

**THE CARIBBEAN POLICY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**  
**INVITES EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR MEMBERSHIP TO**  
**THE UNCTAD XV INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITATING GROUP**  
**(ICSFG)**

**BACKGROUND**

The virtual hosting of UNCTAD XV from 3rd – 7th October 2021 by Barbados, a Small Island Developing State, offers a critical opportunity to ground the discussions in the present and future realities and prospects of the most vulnerable countries and their populations. The Theme of the UNCTAD *forum From Inequality and Vulnerability to Prosperity for All*, provides a platform to re-energize and refocus development efforts and commitments. It also presents a unique opportunity for member states to respond strategically by reinforcing the value of multilateralism and providing a renewed mandate for a strengthened UNCTAD.

Civil Society participation is an important element of UNCTAD processes. Since its establishment by the General Assembly in 1964, UNCTAD has recognized the important role of civil society in its work. The organisation has established formal and informal engagement mechanisms to facilitate civil society involvement.

In order to ensure effective civil society participation in UNCTAD XV, the International Civil Society Facilitating Group (ICSFG) will be established. The ICSFG will work mainly on the substantive dimensions of civil society engagement in the process leading up to UNCTAD XV and the parallel civil society forum being held on 22nd – 24th September 2021. A major task of the ICSFG will be to promote and catalyze interest by civil society organizations and networks to engage with the UNCTAD XV process and facilitate active engagement and effective participation.

The ICSFG will work in close coordination with the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), in its capacity as designated Civil Society Lead Organizer and Host in Barbados, to achieve the goal of convening a successful UNCTAD XV Civil Society Forum and also seek to achieve our sector's desire for a genuinely participatory engagement process in the wider UNCTAD XV policy negotiations

**Guidelines for Applications**

All civil society organisations who are interested in being a part of the ICSFG are required to complete the following Expression of Interest Form utilizing the Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLHXCPD>.

All applications must be submitted by 28th July 2021 by 5:00 pm (UTC/GMT-4). For further information please contact [cpdcsubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:cpdcsubmissions@gmail.com) and [cpdc@caribsurf.com](mailto:cpdc@caribsurf.com).

**See the Terms of Reference is attached.**

## Caribbean Policy Development Centre

### Terms of Reference

#### Membership to

#### The UNCTAD 15 International Civil Society Facilitating Group (ICSFG)

20 July 2021

#### I. Background

The virtual hosting of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 15) from 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 by Barbados, a Small Island Developing State, offers a critical opportunity to ground the discussions in present and future realities and prospects of the most vulnerable countries and their populations. The theme of the UNCTAD 15, *From Inequality and Vulnerability to Prosperity for All*, provides a platform to re-energize and refocus development efforts and commitments. It also presents a unique opportunity for member states to respond strategically by reinforcing the value of multilateralism and providing a renewed mandate for a strengthened UNCTAD.

UNCTAD first convened in Geneva in 1964, and was institutionalized to meet every four years, with intergovernmental bodies meeting between sessions and a permanent secretariat created to provide support. The organization's goals are to: "maximize the trade, investment and development opportunities of developing countries and assist them in their efforts to integrate into the world economy on an equitable basis".

UNCTAD 15 comes at an important juncture in the international trade and development arena marked by continued malaise in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the growth of bilateral and regional trade agreements. Additionally, the context of COVID-19 presents an unprecedented global challenge. This large-scale socio-economic crisis is disrupting livelihoods, potentially pushing tens of millions into extreme poverty, and highlighting the fragility of the global food system (WHO, 2020).<sup>1</sup>

For developing countries, the pandemic compounds already constrained circumstances in an international environment that is impatient with the calls of developing countries for differential treatment and lacks accountability for failure by developed countries to live up to financing commitments or a rewriting of the rules to the disadvantage of developing countries, particularly Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

With the recent contraction of international trade flows and estimated drops in the gross domestic product (GDP) of developing countries there is strong motivation for UNCTAD 15 to be a 'game changer.' The conference is the highest decision-making body of UNCTAD at which member states assess current trade and development issues and formulate global policy responses. It also sets the organization's work priorities for the next four years.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people%27s-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>

## II. Civil Society Participation

Civil Society participation is an important element of UNCTAD's processes. Since its establishment by the UN General Assembly in 1964, UNCTAD has recognized the important role of civil society in its work. The organization has established formal and informal engagement mechanisms to facilitate civil society involvement. The parallel civil society forum, from 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021, is the main platform for civil society representatives to make their voices heard.

Given the current socio-economic context, the social justice perspective of civil society will provide rigour to the analysis of the existing factors that constrain economic transformation and imperil transformative development. While COVID-19 has drastically challenged civil society organizing, the sector is demonstrating that it stands ready to capitalize on the opportunity that UNCTAD 15 presents.

Civil society contributions help to deepen the development and trade discourse offering counter narratives that have been important for some developing countries in particular as they examine policy options. Previous UNCTAD conferences have seen wide and diverse participation from civil society which has provided for multi-dimensional perspectives and focused critique.

Civil society's engagement in trade policy, cannot be divorced from the existence of structured mechanisms which provide support for capacity building and dialogue. For the participation of civil society to be meaningful, there must be a strategic investment in strategies that engage the sector throughout the process. Engagement of and by the sector in trade policy has been challenging. Some of the identified challenges include<sup>2</sup>:

- Lack of transparency in the criteria for participation;
- Preponderance of participation of commercial interest in mainstream negotiations;
- Relegation of traditional civil actors to issue specific non-primary areas;
- Lack of a legal framework guaranteeing the continual right to participation; and
- Lack of capacity and mechanisms to facilitate capacity building for CSOs.

The civil society forum has historically spotlighted the need for structural transformation and the importance of a reformed and strengthened UNCTAD. Given that this will be the first forum that will be held in a SIDS, the imperative to ensure participation from the South is critical. In this regard the International Civil Society Facilitating Group (ICSFG) will be convened to govern and facilitate optimum participation of civil society in the parallel forum and inter-governmental deliberations of UNCTAD 15. UNCTAD 15 will take the form of Ministerial meetings and negotiating sessions, as well as a number of pre-conference meetings, forums and side events.

## III. Civil Society Forum and The International Civil Society Facilitating Group (ICSFG)

In order to ensure effective civil society participation in UNCTAD 15, the ICSFG will be established by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021. The ICSFG will work mainly on the substantive dimensions of civil society engagement in the process leading up to UNCTAD XV and the parallel civil society forum.

The ICSFG will work in close coordination with the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), in its capacity as designated Civil Society Lead Organizer and Host in Barbados, to achieve the goal of convening a successful UNCTAD 15 Civil Society Forum and also seek to achieve our sector's desire for a genuinely

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Ewart (2009), The role of civil society in shaping trade policy

participatory engagement process in the wider UNCTAD 15 policy negotiations. Following are the main ICSFG tasks:

- To promote and catalyze interest by civil society organizations and networks to engage with the UNCTAD XV process and facilitate active engagement and effective participation;
- To stimulate, coordinate and consolidate civil society inputs at different stages of the official negotiations process, starting with inputs based on analyses of the “zero draft” outcome document and successive negotiating drafts;
- To promote and facilitate civil society participation and contribution to the civil society hearings planned during the negotiating process and other relevant events;
- To coordinate the drafting process for the civil society declaration, which should be adopted during the civil society forum and presented at the official opening of UNCTAD 15;
- To structure the programme of the civil society forum based on key civil society priority issues, identified through an inclusive discussion among interested organizations. This would include the organization of the plenary sessions, including facilitating invitations of key personalities from Government, International Organizations or other actors as deemed appropriate, as well as the coordination of the preparations of workshops, parallel panel discussions and side events throughout the forum;
- To facilitate the active contribution of civil society to UNCTAD 15, including by facilitating the identification of key civil society speakers for official roundtables, press conferences, and other relevant sessions and events;
- To promote the outreach and dissemination of key civil society proposals and collective positions, including the civil society declaration, to governmental representatives, all key stakeholders, and traditional and social media; and
- To agree on future actions to accelerate progress and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

## **A. Proposed Programme Priority Areas for Consideration**

The following thematic areas emerged from a 2020 consultation that CPDC co-convened with civil society from Africa, Asia, Pacific and the Caribbean regions.

### **1. A Refocused UNCTAD**

Recognition of UNCTAD’s unique role in critically analysing interconnecting factors including debt, trade policies, and macroeconomic and financial policies that stymie sustainable development. The current context requires a refocused, robust yet streamlined organization that is strengthened to continue to set the agenda and offer alternative policy advice, particularly on questions of debt, macro-economic structural transformation, investment policy and climate change adaptation. UNCTAD needs to be the forerunner in the quest for economic development and the rectification of global imbalances which continue to be moving targets for developing countries.

### **2. Monitoring and Accountability**

Call for a strengthened UNCTAD role in contributing to enhanced monitoring and accountability mechanisms for post UNCTAD XV actions. A desired civil society forum outcome is consensus on a road map for UNCTAD’s work activities as well as a strengthened internal civil society institutional framework for facilitating ongoing civil society dialogue and sharing of information.

### **3. Climate Adaption and Sustainability**

A call for further analysis of adaption strategies, building resilience and financing strategies to support SIDS efforts in responding/adapting to increased incidence of natural disasters and risks to coastal transport infrastructure, and efforts towards green growth and the sustainable blue economy.

4. The Context of COVID-19  
A critical examination of how developing countries and SIDS are navigating the current COVID-19 crisis and the response of the international community. The forum will consider whether a call for greater strategic action is needed to assist these countries to make the necessary adjustments.
5. Debt  
High and unsustainable debt levels in developing countries and SIDS calls for a focus on the following issues: inequality, trade and tax justice, and the development dimension in regional trade agreements
6. Technology Transfer  
Technology transfer continues to be an issue of high priority in negotiations between developed and developing countries specifically as it relates to trade liberalization and climate change. Recognition of the technological gap between developed and developing countries. Policy outcomes need to target increasing access to technology, including improving the abilities the users of technology to identify, acquire, adapt and use knowledge and technology towards developmental objectives.
7. International Trade Agreements  
The recognition of the relationship between trade and economic development has been widely acknowledged. Developing countries continue to urge for the inclusion of mechanism within trade agreements to assist in their integration and participation in world trade. The civil society forum intends to address issues geared towards the needs of SIDS, LDCs, and LLDCs being met in trade agreements to ensure their development and effective integration.

## **B. Composition and Duration of the ICSFG**

The ICSFG will be composed of civil society organizations and networks from around the world representing different regional and/or issue-based constituencies. The articulation of the ICSFG will feature a predominantly Southern leadership and ensure gender and regional balance. Members of the ICSFG are expected to meet the following qualifications/criteria:

- Be an umbrella network or well networked civil society group;
- Have a sound track record of work and history of engagement with one or more of UNCTAD's mandate areas;
- Have organizational programme area(s) that align with UNCTAD mandate areas
- Have regional and/or global scope (on economic justice matters) with the capacity to facilitate civil society engagement in UNCTAD or other inter-governmental policy processes
- Be willing to commit at least one day per week to support the preparatory process.
- Be strongly connected to national/regional/international civil society networks

## **C. Accountability**

The ICSFG is responsible for:

- Facilitating robust and substantive dialogue amongst civil society that advances concrete recommendations on the thematic areas that are prioritized by the ICSFG.

- Facilitating an inclusive space which is representative of the diversity of civil society which contributes to a comprehensive agenda for action.
- Advancing a clear set of actionable proposals which builds upon previous civil society declarations and is reflective of the current and future context of trade and development concerns.
- Agreeing on future actions to accelerate progress and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
- Identifying specific challenges and concerns of the Global South and Small Island Developing States that impact the achievement of sustainable development.

As the Secretariat, CPDC is responsible for:

- Facilitating the co-ordination and implementation of the civil society forum;
- Chairing the ICSFG Group and overseeing the ICSFG process;
- Ensuring transparency in all processes pertaining to the ICSFG and action following on from ICSFG recommendations;
- Providing visibility for the ICSFG utilizing its website and social media platforms and seeking the support of the ICSFG members to do the same; and
- Convening pre- and post-civil society forum Meetings

#### D. Selection Process

An Expression of Interest by eligible parties is required to confirm willingness to become a member of the ICSFG. The expression of interest requires the following information to enable a scoring methodology.

Criteria	Maximum Score
History of the organisation's policy advocacy work on UNCTAD related issues.	15
Organizational programme area(s) that align with UNCTAD's mandate	15
Global and/or regional scope (on economic justice matters) with the capacity to facilitate civil society engagement in UNCTAD and/or other inter-governmental policy processes	15
Networked with national and/or regional civil society	15
Access to reliable technology to allow for virtual engagement	15
Readiness to commit time to facilitate preparations for Meetings	15
Capacity to meet all of the ICSFG membership requirements outlined	10
Total (applicants must score a minimum of 70 points)	100

CPDC will establish a selection committee consisting of two members from CPDC and its Caribbean network and 4 individuals from the regional and international development sector. Those selected among the applicants will be notified before 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2021.

#### E. Guidelines for Application

Civil society organisations will be required to complete the following Expression of Interest Form [Link to survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLHXCPD](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLHXCPD). All applications must be submitted by 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021 by 5:00 pm (UTC/GMT-4) to email address [cpdcsubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:cpdcsubmissions@gmail.com) and [cpdc@caribsurf.com](mailto:cpdc@caribsurf.com).