**New affiliate makes 12 in Colombia**

Fundación Universitaria Politécnico Grancolombiano of Bogotá in February became the 12th Colombian university to join the Virtual Institute.

A private institution established in 1981, Grancolombiano offers undergraduate and graduate programmes in economics, management and international business. Deisy De la Rosa Daza (rosadaza@poligran.edu.co), Director of Undergraduate Studies, will act as Vi coordinator.

**UNCTAD TDR focus of latest videoconferences**

Students and academics from Vi member universities in Jordan and Colombia joined Ugo Panizza and Alfredo Calcagno of UNCTAD's Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, to discuss elements of the latest Trade and Development Report (TDR).

Panizza led the first presentation, attended by 65 participants from the University of Jordan, which focused on the third chapter of the TDR, “International Capital Flows, Current Account Balances and Development Finance.” Panizza introduced basic concepts and critically examined mainstream growth theories, arguing that empirical data does not support their assumptions and predictions.

The second videoconference counted with the participation of 400 lecturers and students from Colombian universities De la Sabana and Jorge Tadeo Lozano. Calcagno provided a comprehensive overview of the TDR 2008, with an emphasis on the Latin American region, particularly in light of the current financial crisis.

Multimedia presentations based on the videoconferences are now online for registered Vi website users.

**Training enriches course offering at Vi member universities**

In response to requests from Foreign Trade University (FTU) of Vietnam, and Makerere University Business School of Uganda (MUBS), the Virtual Institute arranged for Geneva experts to conduct specialized workshops on intellectual property rights (IPR) and market analysis tools for the institutions' lecturers.

IPR issues have come to the forefront of Vietnam's development strategies due to obligations acquired at its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2007. Given the complexities of IPR and the importance of its implications for the country, FTU approached the Vi to help develop a course on this issue both at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

This past December, Christoph Spennemann, of UNCTAD's Intellectual Property Programme, trained 28 academics representing six universities in Vietnam on the development dimensions of intellectual property rights (IPR) at an intensive two-day workshop in Hanoi. As a follow-up to the workshop, Spennemann will make available to FTU's IPR lecturers related material of DIAE's IPR programme. The new FTU IPR courses will begin in September.
The Vi also arranged for MUBS to receive training on market analysis tools provided by its partner, the International Trade Centre. It was the perfect partnership: MUBS wanted to add analytical skills to the university and integrate ITC’s tools into its International Business Programme, while ITC was looking for local partners to become trainers on the use of the tools.

ITC Market Analyst, Eric Buchot, conducted a training of trainers workshop on ITC's Trade Map and Market Access Map databases for 21 academics, trade professional and policymakers January 19-22. "ITC will study the current course programme and explore methods and means of integrating the tools into the course structure," writes Buchot. A second course, focusing on Investment Map, may take place during ITC’s next mission to Kampala.

Four Latin American academics complete Vi fellowships
Thanks to generous funding from the Government of Spain, the Vi has for the first time granted fellowships in Geneva to Latin American academics. The first wave of fellows, from Brazil, Chile and Colombia spent four weeks working on their curricula and researching trade topics at UNCTAD and other Vi partner organizations.

André Biancareli (pictured center), a specialist in financial markets from Vi Brazilian member, the University of Campinas, came to UNCTAD February 2-27 to work on two papers. The first paper, "The financial dimension of South American integration: An assessment of the initiatives and a tentative quantification," is part of the joint Vi research project for Latin American members, implemented in cooperation with UNCTAD's Division on Globalization. The second paper, "International liquidity cycles and developing countries in the era of financial globalization," looked into the cycles of financial inflows into developing countries. Biancareli worked in consultation and with support from two experts from the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, Alfredo Calcagno and Ugo Panizza.

Sascha Furst (pictured right), Head of the Department of International Business at Vi Colombian member, EAFIT University, also in Geneva during the same period, used his fellowship to prepare a Vi study tour for students from Vi Colombian university members and to develop a proposal for a new Masters course at his university. The study tour, the first with a focus on international business, will take place in the fall. Topics to be covered deal with trade from an enterprise perspective, and a session at the World Economic Forum has been included. Furst also worked with Fulvia Farinelli, of UNCTAD's Division on Investment and Enterprise, as well as with experts at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Vi partner, the International Trade Centre (ITC), to develop a proposal for one of the courses in the new Masters in International Business to be launched in 2010. EAFIT's goal in offering the new Masters is to allow undergraduates to continue their studies in this area in their own country.

Felipe Muñoz (pictured left), of Vi member, the University of Chile, came to UNCTAD February 16 to March 13, to work on two research projects, one on Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) -- (also part of the Vi joint research project for Latin America -- and one on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). During his time at UNCTAD, he also developed a course on trade facilitation, and conducted consultations with Vi partner's World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiators and with UNCTAD experts as background for an emerging research project. On FDI, Muñoz will focus on what Chile offers as an FDI destination (such as human capital and infrastructure) and the incentives it can provide to Transnational Corporations (TNCs). The course on trade facilitation will be used in the regional WTO trade policy course in Colombia, in a diploma course on trade policy at his university, and may become part of training courses for Chilean customs officials.

Jorge Ochoa, Professor in Business Administration at Colombia's Universidad de la Sabana, worked during his fellowship of March 8 to April 04, on two projects. The first was the development of curriculum for a new course on Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) for International Business Administration students. His second project involved research on RTAs, where he explored the viability of doing research
on the right timing in the integration process for the introduction of a common currency, and the influence of cultural proximity and similarity of the technological level on countries' propensity to regional integration. During his fellowship, he held consultations and received support from Ralf Krueger, of UNCTAD's Division on Investment and Enterprise, and Taisuke Ito, from UNCTAD's Division on Trade in Goods and Services, as well as from Vi partner, ITC.

South-South, North-South cooperation in Vi joint research projects
Vi member universities from Vietnam and Colombia, and from West Indies and Canada, have paired up to conduct research and to strengthen teaching in their universities.

Foreign Trade University (FTU) in Vietnam and EAFIT University in Colombia have been working on a Vi joint research project on the coffee industry since last summer. Titled "Coffee, Cooperation and Competition: A comparative study between Colombia and Vietnam," their paper compares these two major coffee exporters in terms of infrastructure, players, technology, added value, positioning at domestic and global markets, internationalization patterns and regulatory frameworks. In February, the research team composed of Dao Ngoc Tien, Thu Huong Pham, and Nguyen Thu Hang from FTU, and Adriana Roldan Perez and Maria Alejandra Gonzalez-Perez from EAFIT, travelled together to collect data in the coffee region of Buon Ma Thout in Vietnam. The team also conducted interviews with the major players of the industry in the country, both in Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi.

Also in February, the Shridath Ramphal Centre of the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Centre for Trade Policy and Law (CPTL) of Carleton University held a joint trade negotiating skills course that included 20 students from UWI's Masters in International Trade Policy and three students from Canada. The course revolved around a simulation exercise of the negotiation of a Canada-Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Free Trade Agreement, which is soon to be launched, reports UWI Vi coordinator, Neil Paul. Other joint projects among the two universities include an internship for two West Indies students at CPTL, and future work on a migration project to be funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Russian Vi member universities complete study tour
Six lecturers and 38 students from the Vi's three member universities in Russia took part in a study tour of UNCTAD and other Geneva-based international organizations March 24-27. The tour included interactive sessions at WTO, ITC and the World Intellectual Property Organization, and revolved around country-relevant economic topics such as Russia's accession to the WTO. The students also participated in hands-on training on the use of the ITC's databases and tools, as well as group exercises and a negotiation simulation exercise on trade in services.

The tour provides a valuable experience and insight for students, which complements and deepens understanding gained in the classroom. It also offers both students and teachers the chance to discuss cutting-edge research and to hear about the state of negotiations in Geneva from the experts involved. Participating universities, Moscow's Higher School of Economics, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and the St. Petersburg State University, had completed a similar tour in 2008 and the teachers and Vi coordinators were keen to repeat last year's success and to integrate the study tour into their graduate programmes.

This is the second tour for Russian academics this year, as in February, the Vi had organized a one-day visit to UNCTAD for the School of International Relations at the St. Petersburg State University, during which 14 students learned about the basic workings of UNCTAD and the WTO.
Senegal Masters going strong
For the academic year 2008-2009, important innovations have been undertaken in order to strengthen the Masters in International Trade Policy and Negotiations offered by the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar. In addition to the regular course of studies, the programme launched an evening capacity building programme for professionals. The first session of the programme began December 15, with 13 students chosen from 40 applicants. Representing Senegal, Chad and Comoros, the student profile includes customs inspectors, government officials, a polytechnician and a civil administrator.

Member libraries get new batch of trade resources
In a special mailing to include UNCTAD flagship reports not available in print form in December, the Vi has this month distributed 700 publications among its member libraries. The packages include UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2008, the UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2008, and the brand new publication on the Global Economic Crisis: Systemic Failures and Multilateral Remedies. New in this delivery is a DVD containing all multimedia resources published by the Virtual Institute since 2006. The Vi developed the DVD in an effort to facilitate the inclusion of the materials in the classroom, which our members tell us, lack the Internet connection needed to access the expert presentations online. The resources include presentations on investment, energy, food and commodity prices, capital flows, aid for trade and small and medium enterprises. And for members only, the DVD includes videos not yet published on the site.

Swiss centre offers discount on summer courses for Vi members
The World Trade Institute (WTI), a center of advanced interdisciplinary research and teaching in international trade law and economics, will hold its seventh summer academy July 13 to August 14 in Berne.

The centre, a joint venture of the universities of Berne, Neuchatel and Fribourg, is currently applying for Virtual Institute membership and encourages colleagues in the network to register for this session's courses. Vi members will receive a 25% discount off tuition and fees.

>UPCOMING EVENTS

Fourth membership meeting, May 4-7: Focus on research
Nearly all core Virtual Institute members, as well as several affiliates, have confirmed their attendance to the fourth membership meeting to be held in Geneva in May. The main thrust this year will be research - several sessions will be dedicated to presentations and discussions of outcomes of joint research projects undertaken by members under the auspices of the Virtual Institute. To mark the programme's fifth year, members will have the opportunity to reflect on the experiences, results achieved, as well as problems encountered during this period, and exchange ideas about future orientations and services of the programme. As has become tradition, a session with a keynote speech and discussion will also be organized on a topical international economic issue -- this year, the financial crisis -- and participants will be able to practice the use of the Vi website during a hands-on session.

ТЕАCHING RESOURCES

RTA and Competitiveness localizations now online
From the second round of localizations, launched at the third Virtual Institute members meeting in 2008, five localizations on Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) have recently been completed by Vi member universities from Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, and Russia. The RTA generic teaching material has also been translated into Russian.
In addition, the Vi training material on Competitiveness and Development has been localized to the specific national context in Russia and Belarus. The language of these two localizations is Russian, but the Belarussian localization has also been translated into English.

Localizations contribute to the capacity of Vi member universities to provide locally relevant teaching material. The process of researching, writing and peer reviewing from an UNCTAD expert also contributes to building the research skills of Vi members.

Several other localization projects are ongoing and due soon. They include: the Transfer of Technology by the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in Russia and the University of the West Indies in Barbados; Trade Data Analysis by the University of Jordan and the University of Chile; and one more RTA localization from Chile.

Spain funds Latin American joint research
Financial assistance from the government of Spain has enabled the Vi to launch joint research projects on regional integration and on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Latin America.

The regional integration project involves six research papers written by Vi members from four Latin American countries and Spain. The research will address various aspects of regional integration including the impact of North-South agreements on regional integration, trade liberalization in preferential trade agreements among South American countries, financial integration, and legal instruments for the integration process. The papers will also examine the effect of domestic political environments on regional integration, and look into alternative models for South American integration.

A further five papers, written by Vi members based in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain and Uruguay, will address different aspects of CSR, such as its role in mitigating negative aspects of globalization; the politics of corporate accountability and the role of civil society; as well as how CSR is perceived by the public. The research will also examine the role of CSR in regional trade agreements, and provide a case study on CSR and the mining sector in Chile.

With the ultimate goal of feeding into policymaking, the research papers will identify policy options and recommendations and will contribute to the research and teaching work of the participating universities. Results will be published on the Vi website and in hard copy in the future.

Multimedia teaching resources
This quarter the Virtual Institute published multimedia presentations based on two UNCTAD flagship publications: the Trade and Development and World Investment reports. In English and Spanish, the audio-visual resources were filmed during videoconferences organized for Vi members in Colombia, Chile and Jordan. The Vi has also produced videos of UNCTAD’s Short Courses on Key Economic Issues for Geneva-based delegates. Topics include: Aid for Trade and development, Adapting to the new energy realities, Addressing the global food crisis and SMEs in the global value chain.
UNCTAD Manual for Information Economy Statistics

UNCTAD has released its 2009 revised edition of the 'UNCTAD Manual for Information Economy Statistics'. This manual serves as a reference for national statistical offices and other producers of official statistics on business use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). It provides a guide to data collection and analysis, international standards and definitions, with a focus on the compilation of ICT statistics and how to deal with statistical challenges. The manual will be used in future UNCTAD training courses on ICT statistics.

International Investment Rule-making: Stocktaking, Challenges and the Way Forward

Launched during UNCTAD's multi-year expert meeting on investment for development, the report provides a comprehensive review of sixty years of international investment rulemaking and identifies contemporary trends. It also identifies the core features of the existing 5700 international investment agreements (IIAs) and related challenges. With almost every country in the world being part to at least one bilateral investment treaty, double taxation treaty or other international agreement with investment provisions (such as free trade agreements and economic cooperation agreements), IIAs have not only grown in numbers, but also in complexity. The challenges for firms include keeping track of latest developments in international investment rulemaking and effectively taking advantage of them in their business planning and operation, as well as maintaining good relations with their host countries. The challenges for countries include keeping the treaty network consistent and transparent, and - above all - formulating the "right" agreements in terms of balancing the interests of host countries, home countries and foreign investors, as well as strengthening the development dimension of the agreements.

World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2009

This year's report provides an overview of the build up to the financial crisis and its impact on global economic performance in 2008. It describes short-term prospects for the world economy in 2009 and offers some perspective on the global recession, as well as global economic policy recommendations. The report sets out optimistic and pessimistic scenarios for global output, with a relatively large confidence interval between the two, revealing the influence of still unknown potential losses in the financial system, arising from "off-balance-sheet" debt positions of financial institutions.

In response to the crisis, the report highlights the need for several macroeconomic policy stances, such as strong fiscal intervention and counter-cyclical fiscal policy. It also calls for more coordination of financial activity at the international level and greater regulation of the sector. Additionally, it recommends the reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions and perhaps even the need for a new institution dealing with capital flows - as capital mobility was much more limited at the time of the creation of the original international financial institutions.

> LINKS

The Regional Integration Knowledge System (RIKS) - http://www.cris.unu.edu/riks

A joint initiative of the United Nations University Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) and the GARNET Network of Excellence, the website provides statistical data and indicators on regional integration processes and degrees of
regional interdependence (regional GDP, GDP/capita, population; intra-regional trade share; symmetric trade introversion index, intra-regional trade intensity index), information about regional arrangements (creation, legal framework, membership, governance system and milestones of regional organizations; links to official websites of regional organizations); and links to relevant statistical databases, specialized journals and research centers dealing with regional integration worldwide.

**The WTO Regional Trade Agreements Information System (RTAIS)** - [http://rtais.wto.org](http://rtais.wto.org)

This website provides interactive access to the most up-to-date information on Regional Trade Agreements notified to the GATT/WTO - both those already in force and those under negotiation. One can search for information by country using an interactive map of the world, or by using pre-set criteria such as the coverage, type or status of the agreement, entry into force, signatories, region, topics covered, year of notification, WTO legal cover etc. In addition to this information, the record of each agreement contains the link to its website and the underlying legal text. Trade and tariffs profiles, as well as the Trade Policy Reviews conducted by the WTO are also available on the site for each country.

**FEEDBACK**

The Virtual Institute welcomes any feedback, both positive and critical, about the Vi Newsletter. Is it clear? Are the links helpful? Do they work? Equally, if there is any aspect of UNCTAD's work that you would like to see reported in the newsletter, please make suggestions and we will try to cover it. We would also welcome any news items from member universities about their current activities. Send all comments and document requests to: susana.olivares@unctad.org

Previous issues are available online.

ALSO, if you haven't already, please have a look at our website and familiarize yourself with its structure and content.

The UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development is a capacity-building and knowledge-sharing programme designed to strengthen the capacities of academic institutions in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to teach and research trade issues.

***NOT A MEMBER? Sign up as an associate member by clicking [here](http://vi.unctad.org).

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