



COURSE ON KEY ISSUES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AGENDA

Short courses for Permanent Missions in Geneva
Organised by the Division on Technology and Logistics- Technology, Innovation and
Knowledge Development Branch
Policy Capacity Building Section / P166 courses

Voluntary sustainability standards and international trade

Thursday, 27 April 2023, Delivered by the Division on International Trade and Commodities

PROGRAMME

Geneva, Palais des Nations		Room XXII
10:00- 10:15	Welcome address, Dr. Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics Short course will be moderated by Ms. Randa Jamal, Chief, Economic Affairs Officer, Policy Capacity Building Section, Technology, Innovation, and Knowledge Development Branch-DTL.	
10:15 - 11:30	Session 1 This session will map out the interlinkages between trade policy and sustainable development, ensuring that trade policy outcomes positively influence sustainable development. In this regard, implementing voluntary sustainability standards related to products and production processes can help ensure that products and production processes comply with a set of social, economic, and environmental requirements in order to make global production more sustainable. This session will illustrate for Geneva-based delegates how to maximize the benefits of a trade policy while considering all of the social, economic and environmental components. Presented by Santiago Fernandez De Cordoba, Chief, VSS Program DITC, UNCTAD	
11:30 – 11:45	Q&A session	
11:45 – 12:30	Session 2 Building on the previous session, this one will be contextualized from the perspective of lower income countries- the duality between standards-takers and standards-setters. While these standards have generated benefits for some, they have quadrupled the impediments for poorer ones. In this regard, this session will zoom on the policy options for developing economies and how they can best derive benefits from these sustainability standards. Would this require policies on the national level alone, or would regional and international policy approach be required in ensuring inequalities in and among countries are addressed? This will be discussed, along with related pertinent aspects. Presented by Ruby Lambert, Economic Affairs Officer, DITC, UNCTAD	
12:30 – 13:00	Q&A session	

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International trade is recognized as a driver of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction that contributes to the promotion of sustainable development under both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. However, training policymakers to map interlinkages between trade policy and sustainable development remains a challenge, along with ensuring that trade policy outcomes positively influence sustainable development. In this regard, implementing voluntary sustainability standards related to products and production processes can help ensure that products and production processes comply with a set of social, economic and/or environmental requirements in order to make global production more sustainable. Such standards may help generate higher productivity levels due to improved agricultural practices, training, input use and technology transfer at the level of producers, thereby allowing for higher trade volumes. However, the reliance of such standards on audits to ensure compliance has become a challenge during the pandemic. In addition, even before the pandemic, voluntary sustainability standards might have impeded trade, particularly in low-income countries. Certification, compliance and monitoring costs make it difficult for some producers, particularly smallholders, to obtain certification, and might drive them out of export markets. Such costs are proportionally higher in countries with weak institutions and/or a fragile regulatory environment. This course will address the following:

- Best practices in implementing voluntary sustainability standards to pursue sustainable trade, particularly in post-pandemic recovery
- Opportunities and challenges in using voluntary sustainability standards to make trade more sustainable and inclusive for developing countries
- Capacity to strategize the building blocks of sustainable global value chains