



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

Market access in times of geopolitical tensions

Thursday, 16 October 2025

Delivered by the Division on International Trade and Commodities
UNCTAD

PROGRAMME

Geneva, Palais des Nations		Room XI
10:00 - 10:15	<p>Welcome address, Mr. Angel Gonzalez-Sanz, Head, Technology, Innovation and Knowledge Development Branch, DTL, UNCTAD.</p> <p>Moderator, Ms. Randa Jamal, Economic Affairs Officer, Policy Capacity Building Section/P166, Technology, Innovation, and Knowledge Development Branch-DTL, UNCTAD</p>	
10:15 - 11:30	<p>Brief introduction - Trade as an Enabler for Sustainable Development: What's at Stake?</p> <p>This brief introduction will address the critical role of trade and market access in driving the sustainable development agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It sheds light on how open and rules-based trade systems have supported economic diversification, productivity growth, and poverty reduction, and how it can support sustainable development.</p> <p>Presented by Ralf Peters, Head, Trade Analysis Branch, Division on international trade and commodities, UNCTAD</p> <p>Session 1 – Tariffs and Their Implications for Market Access in the context of geopolitical tensions.</p> <p>This session will examine how tariffs have evolved in recent years and how they have been and are used as instruments of trade policy. It will also focus on how growing geopolitical tensions and policy shifts are reshaping global market access. The session will highlight how rising tariffs and ongoing trade policy uncertainty are altering trade flows, disrupting supply chains, and creating significant challenges for exporters from developing countries. The discussion will underscore the critical role of understanding these dynamics in navigating a complex and increasingly fragmented global trading environment. alike.</p> <p>Presented by Alessandro Nicita, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Trade Analysis Branch, Division on international trade and commodities, UNCTAD</p> <p>Q&A</p>	

11:30 - 13:00	<p>Session 2 – Trade Policy Instruments for Sustainable Development: Understanding Market Access, Non-tariff Measures, and Voluntary Sustainability Standards</p> <p>This session provides an in-depth overview of the key trade policy instruments that shape market access for developing countries, with a particular focus on non-tariff measures (NTMs) and voluntary sustainability standards (VSS). Delegates will examine how these instruments influence trade flows, production practices, and competitiveness, as well as their growing importance in global markets driven by sustainability and consumer expectations.</p> <p>The discussion will explore the increasing complexity of trade frameworks, especially in areas such as technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and sustainability-related certifications, and how VSS can both open new market opportunities and create compliance challenges for exporters in low- and middle-income countries.</p> <p>The session will also highlight potential domestic and multilateral policy approaches to help countries navigate NTMs and VSS more effectively, safeguard equitable market access, and align trade policy with sustainable development goals. By the end of the session, delegates will have a deeper understanding of how NTMs and VSS shape current market access dynamics and the policy options available to promote fair, transparent, and sustainable trade.</p> <p>Presented by Ralf Peters, Chief, Trade Analysis Branch and Santiago Fernandez de Cordova, Trade Analysis Branch, DITC</p> <p>Q&A</p>
---------------	--

Market access in times of geopolitical tensions

16 October 2025

Delivered by the Division on International Trade and Commodities

Trade, as an enabler for sustainable development, is at risk? Unilateral policy measures and uncertainty regarding the rules based multilateral trading system have a potential impact on the ability for developing countries to use trade for sustainable development. This session recalls how important trade and market access in particular have been for recent development success stories and provides an overview of trade policy measures that have recently been used and that may prevent such development success stories in future. The focus is on tariffs, non-tariff barriers and measures as well as voluntary standards, forming the major parts of market access.

At the end of this course, delegates will have gained knowledge of:

- What is at stake for sustainable development and the SDGs in the current period with increased use of nationalistic trade policies.
- Trade policy instruments mostly related to market access, their current use and concrete and systemic implications.

Ralf Peters is the Head of Trade Analysis at United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD). He has extensive experience with quantitative trade analysis to support policy making and trade negotiations. He leads the United Nations' data work, research and capacity building efforts on trade policy data, including non-tariff measures and sustainability standards. At the International Labour Organization, he was Chief Technical Advisor for trade and employment. Before joining the UN, he was Assistant Professor for international economics. He has a master's degree in mathematics and holds a Ph.D. in economics.

Santiago Fernandez de Cordova is a Senior Economist at UNCTAD and the Coordinator of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS). With over 25 years of experience in trade policy, he specializes in market access, sustainability standards, and structural adjustment. He advises governments on economic development strategies, trade negotiations, and trade promotion. Mr. Fernandez de Cordova has been a featured speaker at more than 200 international conferences on trade liberalization and economic development. He currently serves as a Visiting Professor at the Center for International Development, Universidad de Navarra, and was previously a Visiting Scholar at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He is the Editor of the UNFSS Flagship Report Series, with the sixth edition titled "The Future of Sustainable Trade: Due Diligence Initiatives and Developing Countries." In addition, he authored the book "Coping with Trade Reform" (Palgrave Macmillan) and has published extensively on trade policy and development. His expertise has been recognized by institutions such as the World Bank, OECD, and the World Trade Organization, for which he has served as an expert and consultant. Before joining the United Nations, he worked in management consulting and investment banking. Santiago holds an MBA from LUISS Guido Carli University and a degree in Economics from Universidad de Navarra.