



**Statement by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in Geneva  
at the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget  
Seventy-ninth session**

**Geneva, 20-22 January 2020**

Mr. Chair, Ambassador Javad Amin-Mansour of Iran  
Mrs. Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Mr. Chair,

1. At the outset, allow me on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 79<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Program Budget. The Group is confident that under your leadership the objective of this session will be achieved, and you can count on our full support to this end.

2. The Group of 77 and China thanks to Deputy Secretary-General Durant for her introductory statement and to the UNCTAD Secretariat for organizing this meeting and preparing the “Draft UNCTAD proposed programme plan for 2021 and performance information for 2019” contained in document TD/B/WP (79)/CRP.1, as well as for its availability to answer our queries.

Mr. Chair,

3. We would like to first make some general remarks in order to benefit from the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General. During the informal session we will provide more specific comments in relation to the five subprogrammes for the attention of the relevant Division Director during the informal session.

4. The Group of 77 and China note with concern the trend of decreasing resources for UNCTAD, whereby not only regular staffing has been reduced by some 25 posts over recent years, but also non-post resources have been affected by successive decisions by the General Assembly, including the most recent reductions for 2020 on several lines ranging from 5 to 12.5%. This trend puts in jeopardy the capacity of the UNCTAD secretariat to deliver its mandates effectively. UNCTAD requires sufficient, predictable and stable resources to fulfil its mandate.

5. In this connection, we would like to emphasize the importance of finalizing the terms of reference of the Working Party in order to ensure a more meaningful participation of the Member States in the planning of regular budget resources of UNCTAD. The Group of 77 and China calls on the UNCTAD secretariat to continue to facilitate the ongoing discussions with the relevant officials in New York.

6. Turning more specifically to the document, the Group of 77 and China has some general observations to make:

- We noticed the inclusion of cross-cutting deliverables which are under the authority of the Office of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, contained in Section D. of the Overall

Orientation. The Group would like to have some clarification as to whether this is a comprehensive list of the cross-cutting activities of the UNCTAD secretariat and whether these deliverables are in addition or as a complement to those contained in the Programme of Work section.

- Further on the section Overall Orientation, the Group notes with concern the use of some concepts that do not fully reflect the views of its members. For instance, in paragraph 2 the document refers to the work of UNCTAD to “promoting development centred globalization”. This raises the question as to whether there is an agreement about UNCTAD role promoting globalization as an exclusive road to development. The document should better refer to meaningful concepts present in the developmental multilateral discussions. The group of 77 and China proposes a reformulation embracing the urge to “reduce inequalities” the theme of the high-level segment of the most recent Annual Session of the Trade and Development Board and many relevant debates in Geneva and New York.
- Also, some parts of the Overall Orientation are written in a repetitive manner and could thus be streamlined, for instance paragraph 12. We will make some specific suggestions about this.
- The choice of “stories” or highlighted results seems to have taken place in a fragmented or uncoordinated manner. Some subprogrammes take a very narrow focus of one specific narrow output, such as a specific training, while others take a wider view of a collection of outputs across several pillars. Also, the focus of the current document result stories seems to be heavily biased towards technical cooperation and UN. While we understand it might be easier to demonstrate results in this area, we must not forget UNCTAD is not a technical cooperation agency and the work done under the other two pillars of the organization is fundamental.
- The Group of 77 and China would like to understand if there is an internal arrangement – not reflected in the presented programme- to guarantee the participation of the Subprogram 2 in the forthcoming XV Conference of Trade and Development. The scarce resources have been concentrated in the celebration of the World Investment Forum, marginalizing the allocation of resources to UNCTAD XV. This is not acceptable.

Mr. Chair,

7. The Group of 77 and China understands that document before us follows a format that responds to the needs and guidance of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee and related bodies in their work considering the overall programme plan and budget of the United Nations. As the document and the related process is set in such a manner, the Group would like to express its reservations about the ability of the discussion we will have in this Working Party session to “check the box” of Member States’ oversight of the work of the UNCTAD secretariat. Therefore, the Group would like to reiterate its call for setting up a separate mechanism to ensure more comprehensive oversight by Member States, for instance through an annual report specifically geared to the oversight needs of Member States.

8. The Group also notes that this programme plan covers a period that is beyond our next quadrennial conference, to be held later this year in Bridgetown. The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate the importance of the Conference as a space to take stock of the achievements and shortfalls in the implementation of the Nairobi Maafikiano and of the Sustainable Development Goals, and also to discuss recent developments and long-term trends in the area of trade and development. The Group would therefore like to put on record its understanding that the programme plan for 2021 will have to be reviewed in the TDB after UNCTAD XV in order to adjust it to the mandates adopted in Bridgetown.

Mr. Chair,

9. The Group of 77 and China, once again, appeals for a balanced funding in all UNCTAD's pillars. UNCTAD has always been strongest when it delivers on its core work. Conversely, it has also been our experience that UNCTAD is weakest when it strays from its original path of addressing the fundamental issues and problems of development. The Group of 77 and China trusts in the commitment that member States and the Secretary have towards the obligation to preserve the original aim of UNCTAD.

10. Please receive this document with the specific language suggestions to section I. Overall Orientation of the "Proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance for 2019".

Thank you very much.