

GETTING UNCTAD XII RIGHT: RECOMMENDATIONS ON THEME AND SUB-THEMES

SYNOPSIS

This South Centre Analytical Note makes some recommendations on the possible theme and sub-themes for UNCTAD XII. It seeks to provide a conceptual overview of what UNCTAD XII should focus on so that the results of the ministerial conference will be an UNCTAD that is stronger, better able to play a significant role in global economic governance, and more capable of promoting – through its three pillars of policy research and analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building, and technical assistance – equitable and sustainable global development, especially of developing countries. It suggests that UNCTAD XII should be both a visionary and a practical conference that will lead to a shared conception of a common global future, and UNCTAD's practical institutional contributions in shaping that future, marked by mutual cooperation and multilateral dialogue.

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GETTING UNCTAD XII RIGHT: RECOMMENDATIONS ON THEME AND SUB-THEMES

I. Introduction

1. This paper presents recommendations from the South Centre on the possible theme and sub-themes that could be the focus of the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII), especially in the context of its preparatory process.
2. UNCTAD XII will be a landmark conference, taking place as it will in the context of global economic, social, political, and environmental changes whose outlines are now coming into focus but whose impacts are still to be clearly understood. UNCTAD XII also comes at a time when the pressure from the North to “reform” the UN system, including UNCTAD, continues to be on the increase. UNCTAD XII comes at a time when existing patterns of global political and economic governance make it difficult for developing countries to fully participate and effectively make their voices heard.
3. However, UNCTAD XII also comes when, despite such difficulties, developing countries are realizing their strength in their unity. UNCTAD XII comes at a time when the South is waking up to their potential, when many developing countries are becoming more confident and self-reliant in shaping their development path their own way and in the willingness to engage their development partners on a more assertive footing, when the necessity and the benefits of South-South cooperation are becoming more self-evident, and when the foundations of North-South engagement are shifting from one of dependency to one of mutual cooperation. UNCTAD XII comes at a time that is ripe with change, a time that is opportune for the global community to build a common global future together.
4. Hence, it is important at this critical historical juncture that UNCTAD XII is gotten right. The determination of the key theme and sub-themes that will be the focus of UNCTAD XII’s discussions and negotiations will be crucial in shaping the final outcomes of UNCTAD XII – whether it will become an UNCTAD XII that is right for the challenges of the 21st century, especially those facing developing countries, or whether UNCTAD as an institution will remain mired in the difficulties that it has faced in the past three decades.

II. UNCTAD XII’s Main Theme – “Building a Common Global Future: UNCTAD’s Contribution to Revitalizing a Global Partnership for Development”

5. UNCTAD XII’s main theme should be on “Building a Common Global Future: UNCTAD’s Contribution to Revitalizing a Global Partnership for Development.”

6. This will emphasize the forward-looking nature of UNCTAD XII, and its recognition that the old modes of conflict and confrontation, of dominance and exploitation, should no longer be reflected in the 21st century. It will emphasize UNCTAD XII's recognition of the global economic, social, political and environmental challenges arising from past modes of industrialization and the current pace and thrust of globalization that are facing the global community and hence UNCTAD's willingness to address those challenges in a constructive manner.
7. UNCTAD XII should NOT jump off from an acceptance of the inevitability of today's model of globalization, which has resulted in widening economic disparities between the North and the South. Today's model of globalization CANNOT be made to work for development because the very premises that underlie such model are in themselves flawed. Such flaws cannot be remedied by peripheral changes that seek to address the symptoms but not the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty in the South and the role of the current international economic system in further exacerbating the adverse effects of such root causes. A flawed model needs to be changed, and fresh ideas for the creation of a new model have to be encouraged.
8. UNCTAD XII should, hence, focus on creating a global consensus on what needs to be done by UNCTAD, its Member States, and its other stakeholders (including civil society, the private sector, and the academe) and the policy and institutional framework in which to promote a common global future characterized by equitable and sustainable global development, especially of developing countries. UNCTAD XII should come up with a new model of global economic cooperation in which the development of the South, including the alleviation of global poverty, is at the core.
9. Building on the outcomes and mandates coming from Bangkok (UNCTAD X), Sao Paulo (UNCTAD XI) and the UNCTAD XI Mid-Term Review, UNCTAD XII should be a visionary conference, with both conceptual and practical outcomes. It should lay down the vision and the conceptual framework within which UNCTAD can become, as it initially was and should always have been, a concept leader in analyzing, shaping and recommending development policies and strategies that take into account specific national circumstances and also support developing countries' desire and ability to develop equitably and sustainably.
10. UNCTAD XII should also lay down the practical institutional framework for actions that will need to be undertaken by its Member States and other stakeholders in order to move forward on the adoption and implementation of appropriate development policies and strategies. Such practical institutional framework should ideally include a renewed commitment to strengthening UNCTAD and its ability to deliver in all of its three pillars, and a new commitment on the part of its Member States to work together to promote UNCTAD's new vision of a common global future marked by equitable and sustainable global development, especially of the South.

11. The main theme suggested above will need to be fleshed by more specific discussion on sub-themes.

III. UNCTAD XII's Sub-Themes

12. To support the development of the main theme suggested above, the following sub-themes could be proposed:
 - (a) Making global economic governance and policy-making coherent for development
 - (b) Defining new ways cooperation for development
 - (c) Ensuring supply-side productive capacity through trade, knowledge- and resource-sharing
 - (d) Addressing emerging issues through development-oriented action
 - (e) African growth based on African policies and African resources
 - (f) Cross-cutting issues of development for UNCTAD XII

Sub-Theme 1: Making global economic governance and policy-making coherent for development

13. Having a sub-theme focused on how, both conceptually and practically, global economic governance and policy-making can be made coherent in order to better support global development, especially of the South, will enable UNCTAD XII to focus its attention on the challenges to and failures of global cooperation for development.
14. Ideally, this should include paying attention to the following issues:
 - *the role of the UN system, including UNCTAD, in global economic governance and policy-making*, in particular with respect to:
 - discussing the UN's mandate to serve as the primary global governance institution not only in the political and security fields but also in the economic, social and cultural fields (through ECOSOC) and the UN's relationship to other global economic institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization;
 - strengthening UNCTAD's institutional ability to deliver effectively on its three pillars of policy research and analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building, and technical development assistance. This should include focusing on rebuilding UNCTAD's ability to undertake solid policy research and analysis with respect to options in development strategies; enhancing the ability of UNCTAD's intergovernmental machinery to provide normative policy outcomes that can help Member States cooperate to address development challenges; and

ensuring that UNCTAD's technical assistance activities support nationally-owned and designed development strategies rather than create aid dependency among the beneficiaries.

- *global economic governance and the trade, financial and monetary system.* Any discussion of this system should include:
 - addressing their ability or inability to support and promote Southern development; the role of global institutions (such as the BWIs and the WTO), the private sector, and civil society, in shaping and implementing the policies arising from this system;
 - the negative impact of net flow of financial and productive resources from the South to the North;
 - the definition of a new international trade, financial and monetary architecture that would be supportive of Southern development;
 - capital flight, international tax cooperation and tax justice;
 - globalization in all its aspects and its impact on the development prospects of developing countries, especially LDCs;
 - systemic imbalances and inequities in the international trading and financial systems that adversely impact on the development prospects of developing countries

- *the debt problem.* This should include a discussion of:
 - the need to have an audit of developing country debt to Northern private and public creditors (with a view of ensuring that only those debts which are legitimate should be paid);
 - the issue of freeing up resources as a result of debt relief and debt cancellation to finance development;
 - freeing up policy space for the South as a result of the removal of BWI conditionalities

- *options for national development strategies.* This discussion should:
 - move forward the discussion on national development policy space for developing countries;
 - recognize that different developmental contexts require different developmental solutions; and
 - stress that international rules and commitments should be crafted with a view towards ensuring that choices and options continue to exist to the maximum extent possible in order for developing countries to be able to freely choose and implement the national development strategies that they deem fit.

15. UNCTAD XII's discussions on the issues above must also be linked to other international processes that seek to tackle development issues from other angles. These include the preparations for the 2008 Review Conference of the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development; work being undertaken by other UN agencies and other institutions to achieve the UN Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs); and the initiatives for reforming the UN system. This means that UNCTAD Member States will have to ensure that these various processes inform and provide the institutional and policy context for each other as they move forward.

Sub-Theme 2: Defining new ways of cooperation for development

16. Additionally, the rapid pace of development of some developing countries and the increasing consciousness of UNCTAD's stakeholders of the need for increased Southern cohesion and self-reliance as well as for new and more equitable ways of North-South interaction, new ways of cooperation for development will need to be explored. This should include UNCTAD looking more deeply at:

- *South-South regional integration, self-reliance and cooperation.* South-South cooperative approaches, designed to promote Southern development, increase Southern self-reliance on their own resources, and improve the basis for North-South cooperation and dialogue in economic, political, social and environmental issues need to be addressed and promoted. This means that innovative ways must be explored and promoted to ensure that South-South cooperation, including regional integration initiatives, provide developmental benefits.
- *Plurilateral and bilateral North-South cooperation.* There are many challenges that North-South cooperation on a plurilateral or bilateral basis poses. These must be understood and addressed in order to ensure that such cooperation provide developmental benefits to the Southern partner.

Sub-Theme 3: Ensuring supply-side productive capacity for development through trade, knowledge- and resource-sharing

17. Equitable and sustainable global development depends, in large part, on the ability of countries, both at the governmental and non-governmental level, to enhance knowledge and share resources in a globally cooperative way. This should ensure that all countries, especially developing countries, have sufficient and adequate access to the knowledge and resources that they require in order to alleviate poverty, promote development, and protect their environment.

18. Hence, this sub-theme should include the following issues:

- *Trade and development.* This should include discussing the role that global trade and the use of fair trade rules and disciplines can play in fostering development
- *The trade chain.* Specific discussions should be undertaken with respect to the following:

- Trade finance/insurance
 - Development of supply-side productive capacity (including FDI, ODA, private and public enterprise development, transfers of technology, innovation and access to knowledge)
 - Infrastructure development
 - Transportation systems (both domestic and international)
 - Customs facilitation
 - Trade negotiations – including development of negotiating capacity
 - Electronic commerce and development opportunities from the Internet
- *Economic diversification in developing and transition countries*
 - *Enhancing the development impact of aid and development assistance*
 - *Market manipulation and failures (including commodity issues)*
 - *Corporate social responsibility and the regulation of transnational corporations for development*
 - *Energy security, environmental sustainability, and development*
 - *Environment, trade, food, bio-safety, sustainability and the role of IPRs*
 - *Provision and management of international public goods and the resources of global commons (sea bed, space), international regulatory mechanisms for global commons, and provisioning of international public goods and services*
 - *Operationalisation of the principle of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) in international trade and financial relations*

Sub-Theme 4: Addressing emerging issues through development-oriented action

19. In a time of economic, social, political and environmental flux and change, the global community is facing many development challenges and issues that will require cooperative solutions. These could include:

- *Migration.* The need to address the root causes of South-North and South-South migration – i.e. poverty, deprivation of economic opportunities, social and political conflict, environmental insecurity – is clear. The economic and social impacts of cross-border movements of people for economic and social reasons (including the phenomena of brain drain, brain gain, and remittances) need to be clearly understood, and the challenges and root causes addressed. The role that migrant labor remittances can play in promoting development should be studied.
- *Climate change and the role of global trade and economy.* It is now clear that the current climate change crisis is mostly anthropogenic. In many

ways, the modes of industrial production and consumption being encouraged by the current model of the global trade system serve to accelerate the pace of climate change. Climate change is likely to adversely affect developing countries more than developed countries. Hence the synergistic impacts of the global trade and production system and of climate change vis-à-vis the development prospects of developing countries must be looked at.

20. While UNCTAD will have to deal with these emerging issues, care must be taken to ensure that resources should not be diverted away from its work on its core issues and mandates – e.g. those issues covered in Sub-Themes 1 to 3 above.

Sub-Theme 5: African growth based on African priorities and resources

21. As the host continent, the development issues of Africa also need to be addressed by UNCTAD XII. Africa, while rich in natural and human resources, continues to be economically the poorest continent on the planet.

22. But at the same time, with the increasing global hunger for natural resources to fuel continued economic growth in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the developed world, Africa's natural wealth is increasingly attracting more and more attention. Africa's economic, social, and political marginalization in the global arena continues to be a long-standing global development challenge that UNCTAD XII will need to address innovatively. Africa needs to be built up so as to enable it to achieve its full potential as an equal partner in global governance and in the global economy.

23. In this regard, some key issues that could be discussed include:

- *the impact of the African human diaspora on African development*
- *ensuring developmental benefits from foreign investment in and official development assistance to Africa*
- *ensuring developmental benefits from and facilitating the flow of remittances from Africans in diaspora*
- *supporting African regional integration*
- *improving Africa's share in global trade and the global economy*
- *improving African supply-side productive capacity, including promotion of economic diversification*
- *promoting African innovation and access to knowledge, including technology transfer and flexibilities in intellectual property rights*

- *promoting effective African participation in global economic governance institutions, including UNCTAD, the WTO, and the BWIs.*
24. Any work that may be undertaken by UNCTAD pursuant to a mandate to address African development issues should be placed in the context of UNCTAD's overall mandate and work programme as a multilateral institution. In this regard, improved mutual coordination and support could be undertaken by UNCTAD and other UN agencies, such as the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and African institutions such as the African Union and the sub-regional secretariats (ECOWAS, SADC, etc.).

Sub-Theme 6: Cross-cutting issues of development for UNCTAD XII

25. Finally, there are cross-cutting issues that are relevant to the development of a new vision for global cooperation in trade and development that UNCTAD XII will also have to consider. These could include the following:
- *Gender.* The gender impacts of global economic patterns of trade, production and consumption need to be more clearly understood. Trade and other economic data will need to be made more gender-sensitive so as to provide the policymakers with gender-disaggregated information needed to make policy choices that take into account the differential impacts of trade and economic policy between the sexes.
 - *Human rights in trade and development.* Issues relating to the impact of the current model of trade and globalization on the enjoyment, protection and promotion of human rights (in particular on economic and social rights, including the right to development) and on labour rights also need to be addressed. The UN's human rights bodies as well as the ILO have released reports that assess such impacts, such that new ways need to be found to address and reflect such issues and concerns into a new vision of trade for development in UNCTAD.
 - *Least-developed countries, land-locked countries, transit countries, and small economies (including small island developing states).* More attention needs to be given to the specific development challenges faced by these categories of countries. Innovative ways need to be found that would promote their development, increase their shares in global trade, increase inward resource flows to support their development, diversify their economies, and improve the living standards of their peoples.

IV. Strengthening UNCTAD's Institutional Structure

26. UNCTAD XII should lay the foundation for strengthening UNCTAD's institutional and financial capacity to deliver on its mandates.
27. Discussions on strengthening UNCTAD's institutional structure in the context of supporting its ability to carry out the mandates that may come out of

UNCTAD XII could include a careful consideration of various inputs including, inter alia, the Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Enhancing the Development Role and Impact of UNCTAD. Some suggestions that could be considered as well would be the creation of a new Commission on Globalization and Development Strategies to support the reinvigoration of UNCTAD's role as the primary institution in the UN system to carry out policy research, analytical, and normative work on globalization and development strategies.

28. UNCTAD's current administrative structure may have the flexibility to address and respond to any new mandates that UNCTAD XII may come up with. Administrative re-organization must be carefully dealt with to ensure that UNCTAD does not lose even more the human expertise and the administrative experience which has allowed it in the past to be the premier development policy thinktank in the UN system.
29. If at all, administrative re-organization should involve further strengthening and building up UNCTAD's human, administrative, technical and financial resource base so as to enable it to fully and effectively carry out its work programme pursuant to the mandates laid down by UNCTAD XII and previous ministerial conferences.
30. UNCTAD's administrative structure – e.g. its divisional structure – plays a key role in ensuring that it delivers. UNCTAD XII must be conscious of the fact that there must be clear links between the mandates that it provides, the implementing work programme that the UNCTAD Secretariat comes up with, and the actual administrative implementation structure of the Secretariat designed to carry out that work. Changes in or additions to UNCTAD's mandates must not be used as the basis for wholesale changes in its administrative structure that could weaken it further.

V. UNCTAD XII's Outcome: Suggestions for a Visionary Document

31. What should be the negotiated outcome of UNCTAD XII? **The outcome should be that UNCTAD Member States arrive at a strong consensus on the mandate and work programme of UNCTAD building on and coming from those established in Bangkok, Sao Paulo, and the UNCTAD XI Mid-Term Review.**
32. UNCTAD XII has to be a visionary exercise that has both conceptual and practical output. It should be a genuinely inclusive dialogue among UNCTAD's Member States that will result in a visionary Ministerial Declaration that would contain sections focused on:

I. The Vision of UNCTAD XII

This would include:

- (a) having a common conceptual understanding of the rapidly changing global economic, political, environmental and social context, its causes, and its implications for UNCTAD's work;
- (b) coming up with a consensual vision for UNCTAD's role in the UN system and in global economic governance in the 21st century;

II. Renewing and Revitalizing UNCTAD's Mandate

This would include:

- (a) having a common agreement that the primary objective of UNCTAD's work is to promote the development of the South and that such objective should be evident and reflected in UNCTAD's three pillars;
- (b) agreeing to strengthen UNCTAD's institutional mechanisms – especially with respect to its policy research and analysis and intergovernmental consensus-building pillars – by providing for adequate resources (both human and financial) and clear objectives for policy oriented research and normative outcomes; and, finally,
- (c) *building on Bangkok, Sao Paulo, and the UNCTAD XI Mid-term Review outcomes*, having a common agreement on the objectives, parameters, and focus for UNCTAD's work on key development issues, especially on, but not limited to:
 - i. global economic (especially on trade, finance, monetary, and institutional governance issues) policy and norm-making;
 - ii. options for trade and economic development strategies;
 - iii. financing for development, in its broad sense (ranging from capital flight, FDI and ODA, and the international financial architecture), for the South;
 - iv. productively harnessing the potential of developed countries and emerging Southern economic powers to support equitable and sustainable global development, especially for other Southern countries;
 - v. encouraging and promoting South-South regional integration, self-reliance and cooperation;
 - vi. supporting the development of supply-side productive capacity;
 - vii. addressing emerging and cross-cutting development issues;
 - viii. support for increased Southern capacity to participate in global governance institutions effectively and fully; and
 - ix. improving the basis for fair, equal and participatory dialogue between the North and the South in building a common global future through a new framework for global cooperation on trade for development.

III. UNCTAD's Institutional Arrangements

This would include:

- (a) linking each aspect of UNCTAD XII's mandates to specific divisions in the Secretariat's structure to ensure transparency and accountability in the execution of these mandates through the Secretariat's work programme;
- (b) agreement to increase both regular and extra-budgetary funding for core and new UNCTAD programmes and activities, to support increased staffing, and enable the Secretariat to enhance delivery of its services to Member States in all of UNCTAD's three pillars;
- (c) ensuring that UNCTAD's institutional role as the UN system's premier development policy research and analysis thinktank is preserved and enhanced, in the context of on-going initiatives relating to UN system-wide coherence reforms; and
- (d) clearly re-emphasizing UNCTAD's primary mandate to deal with trade and related development issues. UNCTAD XII should hence call on all Member States, other UN agencies, and other multilateral institutions such as the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions, to work with UNCTAD to ensure that their actions are mutually supportive of UNCTAD's work in its three pillars in promoting equitable and sustained global development, especially of developing countries.

Annex I: UNCTAD XII - Main Theme and Sub-Themes

Main Theme – “Building a Common Global Future: UNCTAD’s Contribution to a New Vision on Global Cooperation in Trade for Development”

Sub-Theme 1: Making global economic governance and policy-making work for development

- *the role of the UN system, including UNCTAD, in global economic governance and policy-making;*
 - discussing the UN’s mandate to serve as the primary global governance institution not only in the political and security fields but also in the economic, social and cultural fields (through ECOSOC) and the UN’s relationship to other global economic institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization;
 - strengthening UNCTAD’s ability to deliver effectively on its three pillars of policy research and analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building, and technical development assistance.
- *global economic governance and the trade, financial and monetary system:*
 - addressing their ability or inability to support and promote Southern development; the role of global institutions (such as the BWIs and the WTO), the private sector, and civil society, in shaping and implementing the policies arising from this system;
 - the negative impact of net flow of financial and productive resources from the South to the North;
 - the definition of a new international trade, financial and monetary architecture that would be supportive of Southern development;
 - capital flight, international tax cooperation and tax justice;
 - globalization in all its aspects and its impact on the development prospects of developing countries, especially LDCs;
 - systemic imbalances and inequities in the international trading and financial systems that adversely impact on the development prospects of developing countries
- *the debt problem:*
 - the need to have an audit of developing country debt to Northern private and public creditors (with a view of ensuring that only those debts which are legitimate should be paid);
 - the issue of freeing up resources as a result of debt relief and debt cancellation to finance development;
 - freeing up policy space for the South as a result of the removal of BWI conditionalities
- *options for national development strategies:*
 - move forward the discussion on national development policy space for developing countries;
 - recognize that different developmental contexts require different developmental solutions; and

- that international rules and commitments should be crafted with a view towards ensuring that choices and options continue to exist to the maximum extent possible in order for developing countries to be able to freely choose and implement the national development strategies that they deem fit.

Sub-Theme 2: Defining new ways of cooperation for development

- *South-South regional integration, self-reliance and cooperation*
- *Plurilateral and bilateral North-South integration and cooperation*

Sub-Theme 3: Ensuring supply-side productive capacity for development through trade, knowledge- and resource-sharing

- *Trade and development*
- *The trade chain:*
 - Trade finance/insurance
 - Development of supply-side productive capacity (including FDI, ODA, private and public enterprise development, transfers of technology, innovation and access to knowledge)
 - Infrastructure development
 - Transportation systems (both domestic and international)
 - Customs facilitation
 - Trade negotiations – including development of negotiating capacity
 - Electronic commerce and development opportunities from the Internet
- *Economic diversification in developing and transition countries*
- *Enhancing the development impact of aid and development assistance*
- *Market manipulation and failures (including commodity issues)*
- *Corporate social responsibility and the regulation of transnational corporations for development*
- *Energy security, environmental sustainability, and development*
- *Environment, trade, food, bio-safety, sustainability and the role of IPRs*
- *Provision and management of international public goods and the resources of global commons (sea bed, space), international regulatory mechanisms for global commons, and provisioning of international public goods and services*
- *Operationalisation of the principle of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) in international trade and financial relations*

Sub-Theme 4: Addressing emerging issues through development-oriented action

- *Migration.*
- *Climate change and the role of global trade and economy*

Sub-Theme 5: African growth based on African priorities and resources

- *the impact of the African human diaspora on African development*
- *ensuring developmental benefits from foreign investment in and official development assistance to Africa*

- *ensuring developmental benefits from and facilitating the flow of remittances from Africans in diaspora*
- *supporting African regional integration*
- *improving Africa's share in global trade and the global economy*
- *improving African supply-side productive capacity, including promotion of economic diversification*
- *promoting African innovation and access to knowledge, including technology transfer and flexibilities in intellectual property rights*
- *promoting effective African participation in global economic governance institutions, including UNCTAD, the WTO, and the BWIs.*

Sub-Theme 6: Cross-cutting issues for UNCTAD XII

- *Gender*
- *Human rights in trade for development*
- *Least-developed countries, land-locked countries, transit countries, and small economies (including small island developing states)*

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**GETTING UNCTAD XII RIGHT:
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