

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

After its first meeting in 1964, UNCTAD was established as an organ of the Assembly to provide a central and continuing forum for the examination of trade and related development policy issues affecting the economic growth of developing countries. UNCTAD is composed of all members of the United Nations. Its mandate, essentially consultative in character, covers the spectrum of international efforts to promote economic development. It is inspired particularly by the recognition that this depends as much on the expansion of the trading opportunities open to the developing countries as on the transfer of resources in the form of aid; and that the two, aid and trade, are fundamental and interrelated elements in the development process. The organization's headquarters are situated in Geneva, where its Secretariat is led by the distinguished Argentinian economist, Dr. Raoul Prebisch. UNCTAD's expenses are borne by the regular budget of the United Nations.

The permanent executive organ of UNCTAD consists of a 55-member Trade and Development Board which normally meets twice a year to review and direct the organization's work programme between sessions of the Conference itself. Reporting to the Board are the four principal functional committees established to pursue UNCTAD's activities in the fields of manufactures, commodities, invisibles and financing, and shipping. At the present time Canada is a member both of the Board and of each of these four main committees.

The task of establishing UNCTAD's organizational structure and formulating its work programme was largely completed in the previous year. In 1966, therefore, UNCTAD was able to take its place as a major international body for the discussion of the wide range of proposals in the various fields which its responsibilities embrace. As regards manufactures, attention focused during the year on proposals to remove tariff and non-tariff obstacles affecting the trade interests of developing countries, including the question of possible new preferential arrangements. With regard to shipping, work proceeded on such matters as the level and structure of freight-rates, port improvement and the adequacy of shipping services. With respect to financing, discussion in UNCTAD has been directed to the volume, terms and conditions of the flow of resources from the developed to the developing countries in the light of the recommendations on these subjects adopted at the First Conference. A group of experts also pursued further the study of a scheme, elaborated with the help of the IBRD, which would involve the extension of supplementary financing in cases where a developing country's export earnings fell short of reasonable expectations and thus jeopardized the implementation of its domestic development programme.