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### Trade and Development Board

#### Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

#### **Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: In-depth evaluation of UNCTAD's programme on science and technology for development**

## Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

### Evaluation

1. In 2010, the Working Party considered the report on the independent evaluation of UNCTAD's technical cooperation dedicated to the least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing States (SIDS) and other structurally weak and vulnerable and small economies (SWVSEs). The objective of this evaluation was to draw conclusions, make recommendations and identify lessons learned for the future orientation of UNCTAD's work to benefit these categories of countries, and contribute towards the effective implementation of its Accra Accord mandates. The evaluation was also aimed at contributing towards discussions in the course of preparations for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV), which was held in May 2011.

2. Based on their findings, the evaluators concluded that beneficiary countries perceive the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of UNCTAD's programmes to be satisfactory, but that interdivisional coordination could be more efficient. Their recommendations thus called on UNCTAD to improve its efficiency in its delivery of technical assistance, and to enhance its focus on activities in which it had a competitive advantage. The Working Party welcomed the independent evaluators' report as a very important contribution towards strengthening the programme, and endorsed the recommendations of the external evaluators.

3. In July and September 2010, the UNCTAD secretariat reported on its implementation of the recommendations of the external evaluators and the Working Party

on the independent evaluation of UNCTAD's commodities programme.<sup>1</sup> Measures have been taken to strengthen the commodities programme, such as a restructuring of the Unit aimed at enhancing its relevance and effectiveness with its clear emphasis on research and analysis, the results of which will feed into its technical cooperation programme. Member States reaffirmed the importance of UNCTAD's work on commodities and called on the organization to strive to maintain its tradition of engagement with commodities negotiations. It was noted, however, that there was a need for improved follow-up on technical cooperation and other advisory services provided by UNCTAD to enable countries to fully benefit from them. UNCTAD was also asked to continue restructuring and streamlining its activities and projects, in order to revitalize UNCTAD's work on commodities.

4. External evaluations were also completed for two projects that were supported by the United Nations Development Account (fifth tranche): (a) "Capacity-Building for Information and Communication Technology Measurement and Policy"; and (b) "Strengthening National Capacities for Home Grown Economic Policies through a Network of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute". On the first project, the conclusion reached by the evaluator was that the project met its objectives and added to the skills of the producers of statistics in the construction of internationally comparable information and communications technology (ICT) indicators. An extension of the project was recommended to ensure sustainability of outcomes achieved, particularly given the dynamism of the field. On the second project, some of the evaluator's conclusions included (a) that the Vi improved the *access* of member universities to the latest policy-oriented knowledge; (b) that it enhanced *networking* between universities in North and South and between these bodies and the Geneva-based institutions in a way that builds capacity; and (c) that knowledge been shared between the members in a way that has led to improvements in the quality and quantity of *postgraduate teaching materials and relevant research*. The evaluator recommended that, if the achievements of the Vi were to be maintained, it must be reinforced through securing continuing *external* funding to the most critical activities and further strengthening the *internal* support to the programme.

5. Two programme evaluations are underway that will be considered by the Working Party and by the Trade and Development Board, respectively, in 2011: (a) an in-depth evaluation of UNCTAD's programme on science and technology for development; and (b) an independent evaluation of UNCTAD's programme of assistance to the Palestinian people. Three project evaluations are also being undertaken, two that are supported by the Development Account, and one that was requested by the donor. These reports will be available on UNCTAD's website when they become available.

6. UNCTAD has been able to contribute actively towards efforts to strengthen the evaluation function within the United Nations system, in particular through its participation in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). During 2010, UNCTAD continued to contribute to the Human Rights and Gender Equality Task Force within UNEG, which is developing guidance materials on "How to Integrate Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations". UNCTAD is also participating in the development of guidance materials on impact evaluations, as well as for United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations.

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<sup>1</sup> The full report is contained in the document TD/B/EX(50)/4.