

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE 2007

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT INDEX

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PREFACE

by Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General, UNCTAD

The link between trade and development, and the kind of policies required to strengthen the contribution of one to the other, have been the subject of much academic discussion. For UNCTAD, as the United Nations focal point for the integrated treatment of trade and development, this issue has been at the centre of its work for more than 40 years.

In this Trade and Development Index (TDI), UNCTAD presents some of its research on the link between trade and development in a new, integrated fashion. The TDI is an outcome of the secretariat's analysis to identify the complex interdependence of current economic conditions in both developing and developed nations.

The index offers a comprehensive review of the global trade and development performance of different countries, and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of their institutional and policy environment. It showcases not only the tremendous progress that many developing countries have achieved in recent years, but also raises several pertinent issues which will require further attention in formulating trade and development policies.

The TDI also aims to provide policymakers and researchers with a new tool for policy analysis and formulation, by presenting an analytical framework to understand how to enhance the enabling environment for trade and development. We believe that this framework will contribute to understanding why certain countries have made progress towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), while others have not. The analytical framework will also allow the UNCTAD Secretariat to enhance the overall coherence of its work, ranging from technical assistance to promoting Aid for Trade.

In order to guide and support our future work on the TDI and related issues, I have constituted an Advisory Board, which will be chaired by Nobel Laureate Professor Lawrence R. Klein. The Board consists of international scholars drawn from academia, international organizations, think tanks and the private sector. I am confident that the pragmatic framework of the TDI and the work of the Advisory Board will help UNCTAD further strengthen its capacity to assist countries in formulating sound trade and development policies.



Supachai Panitchpakdi

FOREWORD

by Professor Lawrence R. Klein, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences

The Trade and Development Index (TDI) has been taken forward in 2007 beyond its inaugural presentation in 2005, and UNCTAD has laid a solid framework in establishing new standards for examining progress in world economic and social development. The second release of TDI measures has expanded country coverage and broadened the scope of quantitative analysis.

The main index, showing development dynamics across countries, has been enlarged and covers new time periods. It also takes up the very important concept of sustainability. In the analysis of key international totals, such as total national income or total production among countries, new attention is paid to income distribution within countries. This is of extreme importance among – as well as within – countries, as it sheds light on the existence of poverty in all too many countries. This is a necessary first step for programmes to reduce poverty.

The principal tool of statistical analysis used remains the method of principal components to deal with latent variables, which are defined in a modern dictionary as something that is “present but not visible or apparent”. The use of the method of principal components in quantitative economic analysis was introduced by Richard Stone in 1947, but he fruitfully explored national results in terms of specific economic magnitudes across time periods for the United States. This approach can readily be used for the countries being studied in the TDI. This extends the statistical analysis to the sustainability, of specific growth rates, a feature that all countries want to know, concerning their economic progress in development.

The TDI framework indicates that in this era of globalization, one must look at financial interrelationships among nations. Trade flows alone cannot provide an understanding of international economic issues. Trade in goods must be extended to goods and services. The latter concept needs further extension to current account balances for the increasing degree of globalized connections among countries to be appreciated. This can be seen in the recent problems of a bank in the United Kingdom being caused by a financial disturbance in the United States mortgage market. For better understanding of financial linkages and their effect on international economic stability, one must look beyond merchandise trade flows among nations.

Methodology, scope, and provision of practical information are all present in improved form in the 2007 edition of this publication. It can be expected that many more such estimates of specific concepts or magnitudes will be in future publications.



Lawrence R. Klein

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