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and the Programme Budget
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Geneva, 16–20 September 2002

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN
AND THE PROGRAMME BUDGET ON ITS THIRTY-NINTH SESSION**

Geneva, 16–20 September 2002

Rapporteur: Mr. V. Malevich (Belarus)

Speakers:

Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD	United Kingdom
Egypt for the Group of 77 and China	Benin for the LDCs
Indonesia for the Asian Group and China	Switzerland
South Africa for the African Group	Netherlands
United States of America	Finland
Ethiopia	France
Bangladesh	Germany

Note for delegations

This draft report is a provisional text circulated for clearance by delegations. Requests for amendments to statements of individuals should be communicated by **Wednesday, 25 September 2002** to: The UNCTAD Editorial Section, Room E,8106, Fax No. 907 0056, Tel. No. 907 5656/1066

Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

1. The **Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD** expressed appreciation for the generous support of donors to UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities. UNCTAD technical cooperation continued to focus on capacity building and integration of operational activities with research and analytical work, and in that respect value added and resource allocations had to be weighed carefully. Contributions to trust funds had continued to be the major source of financing for technical cooperation in 2001, amounting to US\$ 18 million. Developed countries had accounted for some 60 per cent of total contributions to trust funds. Contributions by developing countries had represented 29 per cent of trust fund contributions, a reflection of the importance attached to UNCTAD's technical cooperation by beneficiaries. Expenditures had declined slightly, largely on the account of the contraction of UNDP supported projects.
2. The recommendations that had emerged from the internal review of procedures and arrangements governing UNCTAD technical cooperation, initiated by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, included two sets of issues. Those pertaining to internal procedures and arrangements were the subject of in-house action, while other issues such as the question of the update of the technical cooperation strategy, the functions of the Working Party and fund raising needed to be discussed with member States.
3. Reporting on the recent developments regarding the implementation of the Integrated Framework, he stressed UNCTAD's readiness to seek greater involvement in that process, including in the preparation of the Trade Integration Diagnostic Studies. He also provided an update on recent developments with regard to JITAP and arrangements concerning the establishment of an UNCTAD-ITC-WTO Inter-Agency Task Force to develop detailed suggestions on a successor arrangement for consideration by the forthcoming meeting of the JITAP Common Trust Fund Steering Committee, scheduled for October 2002. A clear link would be made between JITAP II, NEPAD and the newly created African Union.
4. With regard to the most recent meeting of the DMFAS Advisory Group, a DMFAS Trust Fund had been established and was now ready to attract contributions.
5. The question of the absorption capacity of UNCTAD for the delivery of technical cooperation services, and thus the need for prioritization, had to be addressed in the light of the availability of resources and trade-offs and complementarities between operational activities and other activities of the secretariat. In a prioritization exercise, it would be important to ensure that operational programmes fell strictly within the mandate, expertise and comparative advantage of UNCTAD. Programmes should be supportive of the analytical work of the secretariat and of intergovernmental deliberations. Effective counterparts should exist at the national and regional level, and strong political commitment should be present at the donor and beneficiary levels.

6. UNCTAD hoped to play its role in the combined international efforts to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and future technical cooperation activities in UNCTAD would be guided by contributions in support of the achievement of the those goals.

7. The evaluation of technical cooperation programmes had become a very effective tool for Member States to provide substantive guidance for the programmes. He stressed two particular features of evaluation in UNCTAD: its independence and its participatory approach. This year's evaluation was different in that it was thematic and not linked to a particular programme.

8. Finally, on the issue of financing the participation of experts in UNCTAD expert meetings, he confirmed that arrangements for such financing in 2002 were proceeding in full accordance with the decisions of the Mid-term Review.

9. The representative of **Egypt**, speaking on behalf of the **Group of 77 and China**, noted the increasing demand for UNCTAD technical cooperation services, and in particular the impressive increase in developing countries' contributions to UNCTAD trust funds, which was a reflection of developing countries' appreciation of UNCTAD's work. She expressed appreciation to donor countries for their contributions and invited them to further enhance their support in order to meet the increasing demand for UNCTAD's services.

10. While endorsing joint programmes involving UNCTAD and other international development agencies, she said that UNCTAD should not be prevented from designing its own programmes, and in that context she invited donors to provide the necessary support to the UNCTAD post-Doha Programme on Capacity-building and Technical Cooperation. She also stressed the importance her Group attached to other activities conducted by UNCTAD, not directly related to WTO.

11. Concerning the absorption capacity of the secretariat, this should not be seen as something rigid. Early warning should be provided by the secretariat when heavy demand existed compared to available supply capacities in order to find adequate solutions. She requested more information on the internal review, and noted that the outcome of the Mid-term Review provided valuable guidelines for technical cooperation activities.

12. With regard to the evaluation of the TRAINMAR programme, she called upon the secretariat to request feedback from training centres about the usefulness of the new measures compared to previous arrangements and to report to the Working Party. She commended the work of the secretariat in implementation of the Trade Point Strategy and encouraged UNCTAD to continue to provide technical cooperation to countries wishing to establish Trade Points and support to the World Trade Point Federation.

13. Finally, she regretted that the question of financing the participation of experts in UNCTAD expert meetings was still unsolved. She expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that her Group had not been involved in the informal consultations on this issue decided upon by the Working Party at its second resumed thirty-eighth session in May 2002. She called for

strict adherence to the outcome of the Board's nineteenth special session concerning this matter and she proposed a work programme in three phases to be conducted under the leadership of the Chairperson.

14. The representative of **Indonesia**, speaking on behalf of the **Asian Group** and **China**, said that, to be effective, the operational activities of UNCTAD should be organized in the overall context of trade- and investment-related technical cooperation, in which partnerships among all stakeholders and cooperation and coordination among all providers were essential for successful implementation of capacity building programmes. Interagency cooperation should take fully into account the comparative advantage, expertise and mandate of each institution. While fully supporting the need for streamlining and prioritization, the Group wished to retain certain technical assistance activities that might not be categorized as capacity building but would be a prerequisite for some countries before they could embark on full-scale capacity building programmes. It was gratifying to note that, in development cooperation, the emphasis was increasingly being placed on poverty reduction and concrete actions were being taken in support of the Millennium Development Goals and of trade- and investment-related capacity building programmes. He called for a more general and intensified approach in that direction.

15. He was concerned with the decline in contributions by developed countries and multilateral donors, in particular by UNDP. He also voiced concern over the decline in the share of Asia and Pacific in overall expenditures, and hoped that the full implementation of new projects would reverse that trend. The Group supported and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in document TD/B/WP/151, in particular concerning the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination among institutions and with donors so as to ensure an all-encompassing approach to trade- and investment-related issues. Donor support and interagency cooperation were required, especially for the implementation of the WTO Doha work programme and UNCTAD's post-Doha technical assistance plan, whose timely implementation had regrettably been prevented by resource constraints. He agreed with the recommendation to discontinue the indicative plan, and suggested that the resources utilized for that activity could be used for other purposes.

16. The representative of **South Africa**, speaking on behalf of the **African Group**, stressed that effective technical cooperation was an essential component of efforts to meet the challenge posed by poverty and underlined that the African countries continued to be among those countries in greatest need of technical assistance. Significant changes were occurring in the global economy, and the negotiating agenda that had emanated from Doha was broad-based and ambitious, posing great challenges to developing countries. UNCTAD's role in that regard was to help developing countries to represent their interests effectively in order to meet negotiating deadlines. UNCTAD had done a great deal already, but a lot remained to be done. The current session of the Working Party provided an opportunity to deliberate on the various programmes and to seek durable solutions to their shortcomings. In charting a way forward, the challenge for UNCTAD was to ensure a good balance between delivery under the post-Doha programme and delivery under its core mandates, as contained in the Bangkok Plan of Action and the Brussels Declaration. UNCTAD's work on investment represented one

of the most outstanding efforts among the many organizations involved in the issue. He also expressed satisfaction with the DMFAS Programme and the useful deliberations of the DMFAS Advisory Group meeting.

17. It was becoming increasingly clear that national, tailor-made programmes were more useful vehicles for delivering technical cooperation. UNCTAD would therefore need to deepen its assistance to address specific needs of individual countries in the future. The question of sustainability was also critical and required innovative thinking but should not be considered a rigid constraint. He finally expressed concern at the decrease in trust fund contributions in 2001, despite the strong commitment by developing countries, which had increased their contributions by 106 per cent. Regarding financing of the participation of experts in UNCTAD expert meetings, he called for an urgent resolution of the issue.

18. The representative of the **United States of America** requested additional information on why UNDP funding had decreased so dramatically over the past decade. He looked forward to the discussion on capacity building versus technical assistance, noting that technical assistance was important for targeted assistance designed to meet short-term needs. The issue of resource allocation was particularly important and should be seen in the context of absorptive capacity and “what UNCTAD could do best”. He welcomed the Deputy-Secretary-General's comments on prioritization and finding the right balance and hoped that the Working Party would address the issue of prioritization.

19. Concerning the secretariat's internal review exercise, he requested more information on the follow-up. Concerning bilateral and multilateral aid, it was not appropriate for the Working Party to discuss donors' choices in that connection. Similarly, he could not agree with the idea of sharing resources among institutions for post-Doha assistance programmes, since many donors had legal and administrative procedures that prevented shifting contributions from one institution to another. On the proposal with regard to discontinuation of the Indicative Plan, he understood the difficulties and would be open to discussion on how to improve the current practice, but believed that member States should be informed clearly on the goals and objectives for the coming year. He expressed disappointment over the fact that the secretariat considered UNCTAD's contribution to the Integrated Framework to be “minimal”. However, decisions on allocations from the IF trust fund had to be taken within the appropriate body.

20. The representative of **Ethiopia** underlined the usefulness of UNCTAD's technical cooperation to beneficiaries. He expressed satisfaction at the continued priority given to least developed countries but expressed concern at the decline in expenditures in Africa in 2001.

21. The representative of **Bangladesh** said that the quality of UNCTAD's technical cooperation had been recognized by Governments for years, and UNCTAD had contributed immensely to the development and capacity building efforts of LDCs. The emphasis placed by donors on poverty reduction was encouraging, but he expressed concern about the clearly declining trend of UNDP funding and the decrease, though marginal, in funding from the programme budget. He urged development partners to further strengthen funding, since financial sustainability was vital for programmes to be meaningful and effective. In that

connection, he was concerned about the decline in the absolute amount of funding for projects in LDCs.

22. He regretted the fact that UNCTAD's post-Doha technical assistance plan remained largely unimplemented due to lack of resources. Under the WTO Doha work programme, LDCs faced a tight timetable and were in need of immediate assistance to participate effectively in the mandated negotiations. The UNCTAD secretariat should intensify its efforts to mobilize resources, and donors should take note of the situation. He invited the secretariat also to consider creating a separate window for LDCs to fund the post-Doha technical assistance plan.

23. Technical cooperation should be geared towards strengthening national institutions and building trade-related supply capacity. While he was grateful for the Commercial Diplomacy programme, it consisted mostly of regional projects. While regional activities might be less costly, country-specific projects would be more effective. LDCs in particular would need tailored assistance, given their difficulty in absorbing more generic region-based assistance. With regard to the Integrated Framework, he called on development partners and UNCTAD to work in tandem to ensure the success of the Pilot Scheme.

24. The representative of the **United Kingdom** recalled that, at the Mid-term Review, it had been suggested that, upon the completion of a related report by the JIU, discussions on indicators of achievement should be included in the agenda of the next session of the Working Party.

25. Concerning funding of UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities, she noted that, in the recent past, there had been a marked increase in United Kingdom contributions. With regard to the indicative plan, the current format might be too complex and give the impression of fragmentation; each programme should be presented in a more coherent manner, with an emphasis on its strategic direction. She appreciated the frankness of the secretariat in raising the issue of absorptive capacity, and agreed that the solution lay in prioritization. While interagency coordination was always valuable, cooperation was not an end in itself but a means to achieve greater impact. Several delegations had emphasized the effectiveness of national projects over regional ones, but since national projects were normally funded in the context of bilateral aid, recipient countries should take up the issue in that context to increase funding of national projects. The evaluation of capacity building had provided useful insights, and its clarification of the concept of capacity building would hopefully help improve UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities across the board.

26. The representative of **Benin**, speaking on behalf of the **least developed countries**, emphasized the need for sufficient resources for least developed countries to help them integrate into the world economy and reduce poverty. He stressed the value of programmes such as the Integrated Framework and JITAP as important tools to strengthen capacity building in LDCs. He emphasized the importance of coordination and regular evaluation.

27. The representative of **Switzerland** said that interagency coordination was important, especially in the context of post-Doha technical assistance programmes, for which

Switzerland had made substantial contributions. The practice whereby the Working Party undertook in-depth evaluations and then followed up the progress made on the outcomes of previous evaluations was the right way to work. While many delegations considered JITAP a successful programme, it should be kept in mind that, in the recent evaluation, the expert evaluators had pointed to problems and deficiencies in interagency coordination. For the Integrated Framework, UNCTAD could play a greater role, particularly in the initial stage of each country programme. Prioritization of technical cooperation programmes was essential, and should follow the emphasis provided in the Bangkok Plan of Action. Concerning the evaluation on capacity building, he agreed with its emphasis on quality over quantity and with its recommendations. As a major contributor to UNCTAD's technical cooperation programmes, Switzerland had a satisfying relationship with the secretariat, although certain information flows could be improved.

28. The representative of the **Netherlands** said his country was a traditional partner of UNCTAD in respect of technical cooperation and would continue to be so in the future. He noted the decline in funding for UNCTAD technical cooperation, due in particular to the decrease in UNDP and European Commission contributions. The DMFAS Advisory Group meeting had been very useful, and he suggested that a similar group could be set up for the ASYCUDA programme. He stressed the importance of multi-agency programmes such as the Integrated Framework and expressed regret at the minimal role played by UNCTAD in respect of the IF. Concerning absorption capacity, a more coherent approach to the question was needed. On the evaluation of capacity building, he commended the open-minded approach of UNCTAD but noted that evaluations had to be an integral part of project design and be paid for either from the regular budget or by the project itself. He suggested the programmes on Trade and Environment or Commercial Diplomacy as possible topics for next year's evaluation.

29. The representative of **Finland** emphasized the importance of streamlining and prioritization. It was important for UNCTAD's divisions to coordinate regularly with each other so that they did not compete for donor funding and so that donors were informed of priorities and could make proper judgments among various project proposals. In order to enhance the sustainability of funding, it was imperative to have proper benchmarking and performance measurement, as well as proper reporting to donors so that they could decide on the continuation of funding in a timely manner.

30. The representative of **France** said that, despite some fluctuations, the overall level of technical cooperation resources and expenditures had remained largely unchanged over the last decade. He expressed concern at the lack of resources pledged to support the excellent technical cooperation programme prepared by UNCTAD in response to the Post-Doha development agenda. Measures to increase resources for this programme were urgently needed, since the credibility of UNCTAD and of its membership was at stake.

31. The representative of **Germany** agreed that UNCTAD's technical cooperation should focus on building sustainable capacity rather than on implementing scattered activities and segmented initiatives. The indicative plan contained a rather long and dispersed activity list, and it should be presented in a more strategic manner. Interagency coordination was crucial

in every organization, and he was therefore disappointed that the secretariat saw its contribution to the Integrated Framework as being minimal. As discussed in the Mid-term Review, the Working Party should address the issue of the balance between analytical work and technical cooperation. Concerning the Internal Review of technical cooperation, he requested further information about the progress made in implementing the outcome. As regards funding, he was pleased to note that the share of LDCs had remained at a high level, but was disturbed by the declining share of Africa. In general, funding was in good shape, particularly with developing countries increasing their share. However, the decline in the funding from some other sources could be discussed in more detail.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Opening of the session

32. The thirty-ninth session of the Working Party was opened by Ms. Gothani Indikadahena (Sri Lanka), Vice-Chairperson-cum-Rapporteur of the Working Party at its thirty-eighth session.

B. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

33. At its 149th (opening) plenary meeting, on 16 September, the Working Party elected Ms. F. Al-Ghazali (Oman) as its Chairperson and Mr. V. Malevich (Belarus) as its Vice-Chairperson-cum-Rapporteur.

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

34. Also at its 149th meeting, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/WP/150). The agenda was thus as follows:

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 technical cooperation activities:
 - (a) Evaluation of capacity-building activities
 - (b) Follow-up action to the in-depth evaluation of the TRAINMAR Programme
 - (c) Progress report on the implementation of the recommendations in the evaluation of EMPRETEC
 - (d) Progress report on the implementation of the Trade Point Strategy
 5. Financing the participation of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in UNCTAD's expert meetings
 6. Provisional agenda for the fortieth session of the Working Party
 7. Other business
 8. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board
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