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Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

Fifty-eighth session

Geneva, 14–15 and 29 March 2011

Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget on its fifty-eighth session

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 14–15 and 29 March 2011

Proceedings

1. The fifty-eighth session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget took place in Geneva on 14–15 March 2011, with the closing plenary held on 29 March 2011, to review the implementation of UNCTAD's communications strategy and publications policy.

I. Chair's summary

2. In his opening statement, UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Petko Draganov told the Working Party that the secretariat had been working hard to implement the communications strategy and publications policy that had been adopted by the Trade and Development Board in 2009. The actions taken had reinforced UNCTAD's visibility, through a targeted approach to communicating with different audiences – governments, the media, civil society and academia. The overhaul of the organization's website, to be completed over the coming months, should provide more effective access to UNCTAD's work. The third systematic readership survey carried out by UNCTAD had shown that readers valued the organization's publications highly. The translation of UNCTAD's main publications remained a major problem, due to the limited resources of the United Nations translation services; translations of several flagship reports into official United Nations languages had consequently been delayed considerably in 2010.

3. The secretariat introduced the "Report on the implementation of UNCTAD's communications strategy and publications policy" (TD/B/WP/229), stating that the more

efficient and targeted approach to communications had led in 2010 to a 17 per cent increase in the number of press articles written about UNCTAD, as harvested by the Organization's search engines. Given the limitations of the search engines, this probably represented only one third of the number of articles actually published. In addition, an extensive reworking of UNCTAD's website was under way, which should greatly enhance its utility. New products had been introduced, such as the *Issues in Brief* series, and the publication of flagship reports had been spread out more effectively across the year. Efforts now in train would result, over the next several weeks, in a redefinition of the graphic identity of the institution.

4. Representatives of Lesotho (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Thailand (on behalf of the Asian Group), Ghana (on behalf of the African Group), El Salvador (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries), Hungary (on behalf of the European Union and associated countries), China, Angola, Ethiopia, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Japan and Palestine spoke during the ensuing debate.

5. With regard to the publications policy, delegations underlined the importance of UNCTAD publications as a source of leading analysis and policy recommendations, and stressed the importance of continuing to enhance the relevance, quality and timeliness of UNCTAD publications. Speakers stated that despite the limited availability of resources, it was important for member States to have easy access, online and on paper, to UNCTAD's reports and other publications; that the translations of flagship reports still, unfortunately, appeared late in languages other than English; and that the delays in translating reports and other UNCTAD documents should be rectified, most particularly in the case of the current year as preparations must be made for the UNCTAD XIII conference. The UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General, in his opening remarks and in response to the concerns raised by delegations, proposed that one solution would be for the UNCTAD Secretary-General to send a letter to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) Director-General, expressing UNCTAD's concern and requesting that the problem be solved. The improved spacing of flagship reports across the calendar year 2010 was noted with approval, as that had helped to ensure that sufficient attention could be given to each report. Representatives stated that recently the choice of topics for UNCTAD's flagship reports had reflected the concerns and needs of developing countries in the wake of the global financial crisis, and that UNCTAD should continue along that path. The use of more case studies and comparative analyses was suggested for UNCTAD publications.

6. Regarding the communications strategy, it was stated that particular attention should be devoted to enhancing outreach to government policymakers and to improving outreach at the country level, in collaboration with the UNDP and UN country teams and with regional bodies. Several delegations observed that the sooner the restructured UNCTAD website was up and running, the better, and that the organization of the new site should enable visitors to more easily find what they were looking for. The web search engine needed to be improved. Reports from meetings – including expert meetings – and material used by panellists in presentations needed to be made available on the website to delegations more quickly after the conclusion of the meetings. Speakers also said that the importance of printed copies of major reports and publications should not be forgotten, as in many developing countries, Internet access was limited. The introduction of new products, such as policy briefs and media alerts, was noted with approval. The Communications Editorial Board had resulted in more effective planning of press campaigns for flagship reports and other publicity campaigns. The broader series of press conferences held to introduce flagship reports in 2010 – such as a press conference held in Angola to introduce the *Least Developed Countries Report 2010* – was cited as an effective step.

7. The communications strategy and the publications policy were both important to UNCTAD's membership, as both had a direct impact on UNCTAD's efficiency and effectiveness in getting its message through to interested and concerned stakeholders.

Therefore, member States participated in the process of negotiating the draft agreed conclusions with great commitment. By the end of the second day of the session, 11 paragraphs had been formulated with wording that would have been agreeable to all member States, as these paragraphs dealt purely with the substantive content of the meeting. At this stage, by virtue of the great flexibility shown by all parties, the addition of paragraph 12 (initially introduced by the Group of 77 and China) was not called into question. In order to finalize this paragraph with language acceptable to all member States, the interested parties – showing their willingness to cooperate – engaged in private informal consultations. Despite this great engagement by all parties, it was not possible to reach agreement. Therefore, no agreed conclusions came out of this otherwise very constructive meeting.

8. Even though it was not possible to reach consensus on all the paragraphs of the draft agreed conclusions, it should be stressed that there was broad agreement on some key elements. There was general appreciation for the progress that had been made in the implementation of the communications strategy and the publications policy. There was consensus on the importance of translation for outreach, and on the need for timely translation of UNCTAD publications as a matter of priority. Member States expressed serious concern at the limited translation capacity being made available to UNCTAD, and requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to pursue his efforts with a view to ensuring an effective multilingual approach to UNCTAD's communications strategy.

9. Delegates took note of the progress that had been made in developing the new UNCTAD website. They expressed the need for the secretariat to complete the process as soon as possible, seeking the views of member States in the testing phase of the new website and ensuring that the new website would be more user-friendly, and multilingual, and that information would be searchable and easily accessible.

10. In the absence of agreed conclusions from the current meeting, the Chair invited member States to reflect on whether the concept of “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” – which currently applied to UNCTAD meetings at all levels – was the most suitable and efficient approach for reaching consensus at meetings dealing with fine-tuning the daily business of the Organization.

11. Several delegates expressed their disappointment that agreement had not been reached on the last paragraph of the draft agreed conclusions, with one delegate stating that the proposed paragraph had contained no language that had not already been adopted in other UNCTAD texts. One delegate emphasized that the results of the current session should not prejudice the future work and future agreed conclusions of the Working Party. In response to questions, the secretariat clarified that, in the absence of agreed conclusions from the current meeting, the secretariat would continue implementing the agreed conclusions from the previous year's meeting where those conclusions remained applicable.

A. Informal meetings

12. After the formal statements presented at the opening plenary by regional coordinators and individual delegations, the Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

B. Action by the Working Party

(Agenda item 3)

13. The Working Party took note of the “Report on the implementation of UNCTAD's communications strategy and publications policy” (TD/B/WP/229) and the report on the results of the readership survey of UNCTAD's publications issued in 2010.

II. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

14. At its opening plenary meeting on 14 March 2011, the Working Party elected Ms. Karolina Frischkopf (Switzerland) as its Chair and Mr. Mohammad Kazem Asayesh Talab Tousi (Islamic Republic of Iran) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

15. At the same meeting, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda (contained in document TD/B/WP/228). The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the implementation of UNCTAD's communications strategy and publications policy
4. Provisional agenda for the fifty-ninth session of the Working Party
5. Other business
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

C. Provisional agenda for the fifty-ninth session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 4)

16. At its closing plenary meeting on Tuesday, 29 March 2011, the Working Party adopted the provisional agenda for its fifty-ninth session (see annex I).

D. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 6)

17. At the same meeting, the Working Party authorized the Rapporteur to finalize the report on its fifty-eighth session.

Annex I

Provisional agenda for the fifty-ninth session of the Working Party

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing
4. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: In-depth evaluation of UNCTAD's programme on science and technology for development
5. Provisional agenda for the sixtieth session of the Working Party
6. Other business
7. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

Annex II

Attendance¹

1. Representatives from the following States members of the Working Party attended the session:

Algeria	France
Belarus	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Benin	Nigeria
Canada	Switzerland
China	Thailand
El Salvador	

2. Representatives from the following States members of UNCTAD but not members of the Working Party attended the session:

Argentina	Madagascar
Austria	Malaysia
Bangladesh	Mauritius
Cambodia	Mexico
Côte d'Ivoire	Morocco
Cyprus	Paraguay
Dominican Republic	Philippines
Ecuador	Poland
Egypt	Portugal
Ethiopia	Spain
Ghana	Sudan
Haiti	Syrian Arab Republic
Hungary	Uganda
Iraq	Viet Nam
Italy	Zambia
Japan	Zimbabwe

3. The following observer was represented at the session:

Palestine

4. The following intergovernmental organization was represented at the session:

European Union

¹ For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP(58)/Inf.1.