United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Trade and Development Board
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Item 11 (b) of the provisional agenda
  UNCTAD's communication strategy and publications policy

UNCTAD publications policy[1]

Executive summary

The main goals of UNCTAD's publications policy include contributing to the full implementation of the Accra Accord and providing a systematic framework to plan, manage and deliver the publications programme of UNCTAD. The mandates concerning UNCTAD's publications policy derive from the Accra Accord (para. 186) and from Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX-17). At the intergovernmental level, the Board will approve the publications policy, and, assisted by the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget, review the publications programme in the context of the preparation of the biennial programme budget. The secretariat will be responsible for the substantive content of publications, and its work on publications will be guided by its Publications Committee. Quality will be the prime consideration for UNCTAD's publications, and the process of updating, improving and streamlining the publications programme will be a continuous one, building on the progress already achieved. Effective dissemination is crucial, and while ICT-based dissemination has demonstrated its efficacy, there remains considerable demand for paper-based publications. The impact of UNCTAD's publications will be assessed on the basis of annual publication surveys.

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[1] As approved by the Trade and Development Board at its fifty-sixth session on 12 October 2009.

I. Main objectives of UNCTAD's publications policy

1. The main objectives of UNCTAD's publications policy are to:

(a) Contribute to the full implementation of UNCTAD's mandate, as set out in the Accra Accord;

(b) Provide a framework for systematic planning, management, oversight, monitoring and improvement of the publications programme;

(c) Serve as the basis for the continuous updating, improvement and streamlining of the publications programme to ensure its coherence, consistency, effectiveness and relevance;

(d) Support review of the publications programme at the secretariat level by the Publications Committee, and at the intergovernmental level by the Trade and Development Board;

(e) Ensure effective dissemination to and feedback from the main audience groups;

(f) Enhance synergies between UNCTAD publications and the work of UNCTAD's other two pillars, namely consensus-building and technical cooperation;

(g) Form an integral part of UNCTAD's communications strategy.

II. Mandates for UNCTAD's publications policy

2. The specific mandates concerning publications policy derive from the following intergovernmental decisions:[2] (a) the Accra Accord (para. 186); (b) Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX-17).

3. The Accra Accord provides, inter alia, that UNCTAD should update and improve its publications policy, and streamline its publications programme taking into consideration the needs of developing countries and the requirements identified in the intergovernmental process. It also provides that UNCTAD's biennial publications programme should continue to be reviewed and endorsed by the Trade and Development Board, according to the established programme budget categories (recurrent, non-recurrent and technical publications) in order to ensure consistency, effectiveness and relevance.

4. Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX-17) relates, inter alia, to the consultative process between the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget and the secretariat, and to the role of the Working Party in the formulation of the publications policy in the context of the programme budget and the annual readership surveys.

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[2] The texts of these decisions are reproduced in annexes I and II respectively.

III. Scope of the publications policy

5. In line with the Accra Accord (para. 186), the following types of publications are covered under this publications policy:[3]

(a) Recurrent publications:

(i) flagship reports, which currently include annual thematic reports such as the Trade and Development Report, World Investment Report, Least Developed Countries Report, Economic Development in Africa Report, Information Economy Report, Maritime Transport Review, and the Technology and Innovation Report;

(ii) other recurrent publications, such as monthly bulletins, yearbooks, and statistical and other handbooks;

(b) Non-recurrent publications, consisting mainly of studies, reports or monographs, as well as one-off publications such as reports of seminars or collections of country case studies;

(c) Technical material, which includes databases, computer software, directories, bibliographies and specialized technical papers.

IV. Main objectives of UNCTAD's publications

6. The main objectives of UNCTAD's publications are to:

(a) Provide development-oriented, independent, ahead-of-the-curve and innovative analysis on trade and development and on related issues;

(b) Focus on the main challenges that all developing countries and countries with economies in transition face in the areas of trade and development and in the interrelated issues of finance, investment, technology, and sustainable development, paying special attention to the least developed countries (LDCs);

(c) Provide practical solutions and policy options and an analytical response to emerging and long-standing development challenges, and continue to examine systemic issues related to trade and development and interrelated issues;

(d) Identify opportunities within UNCTAD's mandate to help developing countries use globalization as an engine for economic growth and poverty reduction, and put forward practical policy recommendations taking into account, inter alia, international, regional and national best practices;

(e) Take into account the needs, priorities and experiences of developing countries and their different levels of development;

(f) Analyse existing national policies that support development, with a view to identifying various effective policies – including innovative policies – that developing countries in general and LDCs in particular could consider in their national development strategies or incorporate in a concrete plan for the implementation of such policies in cooperation with potential beneficiaries;

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[3] In addition to these categories, the programme budget includes parliamentary documentation, which is not covered under the publications policy.

(g) Promote constructive policy dialogue and consensus-building among member States within the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery and other global, regional and national forums;

(h) Underpin UNCTAD's policy advice, technical cooperation and capacity-building activities and its efforts to promote best practices;

(i) Promote general awareness and understanding of the development mission of UNCTAD and its leadership of policy research and analysis on the interrelated issues of trade, finance, investment, technology, and sustainable development.

V. Role of the intergovernmental machinery and the secretariat

7. Development and implementation of the publications policy involves different processes and stages, including approval of the publications policy; approval of the publications programme; the production of publications; monitoring of the publications programme; and the evaluation of publications. The process as a whole must be based on close cooperation between member States and the secretariat, and also on a clear delineation of roles.

Role of intergovernmental bodies

8. Pursuant to the Accra Accord, the Trade and Development Board will approve UNCTAD's publications policy.

9. With the assistance of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget, it will review and endorse UNCTAD's biennial publications programme according to established programme budget categories (recurrent, non-recurrent and technical publications) in order to ensure consistency, effectiveness and relevance. It will also review the implementation of UNCTAD's publications policy.

10. In accordance with Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX-17), which will be implemented in full, inter alia, the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget will:

(a) In the autumn of the first year of each biennium, informally discuss a draft list of publications proposed for the next biennium;

(b) Early in the following year, review the draft list of publications as part of its review of the draft work programme;

(c) At the start of each year, informally discuss the specific list of publications planned for the year;

(d) At the same time, consider a report of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the implementation of the publications policy;

(e) Review the results of the survey of publications issued during the previous year, as well as any in-depth readership survey of selected publications.

Role of the secretariat

11. The secretariat is responsible for authoring, co-authoring and producing the publications provided for in the publications programme and is responsible for their substantive content.

12. It is further responsible for providing the Board and the Working Party with all the material they need to perform their tasks in the area of publications policy.

13. The secretariat's work on publications is guided by the Publications Committee. The Committee operates under the overall guidance of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, and has as its members the Directors of all divisions and the Chief of the Strategy and Policy Coordination Unit. It is responsible for:

(a) Discussing and deciding on policy aspects of all issues relating to the publications policy;

(b) Monitoring the implementation of the publications policy;

(c) Approving the publications programme;

(d) Monitoring the implementation of the publications programme;

(e) Approving the topics for flagship publications.

VI. Ensuring quality

14. Quality must be the prime consideration for UNCTAD's publications. The highest standards must be maintained in terms of analytical content, policy conclusions and coherence, relevance, data and presentation. The necessary mechanisms must be in place to monitor and ensure quality, in particular through policy clearance, peer review and editing.

Prior approval

15. All publications should be subject to approval by the office of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD prior to work beginning. The elements to be taken into consideration for the purposes of approval should include: objectives and expected content; treatment of cross-cutting issues; target readership; production schedule; and the plan for internal quality review, if appropriate. At this stage, careful consideration will be given to determining the optimal length for each publication.

Peer review

16. Peer reviews are an important tool in ensuring quality. The peer reviews carried out in connection with flagship publications (both in house and with the help of outside experts) should be pursued and intensified. The practice of conducting peer reviews, particularly in-house interdivisional reviews, should be extended to other publications where appropriate.

Policy clearance

17. UNCTAD's publications will be subject to an effective clearance process within the secretariat to ensure adherence to United Nations quality standards and to ensure coherence on the part of the organization in all areas of major policy importance.

18.   The Strategy and Policy Coordination Unit will ensure clearance of all recurrent and non-recurrent publications.

Editing

19.   Editing is an important quality-control tool. In addition, in an environment where publications are translated into different languages, editing helps to ensure the quality and consistency (and reduces the cost) of the different language versions. All publications issued by UNCTAD will be subject to editing.

VII.   Updating, improving and streamlining the publications programme

20.   In accordance with the Accra Accord, UNCTAD should update and improve its publications policy by focusing on its flagship research products and on the major study series and high-quality technical materials. UNCTAD should also streamline its publications programme taking into consideration the needs of developing countries and the requirements identified in the intergovernmental process.

21.   The process of updating, improving and streamlining will be a continuous process, building on the progress already achieved. Streamlining of the publications programme, in accordance with paragraph 186 of the Accra Accord, has been a shared objective of both the member States and the secretariat for a number of years, with the ultimate goals of increasing focus, improving efficiency and effectiveness, and enhancing quality.

Numbers of UNCTAD publications

Publications	2004–2005	2006–2007	2008–2009	2010–2011 (budgeted)
Recurrent	98	89	100	86
Non-recurrent	147	144	125	120
Total	245	233	225	206

VIII.   Dissemination of publications

22.   Effective dissemination is crucial, and this matter must be given particular attention. All target audiences must be reached, using the most appropriate methods and technologies. Particular care must be taken to take account of the financial and technical constraints in developing countries.

Target audiences for UNCTAD publications

23.   UNCTAD's target audiences will be as follows:

(a)   Policymakers in member States;

(b)   Academia and research institutions;

(c)   International organizations;

(d)   The private sector;

(e)   Civil society;

> (f)   The media;

> (g)   The general public.

24.   Different publications will have different primary target audiences, and for each publication the specific target audiences must be identified from the outset.

25.   In order to enhance the effectiveness of dissemination to different target audiences, a central UNCTAD listing will be developed. The listing will be updated on a continuous basis.

Modes of dissemination

26.   Traditional paper-based dissemination has its limitations, both in terms of efficacy and of cost. Dissemination based on information and communications technologies (ICTs) has demonstrated both its efficacy and its cost-effectiveness, and such dissemination should be developed to the greatest possible extent. At the same time, there remains considerable demand for paper-based publications, particularly in developing countries where Internet access is limited, and this demand should continue to be satisfied.

27.   UNCTAD's online channels should be seen as one of the important vehicles for the dissemination of publications, where feasible. The production process for publications should take full account of the technical and skill requirements of efficient publishing online. To facilitate dissemination, each publication should contain an executive summary (abstract) and a listing of key words (metadata). Greater use should also be made of CD-ROM and flash memory technology, where feasible.

28.   Greater use should be made of UNCTAD's networks and in-country presence, such as the Virtual Institute Network, the Science and Technology for Development Network, the Global Network of Think Tanks, major training events organized by UNCTAD, and in-country ASYCUDA presence.

Sales publications

29.   Marketing of UNCTAD publications as sales publications should be seen as an important means of enhancing dissemination. In close cooperation with the United Nations Publications Sales and Marketing Cluster in the Department of Public Information (DPI), UNCTAD should seek to maximize the dissemination of UNCTAD sales publications, including through online bookshops. In these efforts, particular attention should be paid to the pricing policy for UNCTAD publications, in the light of their development objectives.

Interface with UNCTAD communications and web strategies

30.   In the implementation and review of the publications policy, full coherence with the communications and web strategies must be ensured. Both should:

> (a)   Foster knowledge *dissemination* based on UNCTAD's research;

> (b)   Further prioritize ways of increasing the access of audiences worldwide to flagship research products, major studies and high-quality technical material.

31.   In this regard, UNCTAD publications should be promoted online in a special and clearly visible section of the UNCTAD website. This section should be user-friendly for quick access to online publications, and should include a feedback section to allow the

public to give their views. In addition, all UNCTAD's publications should systematically be the subject of a series of communication products.

Translation

32. Translating publications is an important means of achieving more effective dissemination. Translation has become even more important with the advent of the Internet, which makes it possible to reach out directly to individual policymakers and other stakeholders throughout the world.

33. The UNCTAD secretariat, in close cooperation with the United Nations services concerned, should seek to intensify the translation of UNCTAD publications and explore all possible options to that end. Given the financial constraints faced by the United Nations, priority for translation should be given to those publications with the greatest potential impact in the languages concerned.

Co-publishing

34. Co-publishing – whereby the United Nations enters into an arrangement with an outside publisher for the publication of a specific product – is one way of giving material the widest possible dissemination in as many languages as possible. UNCTAD should therefore pursue co-publishing as a means of expanding the dissemination of its publications, reaching new audiences, in particular within civil society, and enhancing its visibility. It should also explore the possibility of establishing strategic relationships with publishing houses in both developed and developing countries and in countries with economies in transition;

IX. Scheduling major publications

35. The impact of UNCTAD's major publications will be enhanced through effective scheduling. To this end, maximum efforts will be made to avoid bunching of these publications at any given time of year.

36. The particular care given to launching flagship publications should be pursued and intensified. Member States should be briefed on the publications' content at the earliest possible stage.

X. Attribution of authorship

37. The policy of the United Nations with regard to the attribution of authorship recognizes the need to acknowledge original intellectual contributions and provide appropriate recognition for staff. This policy is to apply to "most materials of a technical nature". UNCTAD will encourage the attribution of authorship wherever possible, within the framework of the above-mentioned United Nations rule.

XI. Evaluation of publications

38. In accordance with Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX-17), the secretariat will carry out an annual survey of the publications issued during the previous year, as well as in-depth readership surveys of selected publications. The results of these surveys will be presented to the Working Party.

39.   The surveys will be based on questionnaires made available to member States and other stakeholders on the Internet, by post, and by electronic mail, and through distribution at UNCTAD meetings. The secretariat should seek to improve the design, methodology and scope of the readership surveys on an ongoing basis.

40.   Also in accordance with Board decision 449, all member States are encouraged to respond as fully as possible to readership surveys.

41.   In addition to publication surveys, web-based evaluation tools, as well as statistics such as the number of downloads of documents, sales, and citations of publications, could be used.

XII.   "Greening" of the UNCTAD publication process

42.   Efforts are currently ongoing in the United Nations Secretariat to promote sustainable publishing, aiming to achieve environmentally sound printing and distribution, and a code of ethics is being drawn up to strengthen United Nations system-wide practices. UNCTAD should participate fully in this initiative, for example through its efforts to achieve a good balance between traditional and electronic modes of dissemination.

Annex I

Trade and Development Board
Decision 449 (EX-17): UNCTAD's publications policy

The Trade and Development Board, taking into account the ongoing work in the secretariat to streamline UNCTAD's publications policy, the relevant reports, and the establishment of a Publications Committee within the secretariat, agrees that:

1.　The efforts undertaken by the secretariat in this respect are most welcome; the Board also takes note of the Working Party's satisfaction with the mechanisms put in place within the secretariat to ensure the systematic oversight and improvement of UNCTAD's publications activities;

2.　Member States be encouraged to take an active part in a transparent review of UNCTAD's publications policy through consultations between the member States and the secretariat, so as to ensure that publications meet their needs and fulfil the priorities set for UNCTAD;

3.　The Secretary-General of UNCTAD be invited to hold meetings with member States regarding UNCTAD's publications policy at an appropriate stage of the planning and review process, as follows:

(a)　The Working Party will, at the start of each year, meet informally with UNCTAD's programme managers to discuss the specific list of publications planned for the year; at the same time, the Working Party will also consider a report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of UNCTAD's publications policy and will report to the Trade and Development Board; the two meetings will not exceed two days altogether;

(b)　In the autumn of the first year of each biennium, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will meet informally with the members of the Working Party to discuss a draft list of publications proposed for the next biennium;

(c)　The Working Party will review the draft work programme early in the following year, including the draft list of proposed publications, after which the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will finalize his programme budget submission to the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the Working Party will review the proposed programme budget at the time it is submitted to the General Assembly and will report to the Trade and Development Board which, in turn, will endorse the recommendations to be transmitted to the General Assembly's review bodies;

(d)　The Working Party will also 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 on an annual basis; in the light of recent experience, the secretariat should seek to improve the design, methodology and scope of readership surveys so that they fulfil their crucial role;

(e)　All member States are encouraged to respond as fully as possible to readership surveys.

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Annex II

Accra Accord, paragraph 186[4]

186.   UNCTAD should fully implement Trade and Development Board decision 449 (EX-17) and, on that basis, it should update and improve its publications policy by focusing on its flagship research products and on the major study series and high-quality technical materials. UNCTAD should also streamline its publications programme taking into consideration the needs of developing countries and the requirements identified in the intergovernmental process. UNCTAD's biennial publications programme should continue to be reviewed and endorsed by the Trade and Development Board, according to established programme budget categories (recurrent, non-recurrent and technical publications), to ensure consistency, effectiveness and relevance.

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[4]   Excerpt from the Accra Accord, adopted by the twelfth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 25 April 2008 (UNCTAD/IAOS/2008/2).