



DEVELOPMENT POLICY SEMINAR
FRONTIER ISSUES

Understanding Bitcoin, Blockchains and the Crypto economy

Thursday, 1 February 2018
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
UN Conference Building, Room C

Presented by:

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Chaired by:

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Since its launch in 2009 by the mysterious Satoshi Nakamoto, Bitcoin has emerged as the most successful cryptocurrency ever. What was conceived as a peer-to-peer cash system for electronic transactions that does not rely on a trusted third party, has become a global phenomenon, sparking the imagination of technology leaders, entrepreneurs and financial investors alike. As the popularity of bitcoin exploded in recent years, its price soared from \$1 in early 2011 to almost \$20,000 in late 2017, but precipitated dramatically in early 2018. Other cryptocurrencies have seen massive increases in value, too, albeit with a much smaller market capitalization. In view of the astronomical price gains and the associated vicissitude, some critics have called Bitcoin “the biggest speculative bubble in history”.

As cryptocurrencies’ financial roller-coaster continues, investors, businesses, regulators and academics are scratching their heads as to how these new technologies might transform the way people around the world conduct financial and non-financial transactions. Do cryptocurrencies fulfill the main functions of money, i.e., serve as medium of exchange, store of value and unit of account? Could cryptocurrencies eventually complement or even partly replace the existing fiat money regimes? Are they, instead, a new type of asset? Could cryptocurrencies alter the way monetary policy is conducted? Will the blockchain technology that underlies cryptocurrencies fundamentally transform the interactions across industries?