

Distr.: Restricted
6 March 2015

English only

Trade and Development Board

Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

Seventieth session

Geneva, 9–13 March 2015

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Review of the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD

Report on the readership survey of main publications of UNCTAD in 2014

Executive summary

The UNCTAD publications policy provides that the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget review the results of a survey of publications issued during the previous year. For this seventh systematic survey, eight publications were selected for review. A brief and user-friendly online questionnaire was disseminated. The total number of responses to the questionnaire was 155, of which 12 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 38 per cent from academic and research institutions, 3 per cent from the public sector, 17 per cent from the private sector, 5 per cent from international organizations, 23 per cent from non-governmental organizations and the rest from the media and others. The results indicate that the readers have rated the publications positively, the average for the overall assessment for the survey being 4.2 out of 5.

I. Mandate and purpose of the readership survey

1. The UNCTAD publications policy provides that the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget review the results of a survey of publications issued during the previous year. Readership surveys should be conducted annually, and in the light of recent experience the secretariat should seek to improve the design, methodology and scope of the surveys so that they fulfil their crucial role. In line with that mandate, the readership survey was carried out in respect of major 2014 publications of UNCTAD to (a) analyse readers' evaluation of the main publications in terms of a number of attributes; (b) facilitate continuous improvements in UNCTAD's publications; and (c) draw lessons for conducting future readership surveys.

II. Methodology

A. Coverage

2. The 2014 readership survey covers the main UNCTAD publications plus a selection of publications covering the work of the different divisions. Specifically, the following eight publications were included in the survey: (a) *Trade and Development Report, 2014: Global Governance and Policy Space for Development*; (b) *World Investment Report 2014: Investing in the SDGs: An Action Plan*;^{*} (c) *The Least Developed Countries Report 2014: Growth with Structural Transformation: A Post-2015 Development Agenda*; (d) *Economic Development in Africa Report 2014: Catalysing Investment for Transformative Growth in Africa*; (e) *Review of Maritime Transport 2014*; (f) *Commodities at a Glance: Special Issue on Rare Earths*; (g) *Key Statistics and Trends in International Trade 2014*; (h) *Trade Remedies: Targeting the Renewable Energy Sector*.

B. Questionnaire

3. A brief and user-friendly questionnaire was prepared, containing multiple rating responses to a number of attributes on a scale of 1 to 5. The attributes for the survey were the following: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) enhancement of readers' understanding of issues; (d) assessment of policy conclusions; and (e) presentation.

4. The online survey questionnaire was launched via the notifications mechanism, as well as the Delegates Portal, and sent to member States, accredited non-governmental organizations and international organizations. A specific box highlighting the survey was also posted prominently on the home page of the UNCTAD website. The questionnaire was available online from 16 January to 1 March 2015.

C. Ratings

5. Numerical data were obtained on the basis of ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 contained in the individual response to the different attributes for each publication (1 = minimum rating,

^{*} SDGs, sustainable development goals.

5 = best rating). An average of ratings was calculated for each attribute, using the following formula:

$$\text{Average ratings} = \frac{\text{sum of all ratings}}{\text{number of respondents}}$$

6. Average ratings calculated for all attributes pertaining to each publication were rounded off to the nearest decimal point. The results for all attributes are presented in table 1. It should be noted here that the publications in the readership survey are not necessarily comparable in terms of content, and the respondents were not the same for all publications.

D. Respondents

7. The total number of responses received for this survey was 155, from 64 countries. Of these responses, 12 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 38 per cent from academic and research institutions, 3 per cent from the public sector, 17 per cent from the private sector, 5 per cent from international organizations, 23 per cent from non-governmental organizations and the rest from the media and others (see annex).

III. Results of the readership survey

8. The results of the survey are summarized in table 1, reflecting the number of respondents for each publication and the average ratings for the five attributes. Based on the feedback received, the average rating for four attributes (overall assessment, analytical quality, enhancing understanding of the issues and presentation) is 4.2, while the average rating for assessment of conclusions and policy advice is 4.0.

Table 1
Average ratings by attribute

	Number of respondents	Attributes				
		Overall assessment	Analytical quality	Enhancing understanding of the issues	Assessment of conclusions and policy advice	Presentation
<i>Trade and Development Report, 2014</i>	93	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.3
<i>World Investment Report 2014</i>	68	4.3	4.3	4.2	3.9	4.3
<i>The Least Developed Countries Report 2014</i>	48	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0
<i>Economic Development in Africa Report 2014</i>	38	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.2
<i>Review of Maritime Transport 2014</i>	80	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.0	4.2
<i>Commodities at a Glance</i>	22	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.2

	Number of respondents	Attributes				
		Overall assessment	Analytical quality	Enhancing understanding of the issues	Assessment of conclusions and policy advice	Presentation
<i>Key Statistics and Trends in International Trade 2014</i>	61	4.2	4.2	4.2	3.9	4.1
<i>Trade Remedies: Targeting the Renewable Energy Sector</i>	19	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.1
Average rating of each attribute of surveyed publications	-	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.2
Total number of respondents	155	-	-	-	-	-

9. **Purposes for which respondents use the publications.** The survey indicates that the publications are used for multiple purposes by readers. Table 2 gives a summary, for each purpose, of the uses made of each publication by respondents. The publications are used mostly for analysis and research, followed by for education and training.

Table 2
Use of publications by purpose

	Analysis and research	Policy formulation and implementation	Education and training	Negotiations
<i>Trade and Development Report, 2014</i>	81	20	56	11
<i>World Investment Report 2014</i>	61	19	41	6
<i>The Least Developed Countries Report 2014</i>	37	17	26	6
<i>Economic Development in Africa Report 2014</i>	31	12	22	4
<i>Review of Maritime Transport 2014</i>	67	27	44	6
<i>Commodities at a Glance</i>	17	4	14	4
<i>Key Statistics and Trends in International Trade 2014</i>	49	13	27	4
<i>Trade Remedies: Targeting the Renewable Energy Sector</i>	17	7	14	1

10. **Format in which respondents consulted the publications.** The survey shows that readers used hard copies, web versions and electronic copies. While electronic copies are the most popular format, there were a significant number of respondents who used hard copies.

11. **Format in which respondents prefer receiving the publications.** In terms of receiving the publications in the future, electronic copies are the preferred format, followed by hard copies in most cases (table 3).

Table 3
Preferred format for publications
 (Percentage)

	<i>Hard copy</i>	<i>Web version</i>	<i>Electronic copy</i>
<i>Trade and Development Report, 2014</i>	37	18	45
<i>World Investment Report 2014</i>	42	19	39
<i>The Least Developed Countries Report 2014</i>	38	23	39
<i>Economic Development in Africa Report 2014</i>	37	19	44
<i>Review of Maritime Transport 2014</i>	29	24	47
<i>Commodities at a Glance</i>	40.5	19	40.5
<i>Key Statistics and Trends in International Trade 2014</i>	23	31	46
<i>Trade Remedies: Targeting the Renewable Energy Sector</i>	35	12	53

IV. Concluding comments

12. The following are some general comments on the results of the survey:

(a) The survey received a total of 155 responses, although the survey was conducted for a period of more than six weeks. While responses were received from various groups of readers (see annex) – international organizations, non-governmental organization, and the private and public sectors – the majority of respondents (38 per cent) associated themselves with academic or research institutions. Approximately 12 per cent of responses came from respondents affiliated with Governments. This indicates that there is a continuous need to consider ways of improving the response rate, particularly from Governments, which are the primary target group for UNCTAD publications.

(b) In general, respondents evaluated the publications positively. The average overall assessment for the publications included in the survey was 4.2.

(c) As shown by the survey, publications are used for different purposes: analysis and research (prevailing), education and training, policy formulation and negotiations.

(d) The survey shows that, while many readers indicated their interest in receiving publications via a weblink or electronically, there is also a demand for hard copies.

Annex

Distribution of responses by category of respondent (Percentage)

