



UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Junior Professional Officer Program (JPO) Chiffre Nr. 2026-2-37

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. General Information

Title: JPO in Economic Affairs, Critical Minerals and Green Hydrogen

Sector of Assignment: Economic Development

Organization/Office: United Nations / United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) / Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC) / Commodities Branch / Extractives Commodities Section

Country and Duty Station: Geneva, Switzerland

Duration of assignment: 2 years with possibility of extension for another year. The extension of appointment is subject to yearly review concerning priorities, availability of funds, and satisfactory performance

Please note that for participants of the JPO-Programme two years work experience are mandatory! Relevant work experience can be counted. In order to assess the eligibility of the candidates, we review the relevant experience acquired after obtaining the first university degree (usually bachelor's degree).

II. Supervision

Title of Supervisor:

Chief, Extractives Commodities Section

Content and methodology of supervision:

Establishment of a Work Plan: During the first month of the assignment, the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) will work jointly with his/her direct supervisor to finalize an agreed upon work plan. The final work plan will be discussed and mutually agreed to by the JPO and his/her supervisor. During the assignment, the supervisor will hold weekly meetings with the JPO to follow up, monitor and further plan the work, as needed.

Evaluation: The United Nations Performance Evaluation System (e-performance) will serve as a primary platform to evaluate of the JPO's performance.

III. Duties, Responsibilities and Output Expectations

Under the direct supervision of the Chief of the Extractives Commodities Section and in close coordination with relevant thematic teams, the JPO will contribute to analytical work, technical cooperation, and intergovernmental processes related to critical energy transition minerals (CETMs) and green hydrogen, to support developing countries in leveraging these sectors for value addition, economic diversification and inclusive and sustainable development. Specifically, the Junior Professional Officer will be responsible for the following duties:

Economic and/or Sector Analysis

- Contributes to original research and analysis on critical minerals and green hydrogen policy issues, including as inputs to flagship reports and policy briefs.
- Collects, evaluates, interprets, and analyses quantitative data and qualitative information from multiple sources, including national statistics, industry reports, and academic literature, related to CETMs and hydrogen sectors, countries, and regions.
- Prepares briefing notes, talking points, inputs for speeches, draft press releases, and content for social media, making technical information on CETMs and green hydrogen accessible to non-specialist audiences.
- Prepares first drafts of analytical studies and background papers related to the production, trade, governance, value chains, and diversification opportunities in CETMs and green hydrogen.
- Assists in the organization and servicing of expert group meetings, technical workshops, and stakeholder consultations, including coordination with consultants, experts, and partner institutions.

Intergovernmental Support

- Prepares inputs for reports and documentation submitted to intergovernmental bodies such as the Trade and Development Board, the Commission on Trade and Development, and the UN General Assembly.
- Monitors and drafts summaries of intergovernmental discussions related to critical minerals and green hydrogen.
- Prepares inputs for statements by Bureau members and UNCTAD Secretariat officials during official meetings and high-level panels.
- Assists in organizing roundtables, side events, and dialogues on development dimensions of CETMs and green hydrogen within multilateral processes.

Technical Cooperation

- Compiles and analyses data and background information in support of the preparation of technical cooperation projects in the field of CETMs and green hydrogen.
- Contributes to the drafting of concept notes, funding proposals, and project documents related to value addition, economic diversification, sustainability, and governance of CETMs and green hydrogen.
- Supports the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of technical cooperation activities, including mission planning and coordination with field-level stakeholders.
- Engages with national counterparts and partners in the implementation of pilot activities, capacity-building, and advisory missions.

General

- Performs other related duties as required, including a variety of administrative and coordination tasks for delivery of the Section's activities.
- Participates in internal and external training opportunities to strengthen substantive expertise and career development.

IV. Qualifications and Experience

Education:

Master's degree in Economics or related field.

Work experience:

A minimum of 2 years of relevant work experience in economic research and analysis, policy formulation, application of economic principles in development programmes or related area. Experience conducting quantitative research as it pertains to trade and issues related to commodity dependency is desirable. Experience in working on topics related to the economics of minerals and metals value chains is an advantage.

Languages:

English and French are the working languages of the UN Secretariat. For this position, fluency in English is required. Knowledge of another UN official language is an advantage.

Other skills:

Experience working with econometric software, including STATA, is desirable.

UN competencies:

PROFESSIONALISM: Shows pride in work and in achievements; Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter; Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results; Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns; Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges; Remains calm in stressful situations.

COMMUNICATION: Speaks and writes clearly and effectively; Listens to others, correctly interprets messages from others and responds appropriately; Asks questions to clarify, and exhibits interest in having two-way communication; Tailors language, tone, style and format to match the audience; Demonstrates openness in sharing information and keeping people informed.

TEAMWORK: Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; is willing to learn from others; Places team agenda before personal agenda; Supports and acts in accordance with final group decision, even when such decisions may not entirely reflect own position; Shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings.

PLANNING & ORGANIZING: Develops clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies; Identifies priority activities and assignments; adjusts priorities as required; Allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work; Foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning; Monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary; Uses time efficiently.

Workforce Diversity

The United Nations believes that an inclusive culture attracts the best talent and encourages all qualified applicants, regardless of gender, disability, sexual orientation, cultural or religious backgrounds, to apply.

V. Learning Elements

On completion of the assignment, the JPO will have gained hands-on experience in:

- Applying economic and policy research methods to emerging global development challenges.
- Supporting intergovernmental processes and engaging in policy dialogue at national and international levels.
- Designing and implementing technical cooperation activities in developing country contexts.
- Working within a diverse, multidisciplinary UN team environment.

VI. Background Information

The Junior Professional Officer (JPO) will be based in Extractives Commodities Section, Commodities Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

UNCTAD is the UN system's focal point for the integrated treatment of trade, investment, finance, and technology. As part of its mandate, the organization assists developing countries in integrating into the world economy in a manner that supports inclusive, sustainable development. Within this framework, the Extractives Commodities Section focuses on the sustainable development of commodity-dependent developing countries through value addition, diversification, sustainability, and fair participation in global markets.

The Branch is currently composed of 13 staff members, including economists, policy analysts, and programme officers from various international and national backgrounds. The team combines technical expertise with field-level experience, delivering both high-quality research and targeted technical cooperation. The wider DITC comprises over 60 staff and includes other thematic branches working on trade negotiations, non-tariff measures, and trade and environment, among others.

The JPO will contribute to a growing programme of work of the Extractives Commodities Section on Critical Energy Transition Minerals (CETMs) and Green Hydrogen. The work on CETMs becomes a strategic priority for UNCTAD as part of its support to developing and least developed countries in the context of the global energy and technological transitions.

The programme originated in response to the rising global demand for minerals essential to clean energy technologies, such as lithium, cobalt, rare earths, nickel, and copper, and to the recognition that developing countries are often rich in these resources but remain locked in extractive-export models. Green hydrogen has emerged as a complementary area of interest, particularly for countries with abundant renewable energy potential. Together, CETMs and green hydrogen offer a historic opportunity for developing countries to shift from being mere exporters of raw materials to active participants in cleaner, higher-value, and more technologically complex industries.

UNCTAD's work in this area has grown rapidly. In 2023–2025, the Branch launched a flagship project on Rapid Assessment of Value Addition and Diversification Capacity in

Southern Africa,¹ focusing on countries such as Namibia,² Zambia,³ and Madagascar. This project responds directly to Recommendation 1 of the United Nations Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, which calls for national strategies that move beyond extraction and support structural transformation. The JPO will be integrated into this workstream and will contribute to analytical studies, intergovernmental dialogues, and technical cooperation activities developed under this initiative and its planned extensions.

Building on the momentum of these country-level assessments, UNCTAD is preparing a broader platform of support to assist other resource-rich developing countries in designing national strategies for CETMs and green hydrogen. Planned developments include new partnerships with UN Resident Coordinator offices, regional development banks, and specialized technical agencies. A strong emphasis will be placed on capacity-building, policy coherence, and multilateral cooperation to ensure that these transitions contribute to equitable development outcomes and do not replicate past patterns of resource extraction and dependency.

UNCTAD also plays a leading role at the global level as co-chair of the United Nations Task Force on CETMs. The Task Force was established to support a coordinated, development-oriented UN system response to the rapidly growing demand for energy transition minerals, with a strong focus on equity, sustainability, and value creation in producing countries. UNCTAD provides analytical leadership and policy coherence to the Task Force, ensuring that trade, investment, industrial policy and technology dimensions are fully integrated into global discussions on CETMs.

Within the Task Force, UNCTAD co-leads two key technical clusters: the cluster on value addition, economic diversification and benefit-sharing, and the cluster on the global framework for accountability, transparency and traceability in CETM value chains. These workstreams aim to ensure that the energy transition supports structural transformation and inclusive development, rather than reinforcing extractive dependency. The JPO will also contribute to UNCTAD's work under the Task Force, supporting analytical outputs, inter-agency coordination and engagement with member States, and ensuring strong linkages between global policy debates and UNCTAD's country-level analytical and technical cooperation activities.

The overarching goal is to support countries to leverage their natural assets to build the economies of the future, adding value, diversifying the economy and building production capacities not only within the mineral and hydrogen value chains, but also beyond them, through linkages to other sectors such as energy equipment, batteries, chemicals, and advanced manufacturing. This vision requires building new partnerships, supporting institutional capacity, and translating knowledge into actionable national policies. The JPO will be an integral part of this work.

**Bitte senden Sie Ihre JPO-Bewerbung direkt an das Büro
Führungskräfte zu Internationalen Organisationen (BFIO) unter
Angabe der Chiffre Nr. 2026-2-37 auf dem Bewerbungsbogen**

¹ <https://unctad.org/project/critical-energy-transition-minerals-in-southern-africa>

² https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsditeinf2026d2_en.pdf

³ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tcsditeinf2026d3_en.pdf