TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget
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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Report on the readership survey of main publications of UNCTAD in 2008

Executive summary

The Trade and Development Board, in its decision 449 (EX-17) provided, inter alia, 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. In this first systematic survey, 14 publications were selected. Responses of readers were also requested for two other publications of their own choice. Two publications – the Trade and Development Report and Review of Maritime Transport – were subject to in-depth reviews. A brief and user-friendly questionnaire was disseminated, which contained multiple rating responses to the following attributes on a scale of 1 to 5: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) enhancement of readers’ understanding; (d) policy conclusions; and (e) presentation. The total number of responses to questionnaire was 268, of which 28 per cent were from respondents affiliated with governments, 32 per cent with academic and research institutions, 6 per cent with international organizations, 8 per cent with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 20 per cent with private enterprises, and the rest from media and others. The results showed that the readers rated the publications very positively. For most publications, average ratings for most attributes were in the highest bracket, i.e. between 4 and 5. No rating was below 3.5.
Contents

I. Mandate and purpose of the readership survey ................................................................. 3
II. Methodology .................................................................................................................. 3
   A. Coverage .................................................................................................................. 3
   B. Questionnaire ......................................................................................................... 3
   C. Ratings ..................................................................................................................... 4
   D. Respondents .......................................................................................................... 4
III. Results of the readership survey of main publications ................................................. 4
   A. Main publications ................................................................................................. 4
   B. Other publications .............................................................................................. 16
   C. In-depth readership survey ............................................................................... 17
IV. Concluding comments ............................................................................................. 20
Annex Breakdown of respondents by publication ......................................................... 22
I. Mandate and purpose of the readership survey

1. The Trade and Development Board, in its decision 449 (EX-17) provided, inter alia, 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, as well as any in-depth readership surveys of selected publications which will have been conducted; 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, readership surveys were carried out in respect of major 2008 publications of UNCTAD to (a) analyze 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 the conduct of future readership surveys.

II. Methodology

A. Coverage

2. The 2008 readership Survey covers the main UNCTAD publications plus a selection of publications covering the work of the different divisions. Specifically, the following publications were included in the survey: (a) Trade and Development Report (TDR); (b) World Investment Report (WIR); (c) Least Developed Countries Report (LDCR); (d) Economic Development in Africa (EDAR); (e) Information Economy Report (IER); (f) Review of Maritime Transport (RMT); (g) Creative Economy Report; (h) Addressing the global food crisis – key trade, investment and commodity policies in ensuring sustainable food security and alleviating poverty; (i) Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa; (j) Overview of Commodity Exchanges – 2007 (issued in 2008); (k) Financing for development-follow-up international conference for development to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus; (l) Investment Policy Reviews 2007 (issued in 2008) (m) UNCTAD Series on Issues on International Investment Agreements; and (n) Cocoa study: industry structures and competition. Responses of readers were also requested for two other publications of their own choice. Two reports – the Trade and Development Report and Review of Maritime Transport – were subject to in-depth reviews in which readers were asked additional questions.

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, with 1 as minimum and 5 as the best rating. The attributes were: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) enhancing readers’ understanding; (d) policy conclusions; and (e) presentation of the publication. The survey questionnaire was disseminated in a number of ways: (a) posted prominently on the home page of UNCTAD website; (b) mailed to permanent missions of member states and distributed in some UNCTAD meetings; and (c) disseminated through the use of divisional mailing lists.
C. Ratings

4. 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. An average of ratings was calculated for each attribute using the following formula:

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

5. Average ratings calculated for all attributes pertaining to each publication were rounded off to the nearest decimal point. These results for all attributes were presented in a graph. It should be noted here that the publications in the readership survey were not necessarily comparable in terms of content and the respondents were not the same for all publications.

D. Respondents

6. Responses to the readership survey were collected in three ways: from the UNCTAD website, from letters received by fax, and during meetings. Total responses received were 268. Of these responses, 28 per cent were from respondents affiliated with governments, 32 per cent with academic and research institutions, 6 per cent with international organizations, 8 per cent with NGOs, 20 per cent with private enterprises and the rest from media and others.

7. As regards respondents affiliated with governments, 26 per cent were from developed countries, 71 per cent from developing countries and 3 per cent from countries from economies in transition. A breakdown of respondents by publication is provided in the annex.
III. Results of the readership survey of main publications

A. Main publications

8. The survey of main publications was carried out on the basis of five attributes: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) enhancement of readers’ understanding; (d) policy conclusions; and (e) presentation.

1. *Trade and Development Report, 2008: Commodity prices, capital flows and the financing of investment*

   The *Trade and Development Report, 2008* highlights the paradox that the “capital-poor” developing world is exporting capital to the “capital-rich” developed countries. The report suggested an alternative focus of reinvestment of profits and credit creation through the domestic banking system. A substantial increase in official development assistance (ODA), combined with improving infrastructure and increasing productive capacities, is necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

(a) Respondents

9. There were 71 total responses received for the *Trade and Development Report, 2008*, of which 33 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 27 per cent with academic and research institutions, 7 per cent with international organizations, 14 per cent with NGOs, 11 per cent with private enterprises and 8 per cent from media and others.

(b) Average ratings

10. Average ratings are presented in graph 1. All attributes were rated 4 or above.

   *Graph 1*
   
   **Survey results for Trade and Development Report, 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Enhancing readers’ understanding</td>
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<td>Analytical quality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall assessment</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **Note:** All attributes were rated 4 or above.

The World Investment Report analyses trends in foreign direct investment (FDI) worldwide, as well as at regional and country levels, in order to improve its contribution to development. The World Investment Report 2008 highlights the complex policy challenges facing developing countries seeking to use transnational corporations (TNCs) to spur improvements in such fields as transport and electricity supply, and stresses the need for active support of such countries by their development partners. Global FDI inflows continued to rise in 2007 and reached a new record despite the onset of the financial crisis. However, the crisis affected FDI flows in 2008, as TNCs became more cautious in their investment plans.

(a) Respondents

11. Total responses received for World Investment Report 2008 were 63, of which 35 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 25 per cent with academic and research institutions, 8 per cent with international organizations, 10 per cent with NGOs, 13 per cent with private enterprises and 9 per cent from media and others.

(b) Average ratings

12. Average ratings are presented in graph 2. The ratings of all attributes are 4 and above.

Graph 2
Survey Results for World Investment Report 2008
3. **Least Developed Countries Report 2008: Growth, Poverty and the Terms of Development Partnership**

The *Least Developed Countries Report 2008* argues that the achievement of a more sustainable and inclusive type of economic growth requires effective development strategies, which are nationally formulated and supported by effective development aid and development-friendly international regimes for trade, investment and technology. Least developed countries (LDCs) are advised to implement aid management policies that will allow aid to be more effective, providing a more powerful contribution to development.

(a) **Respondents**

13. Total responses received from the main publications survey for the *Least Developed Countries Report 2008* were 34. Out of these responses, about 41 per cent were from respondents working with the governments from 14 countries, 21 per cent with academic and research institutions, 12 per cent with international organizations, 11.8 per cent with NGOs, 11.8 per cent with private enterprises and 2.9 per cent with media and others.

(b) **Average ratings**

14. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 3 below. Ratings for all attributes except for “Policy conclusions” are 4. Rating for “Policy conclusions” is 3.8.

Graph 3

**Survey results for the Least Developed Countries Report 2008**

*Economic Development in Africa 2008* argues that export development requires more than trade liberalization and that trade policy needs to be closely linked to complementary and clearly defined agricultural and industrial sector development policies. It emphasizes the need for macroeconomic and political stability as well as policy predictability as prerequisites for the success of trade liberalization and sectoral development policies in Africa.

(a) **Respondents**

15. Total responses received from the main publications survey for *Economic Development in Africa 2008* were 35. Out of these, 43 per cent were from respondents working with the governments from 15 countries, 23 per cent with academic and research institutions, 9 per cent with international organizations, 11 per cent with private enterprises, 6 per cent with NGOs, and the rest from others.

(b) **Average ratings**

16. Average ratings are presented in graph 4. In respect of all the attributes under survey, the average ratings are within the range of 3.8 to 4.1.

**Graph 4**

**Survey results for Economic Development in Africa 2008**

The *Information Economy Report 2007–2008* examines how information and communication technologies (ICTs) affect productivity and growth. It also presents a cross-section of themes and analysis that aim to inform and enable governments to understand the policy challenges and opportunities. The analysis identifies important areas of concern and best practices necessary for the formulation of targeted policy decisions to support and accelerate ICT diffusion.

(a) **Respondents**

17. Total responses received for *Information Economy Report 2007–2008* were 33, of which 39 per cent were from respondents affiliated with the governments from 26 countries, 21 per cent from academic and research institutions, 6 per cent from international organizations, 15 per cent from private enterprises, 9 per cent from NGOs, and the rest from others.

(b) **Average ratings**

18. Average ratings are presented in graph 5. Except for “Policy conclusions”, average ratings for all attributes are at the level of 4. The rating for “Policy conclusions” is 3.9.

**Graph 5**  
*Survey results for Information Economy Report 2008*
6. **Review of Maritime Transport 2008: Special chapter: Latin America and the Caribbean**

The main focus of the 2008 *Review of Maritime Transport* is on maritime transport, which accounts for more than 80 per cent of international trade. The *Review* analyses structural and cyclical changes affecting trade and transport, especially in developing economies, and contains an extensive collection of statistical information on maritime transport and related services. It also sheds light on port- and transport-related developments as well as legal and regulatory changes, and gives a review of transport development by geographical region.

(a) **Respondents**

19. Total responses received for this report were 38, of which 29 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 29 per cent with academic and research institutions, 13 per cent with private enterprises, 5 per cent with international organizations, 8 per cent with NGOs and 16 per cent with others.

(b) **Average ratings**

20. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 6 below. Ratings for all attributes except “Enhance readers’ understanding” are 4 and above. Rating for “Enhance readers’ understanding” is 3.8.

Graph 6
**Survey results for Review of Maritime Transport 2008**
7. Creative Economy Report 2008: the challenge of assessing the creative economy towards informed policymaking

(a) Respondents

21. Total responses received for the Creative Economy Report 2008 were 33, of which 30 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with Governments, 28 per cent with academic and research institutions, 15 per cent with private enterprises, 6 per cent with international organizations, 9 per cent with NGOs and 9 per cent with others.

(b) Average ratings

22. Average ratings in respect of all five attributes are presented in graph 7 below. Ratings for all attributes are 4 and above.

Graph 7
Survey results for Creative Economy Report 2008

8. Addressing the Global Food Crisis: Key trade, investment and commodity policies in ensuring sustainable food security and alleviating poverty

(a) Respondents

23. Total responses received for this publication were 38, of which 34 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 26 per cent with academic and research institutions, 13 per cent with private enterprises, 8 per cent with international organizations, 11 per cent with NGOs and the rest with others.

(b) Average ratings

24. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 8 below. Ratings for all attributes are 4 and above, except for “Analytical quality”, which is 3.9.
9. **Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa**

   (a) **Respondents**

   25. Total responses received for this report were 38, of which 26 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 32 per cent with academic and research institutions, 11 per cent with private enterprises, 8 per cent with international organizations, 18 per cent with NGOs and the rest with others.

   (b) **Average ratings**

   26. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 9. Ratings for all attributes are at the level of 4 and above.

Graph 8
**Survey results for Addressing the Global Food Crisis**

Graph 9
**Survey results for Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa**

(a) **Respondents**

27. Total responses received for this report were 30, of which 27 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 30 per cent with academic and research institutions, 13 per cent with private enterprises, 3 per cent with international organizations, 10 per cent with NGOs and 17 per cent with others.

(b) **Average ratings**

28. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 10 below. Ratings for all attributes except “Policy conclusions” are 4 and above. Rating for “Policy conclusions” is 3.9.

Graph 10

**Survey results for Overview of Commodity Exchanges–2007 (issued in 2008)**

11. **Financing for development: Follow-up international conference for development to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus**

(a) **Respondents**

29. Total responses received for this report were 34, of which 41 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 26 per cent with academic and research institutions, 12 per cent with private enterprises, 3 per cent with international organizations, 9 per cent with NGOs and 9 per cent with others.

(b) **Average ratings**

30. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 11 below. Ratings for all five attributes are between 3.7 and 3.9.

(a) **Respondents**

31. Total responses received were 38, of which 42 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 24 per cent with academic and research institutions, 13 per cent with private enterprises, 3 per cent with international organizations, 10 per cent with NGOs and 8 per cent with other.

(b) **Average ratings**

32. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 12. Ratings for all attributes are between the range of 4 and 5.
13. **UNCTAD Series on Issues on International Investment Agreements**

(a) **Respondents**

33. Total responses received for this report were 37, of which 41 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 27 per cent with academic and research institutions, 13 per cent with private enterprises, 3 per cent with international organizations, 11 per cent NGOs and 5 per cent with others.

(b) **Average ratings**

34. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 13 below. Ratings for all attributes are within the range of 4 and 5.

Graph 13

Survey results for UNCTAD Series in Issues of International Investment Agreements

<table>
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<td>Enhance readers'</td>
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<td>Analytical quality</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall assessment</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. **Cocoa study: industry structures and competition**

(a) **Respondents**

35. Total responses received for this report were 24, of which 25 per cent were from respondents working/affiliated with governments, 29 per cent with academic and research institutions, 21 per cent with private enterprises, 4 per cent with international organizations, 13 per cent with NGOs and 8 per cent with others.

(b) **Average ratings**

36. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in graph 14 below. Ratings for all attributes are from 3.5 to 3.7.
B. Other publications

37. Several other publications were rated by our respondents under the category, “other publication” (respondent needed to specify). These were: (a) Best Practices for Organic Policy: What Developing Country Governments Can do to Promote the Organic Agriculture sector; (b) Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture; (c) International Dispute Settlement; (d) Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy; (e) Transnational Corporations; (f) Transport Newsletter; (g) UNCTAD special studies on Port Planning, Management and Operations; (h) Women and Trade; (i) World Markets for Organic Fruits and Vegetables – Opportunities for Developing Countries in the Production and Export of Horticulture Products. These were reviewed by few respondents. The ratings for all these reports were between 4 and 5. The report, “Best Practices for Organic Policy: What Developing Country can do to promote the organic agriculture sector” was reviewed by a majority of our respondents. Average ratings for this report are presented in graph 15 below. Ratings for all attributes are within the range of 4.5 and 5.

Graph 15
Survey results for other publications: Best Practices for Organic Policy
C. In-depth readership survey

38. As noted above, two reports – the Trade and Development Report and Review of Maritime Transport – were subject to in-depth reviews. In-depth readership surveys of the Trade and Development Report, 2008 and Review of Maritime Transport 2008 were carried out on the basis of a questionnaire containing questions on seven attributes: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) provides useful information about emerging and timely issues; (d) enhancement of readers’ understanding; (e) assessment of policy conclusions; (f) how useful; and (g) presentation. A number of additional questions were asked to elicit qualitative responses.


(a) Respondents

39. A total of 49 responses were received for the in-depth readership survey for the Trade and Development Report, 2008. Out of these, 33 per cent were from respondents affiliated with the governments from 24 countries, 41 per cent with academic and research institutions, 6 per cent with international organizations, 10 per cent with private enterprises, 6 per cent with NGOs and the rest with others.

(b) Average ratings

40. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in graph 16 below. All ratings are in the highest bracket between 4 and 5 except for “Assessment of policy conclusions”. The rating for “Assessment of policy conclusions” is 3.9.

Graph 16

(c) Qualitative responses

41. For what purposes respondents used this report? The survey indicates that the Trade and Development Report, 2008 is used simultaneously for multiple purposes by its readers. Out of the total respondents, 45 per cent used the knowledge and analyses obtained from the Report in negotiations and policy formulation, 84 per cent for analysis and research, and 43 percent for education and training. Analysis from the Report also helped NGOs and private enterprises for advocacy and consultancy.
42. **How frequently respondents consult this report?** The in-depth survey indicates that 80 per cent of the respondents consulted the *Trade and Development Report, 2008* for their work, and 45 per cent consulted three or more times during the past year for their related work. In terms of receiving other publications in the future, 52 per cent wanted to receive hard copies and 48 per cent wanted electronic copies and/or via web-link. It should be mentioned in this regard that some of those readers who requested electronic copies requested printed copies of other publications as well. Some of the responses received from the survey are presented in box 1 below.

**Box 1. Sample of Qualitative comments on the *Trade and Development Report, 2008***

*What did you like most about the publication?*

“The publication describes the current challenges on trade and economy, suggests unique decisions on these issues.”

“Simple but very clean, particularly on policy conclusions.”

“Timely topic and well presented. Good summary and good ‘text box’; chapters are of good length and level for teaching.”

*What did you like least about the publication?*

“A bit repetitive in design and layout and the coverage of data.”

“The concluding chapter – a bit dogmatic and not always connected with the preceding analysis.”

“The discussion of possible improvements to regulatory and institutional framework was less satisfactory than that of macroeconomic issues and policy.”

*Comments and suggestions on the Report*

“I appreciate UNCTAD’s work in the area of policy analysis and options. Keep up the good work and go deep in the area of problem solving.”

“Availability of those kinds of data (statistics) will improve the analysis and our policy recommendation.”

“Your publication is very much focused on developing countries, but now also developed countries are faced with new problems in the solutions of which they need your guidance.”

“Translation into Russian was made with considerable delay.”

2. **Review of Maritime Transport 2008**

(a) **Respondents**

43. The *Review of Maritime Transport 2008* attracted a total of 129 responses, of which 22 per cent were from respondents affiliated with the governments from 52 countries, 30 per cent with academic and research institutions, 30 per cent with private enterprises, 5 per cent with international organizations, 6 per cent with NGOs and the rest with others such as trade associations, chamber of commerce and students.

(b) **Average ratings**

44. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in graph 17 below. All ratings are above 4, except for ‘Assessment of policy conclusions’ which is slightly lower.
(c) Qualitative responses

45. **For what purposes respondents used this report?** The survey indicates that the *Review of Maritime Transport 2008* is used simultaneously for multiple purposes by its readers. Out of the total respondents, 31 per cent used the knowledge and analyses obtained from the *Review* in negotiations and policy formulation, 73 per cent for analysis and research, and 35 per cent for education and training.

46. **How frequently respondents consult this report?** The in-depth survey indicates that 85 per cent of the respondents consulted the *Review of Maritime Transport 2008* for their work and 63 per cent consulted the *Review* three or more times during the past year for their related work. In terms of receiving other publications in the future, respondents asked for combinations of hard copies and electronic copies and/or electronic copies and web-link. Thirty-three per cent wanted to receive hard copies of publications and 55 per cent wanted electronic copies and 39 per cent via web-link.

47. Some of the responses received from the survey are presented in box 2 below.

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**Box 2. Sample of qualitative comments on the Review of Maritime Transport 2008**

**What did you like most about the publication?**

“Very good overall picture of the development in maritime trade.”

“The concise presentation of vast amount of information. Very easy to read. An outstanding publication.”

“It is the only global authoritative and reliable source of information on the subject, and it has long continuity.”

“The RMT is one of the publications I used frequently as a reference to my work which is advising governments in many countries around the world in port and maritime affairs.”

**What did you like least about the publication?**

“I really could not say: I like all of it.”

“Statistics are good but lacking in detail. They seem to be too aggregated and do not offer sufficient time series in many cases.”

“The absence of African expertise in the overall publications.”
“Too many abbreviations; not everyone has expertise knowledge of the subject.”

**Comments and suggestions on the Report**

“Overall, UNCTAD has provided the seaborne trade community with a good knowledge on all the aspects of the trade.”

“Keep the format, it is excellent. Provide more statistical details and more time series if possible.”

“There is a challenge for expertise in Africa and the window of opportunity is limited. Will appreciate an inclusion of African expertise.”

“I have been a regular reader of the RMT for 13 years. And I believe the quality of the last two issues has markedly improved.”

### IV. Concluding comments

48. Following are some general comments on the results of the survey:

(a) Respondents have evaluated the publications very positively. For most publications, the average ratings for most attributes are in the highest bracket, i.e. between 4 and 5. No rating is below 3.5;

(b) In some cases, policy conclusions were given lower ratings, and particular attention will have to be paid to this aspect;

(c) The in-depth survey of the *Review of Maritime Transport 2008* indicated improved presentation can attract increased readers’ feedback;

(d) UNCTAD publications have a mixed readership, with a substantial proportion in most cases being affiliated with governments and academic and research institutions, followed by those affiliated with private enterprises and NGOs;

(e) As shown in the in-depth surveys, publications have multiple uses, including policy formulation, negotiation, research and analysis, education and training, and advocacy and consultancy;

(f) The in-depth surveys indicated considerable demand for electronic copies, but also significant continuing demand for hard copies (one third to one half of readers prefer hard copies and the remainder a combination of hard copies, electronic copies and web-link);

(g) The results of the survey, including comments under in-depth surveys, provide useful information for publications policy and more specifically for planning, preparing and disseminating future issues of the main publications.

49. Some implications for the future surveys are:

(a) This is the first time a systematic readership survey and analysis have been conducted. Institutionalizing the survey will require a well-defined work programme within the framework of UNCTAD’s publications policy;

(b) Focus will continue to remain on the flagship reports, in line with paragraph 186 of the Accra Accord. For each survey cycle, therefore, two flagship reports will be subjected to in-depth review;

(c) Further actions will be taken to ensure greater and timely responses. Strengthened efforts will be made for dissemination of survey questionnaires and feedback, including through increased collaboration with author divisions, enhanced coordination with Communications Strategy and Web Strategy, and the use of UNCTAD’s networks and Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) field presence;

(d) Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX–17) encouraged all member states to respond as fully as possible to readership surveys. More support will therefore be sought from Governments in providing responses.
Annex

Breakdown of respondents by publication

Main publications survey

<table>
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<th>Report</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
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<th>International organization</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Private enterprises</th>
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