

**Working Party on the Strategic Framework
and the Programme Budget**
Geneva, 3–5 September 2012

General statements by regional groups
Speaker: Iran on behalf of the Asian Group

Monday, 3 September 2012

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Statement
by Ambassador Abbas Bagherpour, Deputy Permanent Representative of the
Islamic Republic of Iran,
on behalf of the Asian Group
at the 62nd Session of the
Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget
(3 to 5 September 2012)

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Asian Group. First and foremost let me congratulate those just elected as the Bureau, particularly you, Mr. President. You will certainly enjoy the full support and cooperation of the Asian Group and we have high confidence in your able leadership.

I would also like to associate myself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the G77 and China.

Madam Chair,

This meeting of the Working Party on technical cooperation provides an opportunity to examine a critical pillar of UNCTAD's work and take necessary steps with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the technical cooperation provided by UNCTAD. The Asian Group attaches great importance to this important pillar of UNCTAD work.

The Group fully acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat towards this end during 2011 and expresses appreciation for preparing the comprehensive documents accordingly. The Group is also pleased to see that delivery levels have remained high.

We note with satisfaction the important increase in 2011 of contributions to trust funds. The Group notes that the 44% increase in contributions over the previous year is mainly due to a very big increase in contributions from developing countries. Developing countries' contributions continued to grow and account now for about 34 per cent of total contributions to trust funds. In fact for the first time contributions received from developing countries to UNCTAD trust funds are higher than contributions from developed countries. However, this evolution might not be sustainable as many developing countries are not in a position to finance technical cooperation and continue to need to rely on the support of their development partners. We would also like to thank our development partners for sustaining their support to the technical cooperation programmes of UNCTAD. In this regard, the Group would like to reiterate the importance attached to sustainability in the support lend by development partners. We would like to reiterate that continued support from our developed partners is crucial for the continuation of important projects to which developing countries and the Asian Group in particular attach great value.

With respect to the report of the secretariat on activities carried out in 2011, the Group notes with concern the continued decrease in expenditures for projects in support of Asia and the Pacific from a total of \$8.7 million in 2008 to a total of \$5.2 million in 2011; the share of the region in the total delivery of UNCTAD technical cooperation stands now at 13.5 per cent as compared to 23 per cent in 2008. The Group is concerned about this trend and call the Secretariat to keep the balance and greater share of UNCTAD's technical cooperation delivery is allocated to the region in order to respond to the requests made by members of the Group.

The Group attaches great importance to the two major UNCTAD technical assistance programmes namely ASYCUDA and DMFAS which are successfully implemented in a number of countries in the region. Many interregional programmes and projects are of interest to Asia and the Pacific countries in particular those related to WTO accession and capacity building for effective participation in the WTO negotiations process on trade facilitation, and international investment agreements. The Group also appreciates work carried out in the region in the area of trade and transport facilitation and encourages the secretariat to continue its work in these fields. On knowledge sharing, training and capacity development, the Asian Group wishes to highlight the relevance and importance of the regional courses on key issues on the International Economic Agenda and appreciates the work carried out by the TRAINFORTRADE programme. In addition, the Group appreciates the role of the Virtual Institute in facilitating South-South research cooperation and its support to trade policy capacity building.

While the Asian Group commends the secretariat for its active participation in inter-agency processes related to the United Nations Delivering as One system wide coherence process, It notes that “Delivering as One” represents a major challenge for the agencies of the Cluster, but also for the donors and beneficiaries and greater coherence is necessary among all the parties involved in trade related assistance. The Group calls upon donors to provide adequate resources to these mechanisms to ensure full implementation of the United Nations development operations reform.

With regard to the Agenda item 4 (b); ‘in-depth evaluation of UNCTAD’s programme on Science and technology for development’ the Group recalls the decision of working party to further discuss the recommendations of this report due to its importance. In this context, the Group highlights some of the main issues raised by this report as follows;

The Group notes that the current intergovernmental bodies on Science and Technology for Development (STD) are not satisfactory and a new institutional set-up should be agreed. The Group also notes that there is no overall strategy on STD and in spite of activities undertaken in this field, it is difficult to conclude what outcomes have been produced and what their impact has been. In this context, the group concurs with the report that in the absence of equally well prepared logical frameworks for regular activities, it is difficult to evaluate the produced outcomes and their impact on science and technology. Therefore, the Group endorses the recommendation of the report that UNCTAD should improve its planning, monitoring and reporting practices on STD.

The Group also notes that while UNCTAD's mandate is clear about the role of UNCTAD on facilitating international discussions on transfer of technology and in particular the emphasis put by Doha Mandate on this concept, there is no mention of this issue in sub-programme 4 strategy and it seems the same approach has been taken for 2014-2015 programme and budget. We expected this shortcoming is rectified in the Programme Budget for the next 4 years. The Group also agrees with the report that UNCTAD should clarify its internal division, tasks and responsibilities with regard to transfer of technology, and endorses the first proposed option of the report which is the establishment of a particular division and/or branch responsible for this purpose.

Madam Chair,

As referred by the report, further to research and publications on STI, more attention should be given to technical cooperation programmes and transferring knowledge to developing countries including through capacity building and training. With respect to discussions on STI in the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission, the Group agrees with the report that the allocated time does not allow thorough discussions, and decisions on follow up to STI themes, therefore provide limited support to the research and analysis, and technical cooperation work of science and technology and ICT branch. We also believe that the share of 2 percent of UNCTAD technical cooperation to STD and ICT is very much below the expectations and will not lead to the goals in this field. Last but not least, as the report indicates, the coordination mechanism in STI should be strengthened and institutionalised, internally within UNCTAD and with other organizations.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, I hope that by our serious deliberations on technical cooperation and UNCTAD's programmes evaluation within the time schedule of the working party we could improve and enrich the work of UNCTAD and in particular demonstrate once again the proper work and effectiveness of other pillar of UNCTAD namely the intergovernmental machinery and consensus building.

Thank you Mr. President.