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1. INTRODUCTION: MAIN DEVELOPMENTS

The UNCTAD Virtual Institute (Vi) works with academia in developing and transition countries to strengthen teaching and research on trade and development. Additionally, it supports the role of academia in policy formulation and implementation, and helps universities orient their teaching and research towards this end. The primary channels of the Vi's support to universities are: (a) capacity building services, provided either directly or through its partners, and (b) facilitation of cooperation between the members of its university network - in both the North and the South.

The year 2009 is of particular significance for the Vi, as it will mark five years since its creation in June 2004. This "anniversary" will provide an opportune moment for both its university members and the Vi team to take stock of the experience gained and reflect on future directions for the programme. The independent external evaluation of the Vi that is currently under way will also contribute to this process.

Since the last members' meeting, and the last progress report, in February 2008, the Vi has witnessed several developments which have either already influenced its orientation and strategy, or will need to be addressed in the near future:

- **A growing interest of UNCTAD member countries and their universities in participating in the programme:** as of end-April 2009, the membership stood at 30 core university members, up by 30 per cent since last year, with new additions in Latin America (Mexico, Peru, Uruguay) and developed countries (Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland); additionally, 5 national partners of these core universities (2 from Brazil and 1 each from Colombia, Russia and South Africa) have joined the network, bringing the number of these "affiliate" members to 17 (see Annex 1 for the full list of member universities). These numbers by far exceed the original objective, which was to grow the network to 15-20 universities in the first couple of years.

*Global distribution of Vi member universities (30)*
More than 300 lecturers and researchers from these universities have signed up to access Vi materials and services, as compared with 181 in February 2008. Additionally, in line with the Vi’s efforts to reach out to academics outside Vi member universities, the programme provides access to its digital library, multimedia resources and the Vi quarterly newsletter to individual (“associate”) members. The number of associates increased from 279 members, in 88 countries, to 912, in 126 countries.

- **A growing "maturity" of the network in terms of the services and activities demanded**: in addition to capacity building services geared primarily towards teaching needs, and provided mostly on a bilateral basis between UNCTAD and the university concerned, members have shown increasing interest in research-oriented activities and in joint activities involving cooperation among the members of the network.

- **A temporary improvement in the programme's financial situation**, thanks to a new donation from the government of Spain and the continuation of financial support from the government of Finland. At the same time, however, the Vi’s main source of funding for the past 3.5 years – the UN Development Account - will end mid-2009.

- **The continuing limitations on the size and structure of the Vi team**: it has been a particular challenge to admit new members while continuing to offer them the desired level of personalized attention - one of the programme's characteristic features - as well as provide support to increasingly specialized research-oriented activities demanded by members.

In order to respond to these developments, the Vi has made special efforts to:

- **Expand the range of research-oriented activities and services** both of a networking nature (through a larger number of joint research projects) and of a capacity building nature (through newly introduced mentored research projects for junior LDC researchers); research will also be the main component of the upcoming fourth Vi members meeting in May 2009.

- **Intensify cooperation with partners** to jointly provide Vi members with as wide and complete range of services as possible. These partners are both international organizations and universities in the North that have become members of the Virtual Institute.

- **Expand the number of IT enabled services** mainly through the Vi website and the increased use of video-conferencing facilities.

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**The Vi partners**

For the Vi’s target audience, universities, the program serves as an entry point to UNCTAD's research and for interacting and cooperating with the organization. For this reason, colleagues from **all UNCTAD divisions and programmes** working on a diverse range of trade and development issues are partners of the Virtual Institute, as they contribute to the delivery of a number of Vi services.

With regard to access to research, data and information resources, the Vi has partnered with **international organizations and other institutions** that make their studies, papers and documents available on the Vi website, or allow free-of-charge access to such resources on their own sites. Among these content partners are the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (in particular their research network ARTNeT), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the South Centre, the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and newly also the World Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO provides free access to its market analysis tools and related databases ([http://www.intracen.org/mat](http://www.intracen.org/mat)).

A number of organizations contributed their experts to Vi training programmes for students from Vi member universities in the framework of study tours to Geneva-based international organizations. These
organizations include: the World Trade Organization, the International Trade Centre, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation (AITIC), the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, the South Centre, Oxfam, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

Finally, **Vi university members from developed countries** provide support to their counterparts from developing and transition economies. Such support takes the form of privileged (tuition-free access) to their training programmes, such as the Masters in International Economic Law and Policy at the University of Barcelona, Spain ([http://www.ielpo.org](http://www.ielpo.org)) to which two lecturers from Colombia and Uruguay were admitted, or the Advanced Certificate Program in Trade Policy and Commercial Diplomacy at the Centre for Trade Policy and Law of the Carleton University in Canada ([http://www.carleton.ca/ctpl/training](http://www.carleton.ca/ctpl/training)), attended by a lecturer from Mauritius. All three lecturers simultaneously benefited from a sponsorship from the Vi covering all or part of their travel and living costs. The World Trade Institute in Berne, Switzerland, also offers Vi members a discount on their summer training programme; likewise, there is a possibility of scholarships for Vi members to the Masters in International and Development Economics ([http://www.mide.htw-berlin.de](http://www.mide.htw-berlin.de)) at the University of Applied Sciences in Berlin, Germany. The University of Barcelona and the University of Applied Sciences in Berlin, Germany, have also applied, jointly with Vi members from one or more countries, for EU and German funds for academic cooperation projects in developing and transition countries.
2. SERVICES

To cater to the diverse needs of its membership, the Vi continued to offer a customizable menu of services from which they could choose those that met their needs best, provided funding was available. During the period March 2008-April 2009, Vi services and activities concentrated on the following four areas, which are reflected in the structure of this part of the report, namely course design and materials, professional development for academics, training for students, and cooperation among the members of the network.

2.1 Course design and materials

Curricular advice

A number of Vi member universities are in the process of launching or updating trade and development-related courses and programmes - one of the reasons for them to become members of the Vi. Providing curricular advice is one of the ways the Vi can support them in this endeavour. In the past year, such advice was provided on the design of the upcoming Masters programme in Trade and Development at the Makerere University Business School in Uganda and Masters programmes related to international trade and trade negotiations that are under preparation at the Abomey-Calavi University in Benin. These programmes are essential for both countries as they seek to increase the quality and quantity of its trade professionals to work in both the public sector and private sector professional associations. The Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia, benefited from inputs to the development of a course on regional integration provided by the Vi and other UNCTAD colleagues, as well as staff from the University of Applied Sciences in Berlin.

Provision of trade-related publications and multimedia resources

Vi member universities often cite the lack of access to up-to-date information, data, studies and publications about current developments and topical issues in the world economy as a significant obstacle to their teaching and research, as well as learning by students. The Virtual Institute therefore regularly supplies its members with hard copies of UNCTAD publications to enrich their libraries. Between March 2008 and April 2009, member universities thus received by post almost 1,600 publications from the Vi.

Moreover, electronic copies of more than 500 topical studies and reports from UNCTAD and Vi partners are made available through the online library of trade documents on the Vi website. The library is browsable by thematic category (23 categories are currently available), author, publication year and title. Additionally, it performs full text searches, allowing users to locate information with greater precision. Members can also register for an email alert system, which advises them every time a new document is posted in the category to which they subscribed. The online library can be accessed from the website of the Virtual Institute (http://vi.unctad.org).

The website receives between 83 000 – 113 000 hits from over 2,000 unique visitors every month: an increase of about 30% on the previous year. There are over 650 downloads of documents, presentations or multimedia resources each month, which does not include documents or resources which can be viewed on the website without having to download them. In a recent survey on the website’s user-experience, over 70% rated the relevance of the site’s content as ‘high’ and 85% of respondents rated the quality of the writing also as ‘high’.

In addition, the Vi also developed 12 multimedia teaching resources, including short videos and narrated presentations for use in the classroom or online. In support of short courses for Geneva-based diplomats organized by an associated UNCTAD programme, the Vi developed multimedia presentations by filming the presenters and integrating the films into the PowerPoint presentations. Currently, 5 such presentations
are available (at http://p166.unctad.org/shortcourses) covering the following issues: SMEs in the global value chain; Aid for Trade and development; Adapting to the new energy realities: trade and development perspectives; Addressing the global food crisis through trade and development strategies; and Understanding the global economic crisis.

Feedback on the use of a multimedia presentation developed in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

"Together with my students I have organized a workshop, watched and discussed the materials of the video-lecture, "US housing cycle, financial instability and commodity prices: Navigating the economic storm".

Though the topic of world financial crisis has been already widely observed in numerous overviews and discussed during the classes, [the] lecture provided a very profound overview of current global economic problems and helped us to identify the origins and consequences of the house-market price rise, the financial crisis and also the commodities price crisis.

I would like to thank you one more time for your support and data provided. It was interesting and useful both to the students and me."

Oksana Shkutsko, Belarus State Economic University

Vi teaching materials

While the purpose of the Vi is not to substitute universities by producing standard economics and law textbooks, based on members' demand, the Vi has in some instances developed "applied" generic teaching materials on topical trade and development issues exclusively for its members. Such materials are downloadable from a private section of the Vi website and also shared with members in hard copy and CD-ROM to circumvent the problem of connectivity in some member countries. In our recent survey of members’ needs, all three formats - hard copy, CDROM and website - were equally valued.

Between March 2008 and April 2009, the Vi updated its teaching material on Foreign Direct Investment and International Investment Agreements. Work has also been started, jointly with the WTO research division and UNCTAD colleagues in the Trade Analysis Branch, on converting the Vi teaching material on Trade Data Analysis into a book by adding chapters and producing a CD-ROM with exercises.

Two new teaching materials have also been published. The first one, on the Transfer of Technology, contains four modules, which can be used as the basis of a stand-alone course on the topic, or as sources of information for other courses, in particular on intellectual property, investment and regional integration. In this respect, the modules complement and extend other Vi other training packages in these last two areas. Modules 1 and 2 of the material look at the determinants and channels of technology transfer and what legal and policy instruments exist to facilitate it, such as types of contractual agreements. The modules also examine the process of technology transfer, and contain information on trends in international technology transfer. Modules 3 and 4 focus on Intellectual Property Rights issues and international agreements that cover the transfer of technology.
Unlike all other Vi generic teaching materials that were developed directly by the Vi or its consultants, the material on Environmental economics with an international dimension is the fruit of a Vi-funded joint project between two Vi member universities - the Jawaharlal Nehru University in India and the EAFIT University in Colombia. Having agreed a structure for the material, staff from each university worked separately on selected modules of the material. The final draft was then reviewed by an UNCTAD expert and the material is currently being formatted into a coherent package, which will be published on the Vi website in early summer 2009.

At the same time, Vi members have advanced in their use of earlier generic teaching materials. Results from our recent survey of members on the use of materials show that they have now been used with over 15 000 students, and each material has been used by between 17 to 30 institutions. In rating their quality, more than 80% of members responded in all but two cases that the materials were of a ‘high’ quality; for the other two, the response was over 65% who thought the quality was ‘high’. The majority of teachers use the material or its parts (such as case studies, data and exercises) to build or enrich parts of their courses. Some members (16%) use the material to form the entire basis of a course.

**Feedback on Vi Teaching Materials**

"The materials provide objective and well-organized information not easily and readily available from other sources. They complement nicely the more academic and abstract information found for instance in textbooks. We have started to use the materials to prepare undergraduate classes and intend to discuss parts of them with students that develop research on related subjects."

*Antonio Carlos Macedo e Silva and André Biancareli, University of Campinas, Brazil*

"As textbooks normally only address the strong theoretical aspects on a topic, a great need exists to have a more practical approach (case studies) which students can relate to. Being from Africa, sources are not always that easy obtainable and the (Vi) material thus fill a very important gap which cannot be filled by a regular textbook."

*André Jordaan, University of Pretoria, South Africa*

**Local adaptation of Vi teaching materials**

In order to help its members better tailor the Vi teaching materials, which are by nature generic and not focusing on a particular country, to their national contexts, the Vi has been supporting staff of member universities in undertaking research to gather and interpret information about their countries, and produce local adaptations of generic Vi teaching materials. The purpose of local adaptations is twofold: to provide locally relevant materials that can be integrated into the teaching at member universities, and to strengthen local research skills of university staff by undertaking the research and writing of their own material in consultation with Vi and other UNCTAD staff.

Local adaptations usually consist of an additional chapter, often written in the language of the country, or relevant case studies, data and exercises about the country/region, and, at times, translation of the generic material into the local language. Fourteen such local adaptations of generic Vi materials have been finalized as detailed below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment and International</td>
<td>Colombia (Universidad del Rosario)</td>
<td>Additions to modules 1-4 of the package, with examples, cases and data relating to Colombia (in English); translation of Modules 1-4 into Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Agreements</td>
<td>Jordan (University of Jordan)</td>
<td>Translation of key concepts, definitions, illustrations/boxes in Modules 1-4 of the generic material into Arabic; applied analysis in Module 1 on economic aspects of FDI in the Middle East region; a new chapter on national FDI policies, agreements and performance of Jordan and a comparison with the region; addition of readings pertaining to the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belarus (Belarus State Economic University)</td>
<td>A new module on FDI in Belarus and neighbouring countries covering: economic impact of FDI on Belarus and other economies in transition; economic determinants of investment in Belarus; national FDI policy in Belarus; international agreements as part of national FDI policies in Belarus and the CIS; addition of discussion questions and exercises related to the country and the region; addition of readings and statistical information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam (Foreign Trade University)</td>
<td>Additions to Module 1 of the definition of FDI and its forms in Vietnamese law, analysis of FDI trends and determinants in Vietnam in the context of the region, evaluation of the impact of FDI on the country; additions to Module 2 about the attitude in Vietnam towards FDI, and information about relevant national legislation and international agreements concluded by the country; translation of Modules 1 and 2 into Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness and development</td>
<td>Belarus (Belarus State Economic University)</td>
<td>Development of four new modules on the economic potential and competitiveness of Belarus; competitiveness of Belarussian companies; Belarus in international ratings and indices; and competitiveness of the Belarussian IT services sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia (Higher School of Economics, Moscow)</td>
<td>Addition of exercises for Module 2 on competitiveness (tourism sector and pharmaceutical companies in Russia; conditions for increasing Russian competitiveness; determinants and schools of competitiveness); addition of exercises for Module 3 (labour productivity in Russia; real exchange rates; commodity structure of Russian trade and competitiveness; Global Competitiveness Index and Russia; comparison of different competitiveness indexes; competitiveness of Russian regions); development of a simulation exercise on the competitiveness of the IT sector in Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional trade agreements</td>
<td>Chile (University of Chile)</td>
<td>Translation of all five modules into Spanish; addition to Module 1 of another classification of RTAs and its application to Latin America; addition to Module 4 of how Chile got organized to negotiate the FTA with the US; development of an additional module about regional integration initiatives/RTAs in Latin America; analysis of strategies of Chile and Mexico with regard to RTAs; list of FTAs signed by Chile; list of alliances for WTO negotiations with participation of Latin American countries; bibliography and web references</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt (Cairo University)</td>
<td>Application of generic modules to Arab countries/Egypt with the following additions: Module 1 - on typology, motivation, economic effects, historical classification and main Arab RTAs; checklist for evaluating RTAs; Module 2 - on welfare effects of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
preferential and non-preferential trade liberalization; regional integration, economic growth and development; Module 3 - on WTO rules of RTAs, regulatory issues and RTAs; Module 4 - on negotiating North-South vs. South-South RTAs; Module 5 - on indices for assessing RTAs; addition of discussion questions

Kenya (University of Nairobi) Addition of locally relevant data and analysis to Module 1 - about economic integration in Africa; East African Community (EAC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); addition of locally relevant data and analysis to Module 2 - on the impact of EAC on Kenyan trade; expected impact of Economic Partnership Agreements; Kenya’s policy on regional integration

In English

Russia (St. Petersburg State University) Development of three case studies of RTAs relevant for Russia: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Community, and the Belarus-Russia Union State

In English

Russia (Higher School of Economics, Moscow) Translation of Modules 1-4 into Russian; development of an additional module on RTAs in the CIS region: economic and political context; development of trade flows; stages in the development of economic integration in the CIS; the Commonwealth of Independent States; the Eurasian Union; the Belarus-Russia Union State

In Russian

Uganda (Makerere University Business School) Addition to Module 1 of elements on regional integration in sub-Saharan Africa (East African Community); addition to Module 2 of a case study assessing trade and welfare effects for Uganda under the East African Community; addition of exercises, questions for discussion and readings

In English

Trade and poverty Mauritius (University of Mauritius) Additions to Modules 1, 2 and 3 of the material as follows: a case study on trade, trade liberalization and poverty in Mauritius; a case study using an econometric model on economic growth and poverty reduction in Mauritius: the effects of sectoral components of growth; data about the contribution of domestic demand expansion, import substitution and export expansion to economic growth in Mauritius; a case study on Mauritius in the global value chain for textiles and clothing; references/readings

In English

Trade data analysis Chile (University of Chile) Translation of modules 1-3 into Spanish; addition of Latin American examples, cases and data; addition of readings relevant to the Latin American context

In Spanish

The materials localized by Vi member universities in Argentina, Belarus, Chile, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritius, Russia, Senegal, Uganda and Vietnam have been widely used in teaching their students in a variety of both undergraduate and Masters programmes in Economics (such as International Economics, Rural Economics, Business Economics, Economics and Statistics, International Investment, International Economic Relations, Trade Policy), Business (Business Administration, International Business, Management, Global Business, Banking and Finance) and Law (Intellectual Property). At times, parts of the materials also served to train government officials. This is in line with the Vi intention to develop teaching resources which the universities are then free to use, in parts or their entirety, in the programmes where they see them fit. About 25% of members responded in our recent survey that they were already using other members’ localised material in the own courses, which represents a positive spillover resulting from the project.
The materials were mainly made available to students in the form of soft or hard copies. In some instances, however, the university either published the material as a textbook (the material on FDI and IIAs in Vietnam) or has taken steps to do so (the materials on Competitiveness and Development, and on FDI and IIAs in Jordan; the material on RTAs in Kenya).

In addition to creating teaching materials that are locally relevant, the second objective of localizations was oriented towards policy relevant research. In some cases like Argentina and Jordan, the research undertaken for the localization project has served as a basis for a broader research work (on intellectual property, environment and trade; and indicators of competitiveness, respectively). It has also resulted in several papers being published in journals (two papers in Belarus on FDI in the CIS region, and on the impact of FDI on the Belarussian economy; and one paper from Mauritius on determinants of FDI: lessons from African economies). Finally, research results were presented to academic audiences (Second National Congress on Agro-Biotechnology, Intellectual Property and Public Policies in Argentina) and policymakers (Commission on Finance of the National Assembly in Senegal).

Vi newsletters and a documentary

The Vi quarterly newsletters inform members and partners, among others, about new resources and teaching materials posted on the website. They highlight recent UNCTAD publications, such as its flagship reports, other relevant publications, as well as teaching resources and materials published by the Vi or in cooperation with other UNCTAD programmes. Although the Vi website automatically alerts subscribers of new material that has been posted, the newsletter provides a valuable summary and collation of the previous three months' postings.

Another aim of the newsletter is to circulate information about current activities, particularly those of Vi members, thereby helping to keep them informed of each others' projects and sustaining the network. The newsletter, which is published in electronic and paper form, is linked to ongoing news items on the Vi website, informing members and the wider Vi audience about upcoming and future events of importance and relevance to them. It reports on relevant meetings held at UNCTAD, and reviews and showpieces essential websites providing information and services in the trade and development fields.

Five issues of the newsletter have been produced and circulated to members and to partners inside and outside UNCTAD between March 2008 and April 2009.

To provide first-hand information about the Vi in a less traditional manner, the Vi team created a new promotional documentary film about its work in capacity building for trade and development policies. The film features the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, representatives of beneficiary country governments and universities, as well as Vi donors and partners, who speak about their experience with the Virtual Institute and its services.

2.2 Professional development for academics

To update its members on new topics and developments in the world economy and to strengthen their knowledge and skills with regard to specific research methodologies and tools, the Vi provides several services in the area of professional development for academics - both for groups of academics and
Vi regional professional development workshops on foreign direct investment and international investment agreements for Africa

Vi regional professional development workshops aim to enhance the knowledge and research skills of participating academics on specific topics covered by Vi teaching materials. The objective is to facilitate the use of these materials in regular teaching programmes at universities, and to encourage policy-oriented research on these topics. For this reason, as well as examining substantive issues such as investment or commodities, the workshops also cover methodological questions and data problems. Finally, in line with the Vi’s emphasis on policy relevance in research, the workshops tackle questions of communication with policymakers and their involvement in the research process, and provide networking opportunities between the two groups as well as a round table dialogue between participants and local policy makers.

Martha Hailu from the University of Addis Ababa presents the results of a group exercise

This year's regional professional development workshop in Uganda, organized in cooperation with UNCTAD's Division on Investment and Enterprise, focused on the topic of foreign direct investment, covering both economic aspects and legal elements, in particular international investment agreements. Twenty-four academics from 10 English-speaking African countries, mostly the Least Developed Countries, attended the workshop where they also had the opportunity to share their expertise, present their own research on the topic and get feedback from the resource persons and their peers. The workshop was co-funded by the Governments of Spain and Finland.

On the round table with policymakers

"My expectations were exceeded because it was very interesting to get the views of the policymakers. To me the meeting was very fruitful because the two sides were able to say their views, as far as research is concerned."

Uganda workshop participant

"I am thinking about writing a proposal for the Vi funding [= Vi mentored research projects] and in this respect I want to contact the Ugandan Investment Authority to see in which area they would like someone to conduct policy relevant research."

Richard Sebaggala, Ndejje University, Uganda

On the workshop in general

"I have added to my knowledge in the sense that the country experiences, challenges and success are information I would have not read in a text book. Learning from experts in the field has opened new possibilities of looking at the problems in FDI and finding possible solutions."

Victoria Ndzinge-Anderson, Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis

1 Comments given in the report are taken from feedback questionnaires where participants had the option of not giving their names
"I got comments for improving my study on FDI and also materials that will enlighten my knowledge on FDI. A number of opportunities in terms of networking in research with some participants and the Vi were secured."

Charles Domician, University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

**Use of knowledge from an earlier Vi regional workshop on trade and poverty for Africa**

The Vi has been regularly soliciting participants' feedback at the end of its professional development workshops. However, it is clear that one can only assess the workshops’ impact on participants’ work at a later stage. For this reason, participants are contacted between 6 and 12 months after the workshop to check whether and how they were actually able to put to practical use the knowledge and resources acquired in the workshop. Some examples in this regard relating to an earlier Vi workshop co-funded by the governments of Norway and Finland are shown in the box below.

### One year on… Impact of the trade and poverty workshop, Tanzania, 2007

"I am using the material for my final year BCom marketing students. The most relevant topic for my area was the potential role of international trade in poverty reduction in the LDCs. With the help of the material from the workshop, my students were more interested in international issues. The thing that delighted them was the practical and relevant examples of LDCs given in the materials. This made them to be aware of where their country is in terms of poverty and think very hard on the strategies to be adopted in order to alleviate poverty in the country. I found this very useful because these are the people who are about to join the work force, and they will join it with positive mind of alleviating poverty in their country."

Reginah Thetsane, National University of Lesotho

"I used Module 3 containing value chain analysis in sharpening my PhD proposal titled "Estimating the potential dynamic impact of EPZs on African integration into Global Value Chains and export markets - lessons for Tanzania and developing economies". Also, I happen to be an active member of the Tanzania Trade Experts' Association (TRADEXA). We are currently involved in expert-level meetings/workshops on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and EAC Partner States. One of the pledges in the EPA draft is that the arrangement (EPA) will address trade and development concerns of EAC, including capacity building and poverty reduction. I have personally proposed modalities on how this can be brought about, substantially making reference to pro-poor trade or economic growth details contained in modules 2 and 3 of the workshop material".

Charles Domician, University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

"The question of Uganda signing the EPA brings in many questions on what this would mean for our environment, poverty reduction, employment, investment and food security. Hence, the workshop helped point out ways of how to capture some of these questions. Since I was new to the area of trade, the workshop made it easy for me to know more about the various research engines/data bases and their usage which have been useful in my other research work, say analyzing the growth potential of Uganda, gender mainstreaming in cross border trade in the Nile Basin, and at certain stakeholder workshops in the country."

Madina Guloba, Economic Policy Research Centre, Uganda

**National professional development workshops**

The Vi also offers smaller scale national level professional development workshops in case there is a larger group of university lecturers in one country that would benefit from professional development on a specific issue. Between March 2008 and April 2009, the Vi organized three national professional development workshops for its member universities, as well as joined forces with the International Trade
Centre to provide access for one of its member universities to a workshop organized by the ITC.

**Vi workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IP) and their developmental implications in Vietnam**

The workshop was a joint effort with the UNCTAD's Division on Investment and Enterprise whose expert delivered a two-day training in Hanoi, Vietnam, for 28 academics from the Foreign Trade University, as well as five of their partner universities in the country, on 15-16 December 2008. "The participants were well prepared and had a good level of IP, investment and trade issues," the UNCTAD expert, Christoph Spennemann, said. "It was a lively discussion. They were extremely interested in the issue. Their questions were technical and policy-related, applying concepts to the country's reality." The training was a culmination of Vi's assistance to the university in the development of a course on IP and development which started with curricular advice and facilitation of access to experts in UNCTAD, WTO and WIPO. The course which should be launched in September 2009 will address the need in Vietnam for qualified professionals in the area of IP to implement WTO agreements following the country's accession to the organization.

**Vi workshop on quantitative techniques for trade and trade policy analysis in Senegal**

The workshop took place in Dakar, Senegal, on 14-17 April 2009. An UNCTAD expert from the Division on Trade, Marco Fugazza, served as a resource person for this workshop organized at the request of the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar. Thirty-five participants, including 14 lecturers, 17 students of the university's international trade Masters programme, and 4 guest participants from the government attended the event.

**UNCTAD expert, Marco Fugazza, presents to participants in workshop on trade data analysis, Dakar, Senegal, 14 – 17 April 2009**

The university solicited a workshop of this nature from the Vi in order to strengthen researchers’ knowledge of quantitative techniques and related software and to be able to use them in the context of their research (both at the university and for Masters theses). The workshop also supported their work related to multilateral and regional trade negotiations (such as training they provide for government officials) - an objective that was fully achieved, according to the participants' feedback from the workshop. The participants also expressed a strong interest in an advanced edition of the workshop, as well as workshops in other trade and development fields to be offered by the Virtual Institute in the future.

**Participants' feedback on the workshop in Senegal**

(translated from French)

“This kind of initiative should be saluted. Indeed, in developing countries, and in particular our own, universities suffer both a lack of financial means as well as high quality teachers, and so participation in
such a workshop enables us to increase our capacities and master certain concepts”.

“It is of primary importance [to us] to participate regularly in these kinds of workshops in developing countries, because this will help us inform our negotiators and thus enable them to better defend the interests of their countries in trade negotiations”.

“I intend to use the analytical tools on international trade which have been demonstrated in this workshop in the framework of my research that I am currently preparing, and which focuses on the impact of economic partnership agreements (EPAs) on the agricultural sector”.

Vi workshops on international trade logistics and on trade policy and negotiations in Mauritius

As a follow-up to earlier cooperation with regard to teaching international trade logistics in Mauritius, and to extend professional development to lecturers on trade policy and negotiations, two one-day workshops were organized for the staff of the University of Mauritius on 20 and 23 April 2009. The workshop on international trade logistics added to the joint initiative of the Vi and the University of Mauritius to build local capacity to teach a course on this issue in the framework of the University's MBA in International Business programme. In 2008, an UNCTAD expert delivered the course, with a Mauritian lecturer under-studying him. This year, the Mauritian counterpart took over the initial part of the course while the UNCTAD expert from the Division on Technology and Logistics, Vincent Valentine, was in charge of the rest of the course. In addition, he also offered a workshop for the core team of prospective lecturers for this course to strengthen their capacity to teach this topic in the coming years. Other academics who wished to upgrade their understanding on logistic issues attended as well. The University also has a number of academics who teach international trade, international finance and international business and have to be very up-to-date with current bilateral and multilateral trade negotiation issues. As far as possible, they use information and materials downloaded from the Internet. However, this is insufficient to gain insights into what is happening during the negotiations and understand the intentions of the parties involved. For this reason, the Vi, in cooperation with an expert from the UNCTAD Division on Africa and the Least Developed Countries, Norbert Lebalé, organized a workshop for them on the current Doha agenda and the challenges ahead. Academics at the University of Mauritius have been very satisfied with these two workshops and have shown interest in other similar events in the future, in particular, a specialized course on logistics.

ITC workshop on market analysis tools in Uganda

In a mutually beneficial partnership (ITC seeking to multiply the access to its market analysis tools by training trainers, and the Vi trying to provide professional development on a relevant issue to its member university in Uganda), the International Trade Centre (ITC) conducted a workshop on its market analysis tools for the Makerere University Business School (MUBS) and its partners, on 19-22 January 2009 in Kampala, Uganda. The ultimate goal of the workshop was to train participants on the use of the online tools so that they may in the future become national trainers themselves. An ITC expert, Eric Buchot, acquainted the participants with Trade Map and Market Access Map, two of the organization's market analysis tools, and discussed the possibility of integrating their use in MUBS's teaching and research activities. The university considers that the tools provide low-cost access to data and "an easy, automatic analysis alternative that facilitates the use of research results in the formulation of trade strategy." ITC will provide further curricular advice to the University on this issue. A second course, focusing on Investment Map, may take place during ITC’s next mission to Kampala.

UNCTAD's flagship regional courses on Key International Economic Issues

In addition to its own professional development workshops, the Vi has been trying to facilitate the access of its members to other opportunities available at UNCTAD, in particular UNCTAD's flagship regional courses on Key International Economic Issues which deal in an integrated manner with international trade, finance, investment, technology and their links to development. Vi members continued to be invited to
these courses as both participants and resource persons. The intention is twofold: firstly, to encourage the integration of course materials and knowledge into regular academic programmes at participating countries’ universities. Secondly, to facilitate exchanges between policymakers, who are the main target group of the course, and academics so that the academics better understand policy concerns and policymakers are better aware of research findings that could help them in the formulation of policies.

The regional course for transition economies that took place in 23 June-11 July 2008 was hosted by Virtual Institute member university, Belarus State Economic University. Vi member coordinator and investment expert, Alena Petrushkevich, contributed a presentation about investment trends in her country. Six academics from Belarus, Russia and Latvia also attended the course as participants, often along with policymakers from their countries, which facilitated country-relevant interaction, and opened opportunities for further cooperation between them. An academic from Egypt also attended the course for Western Asia in Bahrain held on 26 October-13 November 2008 and four academics from Botswana, Djibouti, Kenya and Zambia participated in the course for Africa organized in Cairo, Egypt, from 25 January to 12 February 2009.

**Feedback on the regional course in Minsk**

“The course exceeded all my expectations. Its approach was focused not just on presenting information and theory on policy design but on generating debates and brainstorming on economic development, and presentations by participants of their findings. The methods used by UNCTAD experts were an essential advantage of the course which distinguished it from many others.”

“The simulation exercise on GATS was unique in that it synthesized the concepts learned in all the training modules”.

*Alena Petrushkevich, Associate Professor, Belarus State Economic University*

**Virtual Institute fellowship programme**

To enhance the skills of individual researchers and facilitate their access to experts and resources available at UNCTAD and its partner organizations, the Vi offers 4-6 week fellowships to academics from developing and transition countries, either on a sponsored or self-funded basis. The fellows come to Geneva in an early stage of work on concrete projects of a priority interest to their universities, and benefit from mentoring and coaching from UNCTAD and other Geneva-based experts, as well as from access to libraries and information resources at UNCTAD and Vi partner organizations.

Between March 2008 and April 2009, the Virtual Institute hosted 8 fellows from Virtual Institute member universities. Three fellows from the Least Developed Countries (Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda) were funded by the Government of Finland and coached by UNCTAD mentors. One fellow from Russia who came using the funds granted by her university and four fellows from Latin American countries (one each from Brazil and Chile and two from Colombia) sponsored by the government of Spain benefited from consultations with experts inside and outside UNCTAD.
At the end of the fellowships, the Vi organized a short seminar where fellows could present the outcome of their fellowship, together with the participation of their country mission (if feasible), their mentor, the Vi team and other interested UNCTAD colleagues. The purpose of the seminars was to provide the fellows with feedback on the work accomplished and to help them further improve their forthcoming paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fellow</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Issue for fellowship assignment</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis EJONES</td>
<td>Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda</td>
<td>2 June-11 July 2008</td>
<td>Coffee exportation and adaptation to constraints facing its exportation: a case study of coffee-exporting firms in Uganda (research)</td>
<td>Olle Östensson, Division on Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amadou FALL</td>
<td>Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal</td>
<td>30 June-8 August 2008</td>
<td>Competitiveness of Senegalese enterprises and the use of ICTs: case study of call centres (research)</td>
<td>Cécile Barayre, Division on Technology and Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna ABRAMOVA</td>
<td>Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russia</td>
<td>1-30 September 2008</td>
<td>Electronic commerce; international trade in information technologies (research and teaching)</td>
<td>Consultations with experts in UNCTAD (Division on Technology and Logistics), ITC, WIPO, WTO, ITU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>André BIANCARELI</td>
<td>University of Campinas, Brazil</td>
<td>2-27 February 2009</td>
<td>The financial dimension of South American integration: an assessment of the initiatives and a tentative quantification; International liquidity cycles and developing countries in the era of financial globalization (research)</td>
<td>Consultations with experts in UNCTAD (Ugo Panizza and Alfredo Calcagno, Division on Globalization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sascha FURST</td>
<td>EAFIT University, Colombia</td>
<td>2-27 February 2009</td>
<td>Programme of a study tour to Geneva for Colombian universities; proposal for a</td>
<td>Consultations with experts in UNCTAD (Fulvia Farinelli,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During their stay at UNCTAD, all fellows accomplished what they had intended - be it proposals for new courses or the collection of data and development of methodologies and at times first drafts of research papers. Additionally, they have established personal contacts with a number of experts in UNCTAD and other organizations, and Geneva-based diplomats representing their countries to whom they can turn later for consultations, advice and cooperation.

Feedback from Vi fellows

"I mainly worked on developing the thesis, the study, and different aspects of the proposal. The Virtual Institute gave access to experts from within UNCTAD and outside UNCTAD, WTO, ITC… that are always critiquing, and making sure that you are improving the paper at every level. These are some of the things that are unique when you come to UNCTAD - that you learn from a pool of very many people who are only specialists on that very area that you are studying. Generally it gave me motivation… And secondly, I've gained more skills and more knowledge. That is something that I've gotten, on very many aspects of the proposal. How to write it, how to structure it, how to improve it, how to target it for the different people that you're trying to speak to, and also the continuous appraisal that is there. And then, I also got connected to those people. We network now. I now link."

Francis Ejones, Makerere University Business School (from an interview)

"This was a brilliant opportunity to find new statistical and analytical information for the manual on e-commerce and the articles I am planning to publish. I learnt new approaches for the assessment of the role of intellectual property products in socio-economic development of countries. I also got acquainted with up-to-date methodologies for the analysis of the impact of ICTs on international trade in technologies and intellectual property products".

Anna Abramova, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russia

“In my case, the great advantage to be here at UNCTAD was, on one hand, to have access to financial data that I couldn’t access in my country and in my university. On the other hand, I could discuss my ideas with very competent, very recognized experts in some of my issues and it was very good for my research development.”

André Biancareli, University of Campinas, Brazil

Virtual Institute mentored research projects

The Vi has been working hard to "embed" its training after the professional development workshops have
ended: this is partly achieved by the Vi's membership model, which offers long-term support. Past experience of the workshops has shown that participants leave very motivated to engage in research on the subject matter on which they were trained but they face practical problems that may prevent them from applying the newly acquired knowledge in practice. Among such problems are financial constraints and the lack of senior researchers in their institutions specialized in "trade and development" issues who could coach and guide these, mostly junior, researchers in their work.

To address these constraints, the Vi has newly launched a scheme of mentored research projects. Junior researchers from the Least Developed Countries who attended Vi workshops can submit research proposals in the subject matter area of the workshops for sponsorship by the Vi. Each proposal should address a question of policy relevance to the country, have a clear statement of purpose and a reasonably defined methodology, and explain how policymakers will be involved in the project. The intention is to have, at the end of the projects, outcomes/papers that could be published and also be used by policymakers in the researchers’ countries. Authors of selected proposals are granted support from the Vi which consists of a financial grant and mentorship by an expert in the area covered by the research project.

The first wave of such mentored research projects, funded by the government of Finland, started in February 2009 as a follow-up to the regional professional development workshop on investment. Five applications have been received, out of which three were granted support:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>University/research institute</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Topic of paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Makarere University Business School&lt;br&gt;Ndejje University</td>
<td>Francis Ejones&lt;br&gt;Richard Sebaggala</td>
<td>Cross-border bank acquisitions in Uganda’s banking sector: performance, impact and challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>University of Dar-es-Salaam</td>
<td>Charles Domician</td>
<td>Addressing the policy and infrastructural challenges facing the Tanzania’s EPZ programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Foundation</td>
<td>Festo Maro</td>
<td>Foreign direct investment and SME development: the case of Tanzania (focus on linkages between transnational corporations and SMEs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3 Training for students

The main targets of Vi services are university lecturers and researchers. The reason for this choice is first the multiplication potential that the academics have in their countries in terms of dissemination of knowledge and training; the second are resource limitations in UNCTAD (and any other international organization, for that matter) to conduct direct training for the required number of students. However, in one specific instance, where students would gain something unique that they cannot obtain in their own countries, the Vi provides direct training. This unique "good" is the opportunity for interaction with international experts and diplomats of their own countries working on the subjects taught.

**Vi study tours to international organizations in Geneva**

Training successful and experienced trade policymakers, practitioners and negotiators cannot be done in the classroom alone. To accelerate students' experience of the trade policy environment and familiarize them with some of the people, questions, data and tools they may potentially be dealing with in the future, the Virtual Institute has been offering, since 2005, vocational "tours" of Geneva-based institutions - tailored training programmes at international organizations in Geneva for Masters students from member universities. While the Vi designs the programme, organizes training, provides materials and facilities the training sessions for free, travel and accommodation for students during study tours are covered by the participating universities or the participants themselves.
Between March 2008 and April 2009, the Vi organized three full-fledged study tours for its member universities: one for the University of the West Indies and two for universities in Russia, with well over 100 students involved. The Vi also offered three shorter sessions for guest universities from Duke in Durham, U.S., the St. Petersburg State University and a Vi affiliate member, Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogota, Colombia.

The students spent up to two weeks at UNCTAD and with Vi partner institutions, such as the WTO, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and the South Centre. The tours provide students with an in-depth overview of trade policy and the current development agenda and expose potential future trade professionals to the environment of trade negotiations, as well as international experts and representatives of the students' countries in charge of negotiations in Geneva. In the case of the University of the West Indies, the study tour is a mandatory component of their Masters program in International Trade Policy.

**Students of St. Petersburg State University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations and the Higher School of Economics during a negotiation simulation at this year's Russian study tour**

**Feedback from participants in Vi study tours**

"The study tour is a great experience for young professionals looking to move into the international trade arena"

"[My expectations for the study tour] were to learn more about trade negotiations and to improve my skills in negotiating processes… I have fully achieved my goal”

*Anonymous responses from participants in last year’s study tours*

**Model UNCTAD negotiation in Russia spurred by the study tour**
The knowledge, discussions and materials transmitted during the March 2009 study tour of Russian universities to Geneva strengthened an exercise conducted by one of them on the simulation of the Accra Accord negotiation, modeled after the Model UN. Over the past 18 years, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) had been one of the leading centres of the international Model UN but so far their involvement focused on political issues. Even though the idea of selecting an economic topic had been toyed with, it did not receive follow-up till MGIMO became a member of the Virtual Institute.

Third-year students, with support from lecturers of the Department of International Economic Relations, started to prepare for the exercise at the beginning of 2009 - by reading and analyzing documents at regular seminars and group discussions. Two topics of the Accra Accord were selected for the Model - RTAs and biofuels. The study tour to Geneva provided further impetus in terms of the understanding of the negotiation process, additional documents and insights. The exercise in which students took upon roles of selected UNCTAD countries, each of which was represented by a politician and an expert, was then held upon their return to Moscow and resulted in the adoption of an agreed text on the two items that were negotiated.

Students particularly appreciated the link between the exposure to UNCTAD during the tour and the possibility to put in practice their knowledge of substantive issues and the UN rules of procedure, as well as their presentation and negotiations skills, during the exercise.

### Videoconferences with international experts

Taking advantage of new information and communication technologies, the Vi has been offering, since 2007, another service to expose students to discussions with UNCTAD experts and to help gather feedback from academics on UNCTAD's research. Videoconferences have been used to present and discuss the findings of UNCTAD's flagship reports, as well as other UNCTAD research work. In order to provide access to these presentations to persons who were not directly involved, the Vi has been recording them and producing multimedia resources that are available on its website to all registered users. Four multimedia resources based on the videoconferences are currently available online, with three more to be published soon.

**The following universities have benefited from this service during the period covered by this report:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moscow State Institute of International Relations, St. Petersburg State University, Russia</td>
<td>26 November 2008</td>
<td>World Investment Report 2008</td>
<td>Kalman Kalotay, Division on Investment and Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic University, Peru</td>
<td>9 December 2008</td>
<td>World Investment Report 2008</td>
<td>Nicole Moussa, Division on Investment and Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Chile</td>
<td>11 December 2008</td>
<td>International Investment Agreements</td>
<td>Anna Joubin-Bret, Division on Investment and Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia</td>
<td>4 February 2009</td>
<td>Trade and Development Report 2009</td>
<td>Alfredo Calcagno, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Jordan</td>
<td>6 January 2009</td>
<td>Trade and Development Report</td>
<td>Ugo Panizza, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both students and lecturers participating in the videoconferences were very appreciative of the opportunity, which, in addition to getting first-hand information from experts and interacting with them, also demonstrated the practical use of videoconferencing in teaching. All of them unanimously called for more such events in the future - a good example of this is the fact that the universities in Russia and Colombia already organized videoconferences with the Vi for a second consecutive year. The permanent missions of Vi member countries that at times contributed to the events from Geneva also expressed full support to their organization in the future.

Videoconferencing was also used to support an event organized by the University of Mauritius as an offspring of their earlier joint project with the Vi member in Canada - a training workshop on trade policy issues for a Mauritian audience. The workshop titled "Policies and instruments for successful exports" was held on 21-22 April 2009 at the University of Mauritius for a group of 35 government officials, private sector representatives and academics. The objective was to increase the understanding among the audience of the nature of international trade and all the policies and instruments related to trade (such as trade policy, trade and transport facilitation, trade finance; and market analysis tools). In addition to sponsoring face-to-face lectures on port logistics and the current state of multilateral trade negotiations, the Vi, in cooperation with UNCTAD colleagues, contributed two videoconference lectures - on trade facilitation (delivered by Jan Hoffmann from the Division on Technology and Logistics) and Intellectual Property Rights (Kiyoshi Adachi from the Division on Investment and Enterprise). Both the lectures and subsequent interactive discussions were very well received and the University intends to use this tool more in the future to reduce the costs of some training events.

2.4 Cooperation within the network

In addition to services provided bilaterally by the Virtual Institute to its members, there is a considerable potential in the network in terms of expertise and experience on which the Vi has been trying to capitalize on, by encouraging and facilitating North-South and South-South cooperation.

Network meetings

Network meetings are essential to create a community and keep it alive. Members need to be able to meet personally, find out about the ongoing and planned teaching and research projects at their respective universities, share their experiences and research findings, and explore possibilities for exchanges and cooperation. In the case of the Vi, which is by nature a demand-driven programme, the meetings also serve as a forum which gives all the members a say in the formulation of the work plan and the future shape of the programme.

The third meeting of the network took place in Geneva from 4 to 8 February 2008 and was attended by 23 members from the Vi network's academic community, representing its core membership as well as self-funded participants from other partner universities in member countries. It was the biggest meeting yet and reflected the growth of the network from the original 12 members at the first meeting in 2005.
Vi meeting 2008: Panel discussion on Regionalism and RTAs: (from left to right) Vi meeting participants: Francis Matambalya, Tanzania; Ahmed Ghoneim, Egypt; Panelists: Jorge Vitorino, European Commission; Patrick Low, WTO (chairman); Carsten Fink, World Bank

As the focus of the preceding year had been on devolving Vi activities to member countries and broadening participation in the network at its member universities, the meeting evaluated that process and discussed the joint projects of the network in the areas of teaching and research, as well as looked ahead to the future of the network, including areas of further joint cooperation, such as research.

The meeting, held in the run up to UNCTAD XII in Ghana, was open not only to members of the network but also to the Vi’s partners, including missions and donors. In addition to discussing areas of joint cooperation and agreeing the work plan for the network, the meeting also offered substantive sessions for discussion among the membership. Of particular interest to members was the keynote speech by Heiner Flassbeck on the international financial system, in which he addressed the role of exchange rate management and regional financial cooperation, as well as new financial instruments - issues analyzed in the previous Trade and Development Report. Another issue requested by members was RTAs and regionalism: the meeting offered a round table on the topic with the participation of experts from the WTO, the World Bank, the University of Geneva, the European Commission, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery, the World Trade Institute and UNCTAD. The discussion covered several areas, notably the interface between RTAs and the multilateral trading system and the impact of RTAs for development, by looking at recent North-South and South-South RTAs, as well as current economic analysis of RTAs.

"I think that the Vi meeting was (and it is) key to the network’s dynamics. In this sense, it allows us first to “humanize” relations, to contextualize our work (where we come from, the conditions under which we work, etc) and to share interests and needs, among others. After this, communication via e-mail is much easier and productive.

In particular, we found in the network a space where a lot of opportunities and support for professional development arise: we found crucial to find intellectual partners in the development debate; we participated in the localization work; then we are participating of a joint research project on regionalism; furthermore, two of our young professors will take advantage this year of the fellowships at UNCTAD, and I, particularly, have participated in a training course in Peru in 2007. Also, it was very useful to use the Vi meeting in Geneva not only to work with the Vi staff but to make contacts with officers in other international organizations."

Valentina Delich, FLACSO, Argentina

The fourth meeting scheduled for 4-6 May 2009 will, upon members' request and in line with the increasing attention of the Vi to this area, focus mainly on research, in addition to taking stock of the experience gathered over the five years of the Vi’s existence and reflecting on future directions of the programme.
Joint research projects

As the Vi membership grows, both in number and competence, there is increasing demand from member universities for research activities. Consequently, the number of joint projects among Vi members grew considerably over the past year. Two research projects were granted Vi funding following a call for proposals made at the third network meeting and are now at the stage of first drafts. One of these projects conducted by the Cairo University, Egypt, and the University of Jordan, looks into the impact of Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs) on several variables that affect development (exports, employment, investment, and forward and backward linkages with other related industries) using the case of two industries: the textiles and ready made garments industry, and the food industry. The project will also contain a comparative analysis of QIZs' impact on both countries.

The second project - a comparative analysis of two major coffee producing countries, Colombia and Vietnam - will examine their infrastructure, players, technology, added value, positioning at domestic and global markets, internationalization patterns and regulatory frameworks in these sectors. The project is jointly conducted by the EAFIT University in Colombia and the Foreign Trade University in Vietnam. The study is likely to find a practical application as both the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia and the company Colcafé have already shown interest in its results. In February 2009, the two research teams undertook a joint data collection trip to the coffee region of Buon Ma Thout in Vietnam and conducted interviews with the major players of the industry in the country, both in Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi.

A contribution to the Vi from the government of Spain has made it possible to launch two joint research projects with the participation of Vi members in Latin America and Spain. Given the stalling WTO negotiations, there has been an increasing interest in regional integration and preferential trade agreements and the Vi members requested that one of the two planned projects focus on this topic. This project is conducted in cooperation with the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, whose expert Alfredo Calcagno will provide the required substantive support. Seven papers have been granted a contribution from the Vi (see the table below): six of them are in the stage of first drafts, while the seventh from Chile has just been started.

List of papers included in the joint research project on regional integration and cooperation in Latin America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Area of research-title of paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLACSO, Argentina</td>
<td>Valentina DELICH</td>
<td>Argentiná’s regional integration agenda in the light of the new political and economic circumstances in Argentina and the region since 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil</td>
<td>Carlos AGUIAR DE MEDEIROS</td>
<td>Alternative models for South American integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Campinas, Brazil</td>
<td>André BIANCARELI</td>
<td>The financial dimension of South American Integration: an assessment of the initiatives and a tentative quantification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad de Chile</td>
<td>Jorge FERNANDEZ</td>
<td>Assymetries in innovation systems in UNASUR member countries: obstacles and opportunities for regional integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú</td>
<td>Alan FAIRLIE</td>
<td>Regional integration and North-South agreements in Andean countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universitat de Barcelona, Spain</td>
<td>Federico LAVOPA</td>
<td>Legal instruments for regional integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad de la</td>
<td>Marcel</td>
<td>Regionalism as industrial policy in developing countries</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The overarching topic of the second project is Corporate Social Responsibility. The project will be conducted in cooperation with UNCTAD's Division on Investment and Enterprise whose expert Anthony Miller will provide substantive support. Five proposals for papers from VI members in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain and Uruguay have been selected to be part of this project. Topics include case studies of the banana and mining industries, perceptions about CSR in society, the politics of corporate accountability, and legal instruments for issues touching upon CSR in international economic agreements.

All the papers developed under joint research projects undergo peer review by UNCTAD staff, fellow researchers and/or external peer reviewers. The objective here is double: first, to provide support to participating researchers and second, to ensure the required standard of quality that would thereafter facilitate the use of the papers both for academic purposes and publications and in policymaking.
3. CONCLUSIONS

The 13 months since the last network meeting have been a very intense and productive period in the life of the Virtual Institute. The core concepts of the programme - its demand-driven nature; long-term support to the strengthening of academic capacities and locally grounded teaching/research; and personalized attention - proved to be of continuing attraction to developing and transition countries, as evidenced by the growing number of new members. The potential of cooperation with the Vi's developing and transition country members also attracted additional developed country universities that decided to join the network. At the same time, the range of Vi partners among non-academic institutions such as international organizations further increased in both the number and the depth of cooperation, in some instances. The programme benefited from continued financial support from the government of Finland and welcomed a new donor - the government of Spain. It has forged itself a solid reputation among the permanent missions representing UNCTAD member states in Geneva.

The menu of services offered by the Virtual Institute has gradually been consolidated and can now said to be at a mature stage, with a clear focus of each of the service groups and "faithful" clients that come back to request more of the services that they have used in the past. In its fifth year of life, the Vi's impact on the universities, in particular their teaching, starts to be more pronounced as a growing number of both generic and localized materials are integrated into regular academic programmes. With support from the Vi, new trade-related programmes and courses have been initiated and existing ones strengthened in a number of universities. The profile of trade and development issues has also been raised and links with policymakers strengthened in some member universities, partly thanks to the opportunities provided by the Vi and the ensuing personal interest of university staff involved.

The fifth anniversary of the programme provides a suitable moment for evaluation of the past and reflection about the future. Supported by the independent external evaluation currently under way, this reflection should try to reconcile members' needs and demands on the one hand and the resources that are or will realistically be available for the Vi in the future on the other hand. Possible scenarios in this regard will depend on a number of factors. Among them are the level of funding from external sources available to the Vi team, financial resources at its developing and transition country members, the size and qualifications of members of the Vi team, and the support that it will be able to leverage from UNCTAD, Vi partners and developed country members of the network. These factors will have an impact on the number and origin of members whom the Vi will be able to support and the number and nature of activities and services that it will be able to offer. The strengthening of academic capacities in developing countries is an inherently long-term process, requiring predictable and sustainable support, both in terms of funding and human resources to design and provide relevant services. It is therefore hoped that corresponding long-term resources can be found to sustain the current level of Vi's services as well as any future growth, for which a clear demand exists.

Hearing from developing country members…

"It is hard to imagine how we could have managed to launch our professional Master of International Trade degree programme without support from the Vi, in terms of teaching material, and actual involvement in teaching." (Francis Matambalya, University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania)

"We at the Centre for International Trade and Development have participated in joint research projects with other developing country universities. This creates a link which so far has been missing in traditional networks." (Manoj Pant, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)
"We have developed a project with a Chinese Vi member that is still going on. Thanks to the Vi, our academic cooperation with China which would probably have been non-existent, is now expanding." (Aly Mbaye, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal)

"The participation of my department in Vi activities has been very beneficial for research, teaching and faculty development. We enrich our teaching resources (teaching materials), provide students with up-to-date information about the global economy (videoconferences, study-tour) and train staff in relevant topics for our teaching/research. We even could sign a cooperation agreement with Foreign Trade University Hanoi facilitated by the Vi networking platform. Through Vi we could also establish important contacts with representatives from WTO, ITC, WIPO, ILO that contribute to a study tour and to future videoconferences." (Sascha Furst, EAFIT University, Colombia)

"Before we joined UNCTAD Vi, our graduate library did not have enough resource material but now we have a lot thanks to the hard copies that we usually receive from UNCTAD Vi. There are now also more members of staff and students who are involved in research work using the material received either as soft copies or hard copies. We have also learnt of various professional development workshops, fellowships and grants for studies which members of staff have applied, and benefited from access to ITC data base, WTO and World Bank data bases." (Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga, University of Nairobi, Kenya)

"Collaboration with UNCTAD has raised the profile of trade and development issues with top management of the university and improved awareness of the need to build capacity for teaching and research ion this important area. Our staff continue to benefit from trainings and capacity building programs of the Vi. So far five our staff members have benefited from the Vi professional development workshops and three participated in the localization project. This was a learning experience for them. The students have benefited in return through improved tuition and from the handouts generated from the Vi training materials." (Geoffrey Bakunda, Makerere University Business School, Uganda)

### Hearing from developed country members....

"Strong points of the Vi:
- Has focused on what makes the institute unique, and systematically, given resources, made itself stronger than its individual activities by leveraging its partners and complementary activities
- Strong and effective management, strong communications plan, and targeted activities that make sense

Weak points of the Vi:
It needs either a further multi-year financial commitment and/or partners with whom it can expand and become more integrated into the activities of key members overall operations and their respective universities."

*Phil Rourke, Center for Trade Policy and Law, Carleton University, Canada*
ANNEX: Vi MEMBER UNIVERSITIES (30 APRIL 2009)

Core members:

1. Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Buenos Aires, Argentina
2. Belarus State Economic University (Minsk)
3. University of Campinas, Brazil
4. Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
5. University of Chile (Santiago de Chile)
6. University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, China
7. EAFIT University, Medellín, Colombia
8. Cairo University, Egypt
9. Université Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble, France
10. University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany
11. Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
12. School of International Relations, Tehran, Iran
13. Bocconi University, Milan, Italy
14. University of Jordan (Amman)
15. University of Nairobi, Kenya
16. University of Mauritius (Réduit)
17. Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico
18. Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique
19. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú
20. State University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation
21. Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal
22. University of Pretoria, South Africa
23. University of Barcelona, Spain
24. World Trade Institute, University of Berne, Switzerland
25. University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania
26. Makerere University Business School, Uganda
27. Vadym Hetman Kiev National Economic University, Ukraine
28. Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay
29. Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam
30. University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus, Barbados)

Affiliate members:

1. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina
2. Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
3. Federal University of Viçosa, Brazil
4. Fundación Universitaria Politécnico Grancolombiano, Colombia
5. Academia Diplomática de San Carlos, Colombia
6. Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, Colombia
7. Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Colombia
8. Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia
9. Universidad del Norte, Colombia
10. Universidad del Rosario, Colombia
11. Universidad del Valle, Colombia
12. Universidad Icesi, Colombia
13. Universidad Sergio Arboleda, Colombia
14. Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, Colombia
15. Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Russian Federation
16. St. Petersburg State University, Russian Federation
17. Stellenbosch University, South Africa