

Transnational Corporations and Management Division
Department of Economic and Social Development

World Investment Report 1992

Transnational Corporations as Engines of Growth



United Nations New York, 1992

NOTE

The Transnational Corporations and Management Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development serves as the focal point within the United Nations Secretariat for all matters related to transnational corporations and acts as secretariat to the Commission on Transnational Corporations, an intergovernmental subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The objectives of its work programme include to further the understanding of the nature of transnational corporations and of their economic, legal, political and social effects on home and host countries and in international relations, particularly between developed and developing countries; to secure effective international arrangements aimed at enhancing the contribution of transnational corporations to national development goals and world economic growth; and to strengthen the negotiating capacity of host countries, in particular developing countries, in their dealings with transnational corporations.

The *World Investment Report* is published annually by the Transnational Corporations and Management Division to contribute to a better understanding of transnational corporations, their activities and their impact.

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PREFACE

A major challenge facing the world economy today is the revival of economic growth, especially among developing countries, most of which have suffered serious setbacks during the 1980s. Transnational corporations and foreign direct investment can play an important role in meeting this challenge. Since the early 1980s, world investment flows have been expanding rapidly, much faster than other key economic variables such as world trade and world output. A number of major new developments in the global economic situation—the enhanced role of the private sector and a greater reliance on market forces, major technological breakthroughs, the globalization of firms and industries, the ascendancy of the services sector and trends towards a regionalization of markets—has placed foreign direct investment in a central position to influence the pace and the nature of economic growth in most countries. Finally, developing countries themselves have implemented notable and, in many cases, dramatic policy changes, in order to open their economies to greater contributions by transnational corporations.

The question of how, to what extent and under what circumstances transnational corporations can contribute to economic growth of developing countries forms the core of the analysis in the *World Investment Report 1992*, the second in this annual series. Growth itself is a complex process, involving familiar elements, such as capital accumulation, the creation and dissemination of new technology, the development of human resources, access to markets and, of course, the environmental sustainability of growth. How these elements are combined varies substantially across regions and countries, with different results in terms of growth. The contribution of transnational corporations can also vary substantially, due, among other factors, to the structural conditions and policy environments in host economies.

The evidence provides ample cause for optimism, as transnational corporations have made important and positive contributions to some of the most successful recent cases of economic revival in developing countries. At the same time, transmitting such success to a greater number of countries is a formidable task. The lessons learned from the analysis in this Report about the contributions being made by transnational corporations to growth in developing countries can hopefully assist in policy formulation and the design of technical assistance in an increasing number of countries, and thereby help make the 1990s a decade of renewed economic development.



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Director

New York, June 1992

Transnational Corporations and Management Division

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