First meeting of Virtual Institute members, July 2005.
The first annual meeting of the Virtual Institute brought together 11 member universities who met face-to-face for the first time. The meeting was assembled to reflect on the work that had been accomplished so far and to define the future programme of the Virtual Institute network. In order to meet these broad objectives, it was organised around three types of activity: network activities, designed to strengthen relationships between members; knowledge building activities on topical substantive issues, involving speakers from UNCTAD and the wider trade-policy community in Geneva; and action-planning activities, which mapped out common interests and areas of work for the coming year, such as the kind of teaching materials that would be useful for member universities.

During the process of presentation and discussion many common concerns and interests emerged, such as the need for practical examples to enhance teaching and the challenges of institutional change. This process strengthened the incentives for involvement in the Vi and the understanding of how universities could support each other. To read the draft report in full, please visit 'resources' > 'virtual institute meeting' on the Vi site.
School of International Relations, Tehran, latest member to join the Vi
The School of International Relations (SIR) in Tehran became a member of the Virtual Institute in July 2005 bringing the total number of participating universities to 12. SIR offers courses at a master's level on diplomacy and international organisations and regional and contemporary Iranian studies. It also offers short term vocational courses for diplomats, Iranian officials and the business community on law, economics, world politics and security, and is currently developing a new program on international trade and economy. It also cooperates with other academic institutions and international organizations.

University of the West Indies begins second year of its masters programme
Earlier this month the second intake of students began the masters programme in International Trade Policy (ITP) at the University of the West Indies. The students were addressed by Senator Sandra Husbands (of Barbados) - herself a former student of the course - who told them that the course was an opportunity for the students "to help shape the future of the Caribbean." Click here for more on the story.

Having set up the masters and certificate programmes in International Trade Policy at the University of the West Indies (UWI), which aims to address the human capacity needs of the CARICOM region, Pamela Coke Hamilton is now spearheading a two year period of technical cooperation between the UWI and the Organisation of American States. She hopes to raise the profile of the CIS (established in 2000 to provide various consulting services in international trade) both regionally and internationally so that the UWI can play a greater role in the development of international trade and services in the region.

The Univeristy of Dar-es-Salaam launches new masters programme
The professional Masters of International Trade (MIT) was launched at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDES) on the 25th July this year. The programme is intended to create highly skilled trade and business analysts and managers to serve the needs of enterprise and business stakeholders. The course puts particular emphasis on the knowledge and skills needs of developing economies. Thirty students enrolled on the course, of which three will be targeted for recruitment as assistant lecturers at UDES, provided they pass all university standards.

Vi coordinator at the university, Francis Matambalya, says, "The launching of the programme marked the next step in the efforts to integrate a post-
graduate trade programme into the curricula of UDES" During the design of
the degree programme, substantial technical support was obtained from the
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the
World Trade Organisation (WTO). The two institutions, as well as the
International Trade Centre (ITC) have also made book contributions.

Developments at the University of Jordan
The Department of Economics, which is a direct counterpart of the Virtual
Institute at the University, has recently moved from the faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences to the Faculty of Business Administration and been
renamed the Department of Business Economics. This may result in a shift
in the teaching language from Arabic to English. In addition the Department
also has approval to adopt the Harvard microeconomic competitiveness
course as a non-compulsory course on their Master's programme. It is
hoped that an agreement can be reached with Harvard University so that the
course can be offered to students in the near future.

Grenoble University begins second year of its masters programme
"The Governance of Organisations for International Development", one of
the specializations of the Masters programme in International Economy at
the Pierre Mendès France University in Grenoble, has just begun its second
year, with a new intake of students this September. The first year was very
successful and the course received favourable feedback from the students,
all of whom completed an internship of between 4 and 6 months in an
international organization or NGO.

This year there have been more than 100 applicants for this particular
specialization, which thus ranked as the top one in popularity within the
Masters programme. Three quarters of the students were from overseas,
which was one of the original intentions of the programme and which gives it
a part of its strength. The courses can also be completed by distance
learning and this dimension has attracted an even more professionally
varied and geographically diverse catchment, which further strengthens the
international emphasis of the course.
**Workshop on the teaching and research of international investment agreements**

The UNCTAD Virtual Institute and the Work Programme on International Investment Agreements at UNCTAD are organising a workshop on the Economic and Legal Aspects of International Investment Agreements (IIA) in Bangkok, Thailand, from 28 November to 2 December 2005. The material on IIA to be used for the workshop is currently being developed by UNCTAD and there will be a chance for Vi members to review it before the seminar in Bangkok. The workshop is for teachers and researchers from universities and research institutions in Asia involved in building knowledge, understanding and skills on economic and legal issues related to investment. Click [here](#) for an application.

> _TEACHING RESOURCES_

**Training material on competitiveness**

This new material on competitiveness is now available to members and is intended for use by university teachers to augment existing graduate courses on competitiveness or to help structure planned courses. The material consists of four modules covering the issue of international competitiveness, its definition and history, different theoretical models, the measurement and indicators of competitiveness and the determinants of competitiveness. The modular character of the material allows for flexible and independent use and the focus on policy aspects means it is also accessible to students without a strong econometrics background.

The material includes a simulation exercise which provides an opportunity for students to deepen, apply and test their knowledge of competitiveness as well as developing their negotiating, team working and decision making skills. Along with a scheme of work, which provides learning objectives and advice for teachers, the material includes an activity book containing exercises, annotated readings and references, topics for debate and questions for discussion. A recent UNCTAD study on outsourcing and development is also part of the material.
Recent resources on Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) posted on the Vi site
Non-tariff measures are becoming increasingly important and visible instruments impacting on market access as the overall level of tariffs declines. By the same token, they are also getting more attention in research and training. For this reason, we have posted six new resources dealing with Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs), topic of a recent Expert Meeting at UNCTAD, on the Vi site. The resources include a literature review, discussion papers and presentations with relevance to the policy view on NTMs and trade data analysis.

The resources deal with several topics including how NTMs can be classified and measured and how their effects could be quantified; how developing countries can respond to NTMs, with specific reference to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (which could be used as a case study); The WTO context and what information trade negotiators need to know about NTMs; and finally the use of econometric tools to quantify the impact of NTMs. To access the material please visit 'resources' > 'international trade' on the Vi site.

New material on Trade Facilitation posted on the Vi site
Following an Expert Meeting on Trade Facilitation as an Engine for Development, held at UNCTAD in September this year, we have posted a number of resources of interest to researchers and teachers onto the Vi site. These include the introductory speech given by UNCTAD's Officer-in-Charge Carlos Fortin, a number of presentations, and communications from the International Chamber of Commerce and a group of Latin American countries.

The resources cover the areas of: trade and transport facilitation and development; trade facilitation in a regional context and the benefits of integration; the status of negotiations on trade facilitation at the WTO; and the position and opinions of actors in the negotiation process. To access the material, please visit 'resources' > 'trade facilitation' on the Vi site.

>_PUBLICATIONS
UNCTAD Trade and Development Report 2005
The 2005 Trade and Development Report highlights the continued expansion of the world economy but notes several concerns regarding sustained growth and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The decline in US demand as an engine for world economic growth has been offset by the rises from China and India, which have also produced concomitant benefits for other developing countries supplying intermediate products for the Chinese/Indian markets. However, current account imbalances still pose a threat to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The report argues that intervention in currency rate regimes by developing country central banks, intended to protect producers, actually inhibit the smooth unwinding of current account imbalances, which in turn could squander any progress made towards achieving the MDGs.

The report is further broken down into four chapters: Chapter 1 deals with current risks to the world economy; Chapter 2 examines income growth and shifting trade patterns; Chapter 3 looks at the evolution of terms of trade and its impact on developing countries; and Chapter 4 declares the growing trend in south-south trade is creating the potential for new forms of global interdependence. Please visit 'resources' > 'international trade' on the Vi site to access the chapters.

UNCTAD Report on Economic Development in Africa
In its 2005 report on "Economic Development in Africa: Rethinking the Role of Foreign Direct Investment", UNCTAD declares that the recent surge of FDI to Africa, reaching over $18 billion in 2004, triple the annual average for the 1990s, is largely due to increased demand for fuels and minerals. All but one of the top 10 recipients in 2003 had significant mineral and petroleum reserves. The traditional FDI attraction to Africa into enclaves of export-oriented primary production with limited linkages to the rest of the economy has not changed much in recent years and has contributed to undermining a self-sustaining and dynamic investment process. UNCTAD says it is time to rethink the one-sided emphasis on attracting FDI and its replacement with a more balanced and more strategic approach tailored to African socio-economic conditions and development challenges. Please visit 'resources' > 'international trade' on the Vi site to access the report.

The meeting will focus on an important mechanism of international trade: distribution. It aims to discuss policy options that enhance the contribution of distribution services to growth, trade and development. The meeting will also identify approaches that developing countries may follow in seeking access to global distribution channels for their goods and services. In that context, the meeting will also address new developments in distribution services and current negotiations on services at the multilateral and regional levels and assess their role in contributing to national development objectives in this area.

High level experts are expected to contribute to the debate from international organizations and academia. Experts who wish to participate in the meeting in their personal capacity, as a member of a non-governmental organization, or as a nominated expert of a member state of UNCTAD are requested to make submissions no later than 21st October 2005, details of which are available on the UNCTAD site by following the above link. The deadline for financial assistance from UNCTAD is the 7th October.

> _LINKS

EU Market Access Database

This database primarily lists market access issues and trade barriers that firms within the EU face in non-EU countries. There are three main aspects to the database which are free and could be of interest to members. The statistical database provides an overview of trade flows between EU and non-EU countries and lists trade barriers and tariffs for EU countries trading with non-EU countries. The SPS database lists sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures taken by non-EU countries against the EU member states and details some of the history of disputes and measures taken. Lastly, a collection of studies relating to market access issues can be downloaded from the site. This site contains useful information in a simple and accessible database: for example, a search for a specific non-tariff measure (listed by category) taken by a non-EU country will yield a summary and further details of that measure.
DG European Commission Trade Site
Where the Market Access Database provides information about barriers to EU exports, this database details the tariffs and non-tariff requirements expected of developing country exporters to the EU. Like the Market Access database, searches can be made for individual products and countries and, in addition, further details can be found regarding taxes, customs documentation, rules of origin, tariffs and other requirements (some of which would be useful to anyone interested in trade facilitation - for example, the site details the customs documentation required under EU free trade agreements).

International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health
A fairly exhaustive database of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards, regulations, laws, agreements, scientific evaluations and communications from across the globe. Data can be searched for by commodity; by cross-sectoral issue, such as biotechnology; by country or region; by the type of information, such as 'legislation'; and by the source of the information, such as national governments or standard setting authorities. The information contained on this site provides an invaluable source of material for research purposes.

Third World Network (TWN)
TWN is an NGO based in Malaysia and has several offices around the world. It conducts research into economic, social and environmental issues, and publishes several magazines, as well as books. It also aims to represent southern interests at international fora, and the website itself has some good material following trade negotiations.

> _FEEDBACK_

The Virtual Institute would welcome any feedback, both positive and critical, about the new look 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. Send all comments to: joseph.clements@unctad.org

ALSO, if you haven't already, please have a look at our _new website_ and familiarise yourself with its layout and content.
The Virtual Institute on Trade and Development is a knowledge-sharing programme designed to strengthen the capacities of academic institutions to teach and research trade issues, particularly in developing countries.

***NOT A MEMBER? Why not sign up as an associate member by clicking here***


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