

Trade over Aid Initiative by architect Dan Negrea. By Elissa Miolene, *Devex Newswire*, 18 May 2026

Trade offs

Let's turn back to the United States, where the development news never stops. Last month, Washington [launched a Trade Over Aid initiative](#) at the [United Nations](#), inviting member states to sign on to a declaration of principles and join a new Trade Over Aid caucus, as my colleague Colum Lynch scooped at the time.

Now, the architect of that initiative — **Dan Negrea**, the U.S. representative to the U.N. Economic and Social Council — announced that **36 countries have signed on so far**. Devex Senior Reporter Adva Saldinger was there when he described what that meant: Nations have agreed that they own their own development policies; that free markets deliver the best economic results; that trade is the best development assistance program; that free-market reforms attract foreign trade; and that the U.N. has a role to play in helping countries implement such reforms.

“It is not a replacement of aid,” said Negrea, speaking at an event hosted by the D.C.-based Atlantic Council last Thursday. “We are not talking about trade instead of aid, but talking about trade over aid. **Trade is preferable to aid as a more dignified approach** to developing countries where they are partners in development, rather than recipients of charity.”

When asked about the end of traditional development assistance, Negrea said the U.S. continues to be a generous humanitarian aid donor and that it continues to do development assistance, but needs to do a better job of getting the message across.

It's unclear exactly what will come of this initiative, or whether it will be more than countries signing on to a set of principles that extol free markets. But either way, we'll be keeping an eye on it.

ICYMI: [US to UN, global aid has failed to improve lives of poor](#)