European Union

Statement

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

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Agenda Item

UNCTAD’s new Technical Cooperation Strategy

Statement by the European Union Delegation to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva

Geneva, 14 September 2020

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
Mr President, (deputy) Secretary General, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We would like to thank the Secretariat for preparing the document for this session. Being one of the three pillars of UNCTAD's mandate, technical assistance is a key component of UNCTAD's contribution to the 2030 agenda. As such, it is crucial that technical cooperation stems from strategic considerations, and is coherent and complementary in delivering on SDGs.

In this intervention, we would like to highlight some key elements that we believe the final document should include:

- We agree that many elements of the 2003 strategy remain valid.
- As for the additional elements outlined in the document for the strategy:
  - Secretariat-level oversight with robust management is crucial for two reasons:
    - as per past TDB decisions, cross divisional cooperation, coherence and complementarity – within UNCTAD and with other relevant entities – must be strengthened, as does the link with the other two pillars of UNCTAD's work;
    - solid Result Based Management and continuous lessons learnt process must feed into the oversight and bring about the necessary decisions on future technical cooperation. Most recent evaluations, as well as our observations, still find this lacking.

How exactly will such an effective top management-level oversight be assured is not yet clear from this outline. We hope the first full draft will include robust elements in this sense and call upon the Secretariat to engage in regular exchange with this WP or the TDB to ensure a satisfactory outcome.

- Aiming to meet all technical cooperation requests, as per point 2 in paragraph 2, is rather overambitious, even if desirable. Even putting aside the financial constraints, limited human resources make reaching such an objective challenging, not to say impossible. This element should, therefore, rather focus on a framework to develop and maintain an up to date technical cooperation
priorities list (in terms of substance and countries), paired with a single and coherent financing strategy. This should not be based simply on the biggest demand, as implied by the document, but primarily on lessons learnt and Result Based Management to ensure value added of UNCTAD action.

- We agree with the mentioned cross-cutting issues. Furthermore, we believe that digitalisation should also be mainstreamed, given that it needs to be incorporated in all modern development strategy, as well as good governance, which is essential for achieving lasting and sustainable results. Moreover, we wish to underline that, even if important progress has been made over the recent decades on gender equality, we are far from being able to claim success that would render further efforts unnecessary, as also confirmed by the most recent evaluation.

- As for the last element – UNDS reform – we are happy to hear of the measures being developed to ensure agile and effective engagement of UNCTAD with Resident Coordinators. In order to ensure that the UN "delivers as one" and thus provides for the relevant efficiency gains, we hope to observe concrete advances through joint work and initiatives with other UN agencies and programmes. To this end, we encourage UNCTAD to continue working closely within the UN Country Teams, resulting in a more integrated, coherent, efficient and result-driven UN presence on the ground, led by the empowered UN Resident Coordinators.

While here we are focusing on technical cooperation, the efficiency through coherence applies to the three pillars of UNCTAD's work, where duplication remains a persevering issue.

- In relation to the proposed areas to be covered, as per the provided document, and in addition to the already mentioned issues, we would like to make the following comments:

  - A strategy, as per definition, is a long term orientation. Therefore, a portfolio of cooperation products could perhaps be annexed for information purposes and adjusted as per agreed reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
• The same would apply for the corresponding funding and fund-raising efforts. While the strategy document, on the other hand, could identify the essential principles for these actions (such as resorting to a coherent and comprehensive approach, rather than fragmented and individual fund-raising efforts we are witnessing now).

• The overall priorities should stem from the quadrennial conferences. However, the technical cooperation strategy should translate these into more concrete terms and line with past lessons learnt, Result Based Management exercises and available resources. It is, however, crucial that the geographical and substantive priorities are real, thus preventing diluting the resources and compromising the true value added.

• We trust that this session will allow us to get more information on what is contemplated to be included under each item, as for some it might not be fully clear just from the short description. For example for the type of cooperation activities or support costs. To this end, we would call upon the Secretariat to ensure appropriate transparency of the preparatory process to ensure guidance and manage expectations for the final document.

• (if not raised in/or adjusted according to the opening presentation by UNCTAD)

Before concluding, I was wondering if the Secretariat could inform us if and how the findings of the MOPAN exercise can be useful in the preparation of this strategy? We understand this was a very positive exercise and we are very much eager to see how the outcomes presented on 4 September will be integrated in the draft versions of the strategy.
In conclusion, for the EU and its Member States, **UNCTAD's technical cooperation strategy document needs to:**

1. provide for the necessary cross-pillar, cross-division and cross-UNDS coherence and complementarity;
2. be founded on the quadrennial Conference outcome, while ensuring true focus based on systematic lessons learnt and Result Based Management processes, which are to feed into concrete decisions on refocusing priorities and corresponding resources; and
3. provide a single and coherent financing strategy.

Thank you.