

# United Nations Conference and Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

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Description The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) oversees trade, investment, and development issues. UNCTAD's foremost purpose is to promote economic opportunity for developing countries and assist in their fair and equitable integration into the world economy. It seeks to achieve these aims by acting as a forum for intergovernmental negotiation; conducting research, policy analysis, and data collection; and providing technical assistance to least developed countries (LDCs) and countries in transition from socialism. Its influence, however, is often stymied because it lacks authority to commit other bodies to action.

UNCTAD was founded in 1964 in the wake of developing world dissatisfaction with instability in international commodity markets, which were said to reflect unfair terms of trade that contributed to their growing poverty. It was initially intended to give representation to poorer countries and gain trade concessions from developed countries that would strengthen the position of developing economies in the international trading system.

At first unsuccessful at achieving compromise with developed countries, over time UNCTAD has grown to include 192 developed and developing countries and subsequently become an important forum for addressing developing country concerns and promoting cooperation between richer and poorer countries. Identifying new challenges associated with economic globalization, UNCTAD has focused on how economic globalization can promote development and has paid special attention to the causes and effects of financial crises. UNCTAD has recently made African development in a global economy a primary concern.

Suggested Reading: **Cutler, A. Claire, Virginia Haufler, and Tony Porter. eds.** 1999. *Private authority and international affairs*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

**UNCTAD website.** [www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org) (accessed 3 January 2005).

**Weiss, Thomas G, David P. Forsythe, and Roger A. Coate.** 1997. *The United Nations and changing world politics*. 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

**Wells, Robert N. ed.** 1991. *Peace by pieces — United Nations Agencies and their roles*. Metuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

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