European Union

Statement

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

80th session, 14 – 16 September 2020

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Agenda Item

Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

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

Geneva, 15 September 2020

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
Chair, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. We would like to thank the Secretariat for the detailed report on UNCTAD’s Technical Cooperation activities and their financing – an important element for the organisation's accountability and transparency.

As UNCTAD's third pillar, Technical Cooperation is a key instrument to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and to strengthen the economic development of partner countries. The overview of its actions and financing offer a valuable insight on UNCTAD’s noteworthy added value, thus serve as a useful tool for the senior management to learn valuable lessons and adjust the organisation’s work. We hope that now, with the preparation of the technical cooperation strategy, this important objective of these reports will materialise.

On the substance of the report, we are encouraged to see that the 2019 trust fund resources have reached a new record high. Representing almost a quarter of these resources, the EU and its Member States clearly demonstrate our commitment to UNCTAD and to the role it can play on our shared 2030 Agenda.

We are also encouraged to see the important increase the contribution to the trust fund from the developing countries and countries with economies in transition, even if the large majority are for self-financed projects. On this note, we were wondering if the Secretariat would have indications of what part of these self-financed projects are resources made available by donors through bilateral aid programmes, as per point 27 of the report?

We also note that the resources under the UN regular programme of technical cooperation have increased by 7%. We see that three new projects have been endorsed by the steering committee of the development account. Could the Secretariat provide more information on these three projects and how they contribute to the fulfilment of the Maafikiano mandate?

On the expenditure side of the trust fund, we are happy to note the important increase directed to the least developed countries, in line with the Maafikiano mandate and the 2030 Agenda. We support such geographical prioritisation to reach those furthest behind.
Looking at the substance of expenditure and the broad toolbox, we believe that **there is scope for streamlining**, as also recognised by the report in Paragraph 43. While ASYCUDA and DMFAS clearly remain central to UNCTAD’s technical cooperation expenditure, we are happy to note e-commerce and digital economy, as well as sustainable trade and business facilitation as key areas of technical assistance demand from developing countries. **These areas also embody effective management and added value of UNCTAD’s action**, thus representing a clear possibility for streamlining UNCTAD’s toolbox.

**The donor community recognises such effective operations and management, potentially resulting in less earmarked funding**, notably targeting programmes rather than individual projects. This was the case of the two EU Member States mentioned in the report, which provided non-earmarked funding for the e-commerce and digital economy programme.

Last but not least, we are happy to hear that more than 70% of UNCTAD staff received Result Based Management training and encourage the Secretariat to continue this work. However, it is preoccupying that, despite this formal progress, **RBM is not visible in key publications and reports**, as noted, for example, for the SG Annual Report or the report on the Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa. Perhaps paragraph 59 of the report currently considered best describes why this might be the case. Notably, that there is a lack of incentive to enforce systematic and comprehensive RBM. RBM being a mandated requirement, we expect the senior management to take this issue with more determination and true commitment.

In conclusion, we would like to again extend our appreciation to the Secretariat for this well-structured and informative report, and call on the senior management to use our comments to further improve the added value and the reach of UNCTAD’s technical assistance.

Thank you.