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**Report of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and
Programme Performance on its eighty-sixth session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 2 to 6 October 2023



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Introduction

The eighty-sixth session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 2 to 6 October 2023. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

I. Action taken by the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance at its eighty-sixth session

A. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities

Agreed conclusions

The Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of evaluation, as a management tool to enhance accountability, organizational learning and evidence-based decision-making, in accordance with the UNCTAD evaluation policy and the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, as well as of the secretariat's update to member States on the implementation of relevant recommendations identified during the past evaluation;

Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

2. *Welcomes* the content of "Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview" (TD/B/WP/323), and encourages the secretariat to continue strengthening its evaluation function, in line with United Nations system-wide benchmarks;

3. *Takes note* of progress made by the secretariat on the implementation of results-based management, including through its new results framework;

4. *Requests* continued action, in line with the guidelines and practices of the United Nations Secretariat, to ensure the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness (including impact) and sustainability of UNCTAD interventions, facilitate the mainstreaming of United Nations cross-cutting issues and deliver on other evaluation recommendations;

External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2: Investment and enterprise

5. *Welcomes* the "External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2: Investment and Enterprise" (TD/B/WP/324) and the "Management response to the independent evaluation of subprogramme 2 – Investment and enterprise" (TD/B/WP(86)/CRP.2);

6. *Requests* that the secretariat implement the recommendations contained in the external evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2, taking into consideration the management response and the views expressed by member States during the eighty-sixth session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance;

7. *Looks forward* to considering the evaluation of subprogramme 3 at the eighty-eighth session of the Working Party in 2024.

6 October 2023

B. Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information

Agreed conclusions

The Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of member States' role in the preparation of the UNCTAD annual proposed programme plan and programme performance, and calls upon the UNCTAD secretariat to take due account of the membership's comments expressed during the session in the preparation of the proposed 2025 programme plan;
2. *Appreciates* the presentations provided by the secretariat, including by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, and the non-paper shared;
3. *Notes* the improvements made to the non-paper, notably the linkages with the Bridgetown Covenant and the results framework, and the consistent provision of a minimum of two results options for each subprogramme, and encourages the secretariat to provide the non-paper earlier;
4. *Calls upon* the UNCTAD secretariat to continue to mainstream, to the extent possible, the agreements outlined in the Bridgetown Covenant into the programme plan for 2025 and refer to and use its agreed terminology in the corresponding narratives;
5. *Stresses* the importance of work contributing to all four transformations outlined by the Bridgetown Covenant;
6. *Welcomes* the management information reports on UNCTAD staff gender representation, geographical representation and internships, and the 2024 proposed programme budget document, presented and made available by the secretariat on the Delegates Portal.

6 October 2023

C. Other action taken by the Working Party

1. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

(Agenda item 3)

1. At its closing plenary meeting, on 6 October 2023, the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance agreed upon a draft decision on the review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing, which would be presented to the seventy-fourth executive session of the Trade and Development Board for consideration and adoption (see annex I).

2. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities

(Agenda item 4)

2. Also at its closing plenary meeting, on 6 October 2023, the Working Party adopted agreed conclusions on the agenda item (see chapter I, section A, above).

3. Preparatory session for the 2025 programme plan and performance information

(Agenda item 5)

3. Also at its closing plenary meeting, on 6 October 2023, the Working Party adopted agreed conclusions on the agenda item (see chapter I, section B, above).

II. Chair's summary

A. Opening plenary meeting

4. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD delivered the opening remarks at the session. The following speakers made opening statements: the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of the European Union, on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the representative of Peru, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; the representative of Thailand, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific group; the representative of Namibia, on behalf of the African Group; the representative of Egypt, on behalf of the Arab Group; the representative of Canada, on behalf of the JUSSCANNZ group; the representative of China; the representative of Nigeria; the representative of the State of Palestine; the representative of Yemen; the representative of Pakistan; the representative of India; the representative of the Indonesia; the representative of Zimbabwe; the representative of Kenya; and the representative of Brazil.

5. In her opening remarks, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD briefed the membership on the role of UNCTAD in the launch of two high-impact initiatives at the Sustainable Development Goal Action Weekend: one on a new development paradigm focused on structural transformation and the other, the Sustainable Development Goal Stimulus programme.

6. The initiatives helped UNCTAD to stand out, as the current session of the General Assembly marked the halfway point towards achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One result was a growing interest in the productive capacities index. Collaborative contributions between the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, UNCTAD, the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had allowed for comprehensive and coordinated messaging on international finance reform issues. That “one voice” was key when going to other international forums, such as the Group of 20 and the Paris Summit.

7. Going forward, she said that the aim for the UNCTAD World Investment Forum was to contribute meaningfully to the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties. Thus, the Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes Work was leading an interdivisional working group, with partners that included the Conference presidency. She recalled that one of her key priorities was to bring a development perspective to climate change discussions. The Conference of the Parties would, for the first time, dedicate one day to discussions on trade. UNCTAD would participate, arguing that trade and climate regulation should be multilateral and coordinated, and also share a pavilion with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A recently developed toolbox was designed to help countries transform international investment agreements to better support the energy transition, along with concrete solutions to increase investment in sustainable energy and tackle the global climate crisis. The impact of the technology gap on the climate agenda in developing countries, and the need to unlock technology sharing globally, at scale, were likewise important areas.

8. The Sustainable Development Goal Stimulus programme, created by the United Nations Secretary-General to address key development finance challenges of the 2030 Agenda, followed a report on global debt published by the Global Crisis Response Group, whose task team UNCTAD coordinated. As part of the Sustainable Development Goal Summit, she had chaired a high-level debate on Sustainable Development Goal finance, and UNCTAD had been part of events related to the high-level dialogue on financing for development, as well as discussions and work on the Summit of the Future to be held in 2024.

9. She noted that work related to the Global Crisis Response Group and the Istanbul agreements continued. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had stated that the United Nations would continue to facilitate the trade of grain and fertilizers from the Russian Federation and Ukraine in global markets.

10. Furthermore, the Statistics Service had produced and taken to New York a new assessment on the cost of the six Sustainable Development Goal transition pathways, using a synergistic analytical method that would support countries in being strategic in their efforts to achieve the Goals.

11. In addressing the 2025 programme plan, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD provided an overview of subprogramme priorities, such as productive capacities, investment promotion for the energy transition, debt and development, technology sharing and trade and climate.

12. She also highlighted that work on gender mainstreaming remained a priority and that women's economic empowerment was central to that work, whether by enhancing women's participation in international trade, enabling women to benefit more from the digital economy or examining the challenges and opportunities for women cross-border traders. Improving statistics on gender and trade to better understand the gender dimensions of trade and facilitate evidence-based policies was an important part of the work.

13. Furthermore, she noted that results-based management was a fundamental element of the 2025 programme plan; implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant through result-based management continued to be an UNCTAD priority.

14. She also noted that the overarching results framework presented to member States in April and May 2023, which received positive feedback, was in place. The results proposed in the non-paper prepared for the session had a clear connection with the framework, with direct links to the four transformations, which was one step in operationalizing the framework and connecting it to UNCTAD corporate plan.

15. She likewise provided updates on the 2024 programme budget that was currently under committee consideration in New York. While her intention was to propose a comprehensive budget proposal for additional resources to address the expanded mandates of the Bridgetown Covenant that could not be addressed in the 2023 budget proposal, it was decided that the funding envelope for UNCTAD would be submitted at the maintenance level.

16. The 2024 programme plan and budget had been reviewed and considered at meetings of the Committee for Programme Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which she had attended. While the Advisory Committee issued its recommendations to the Fifth Committee, the Committee for Programme Coordination was not able to reach consensus on 10 programme entities, including UNCTAD.

17. On the mobilization of trust fund resources for technical cooperation, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD noted that the exceptionally high level of voluntary funding in 2021 decreased from \$51.2 million to \$41.5 million in 2022, with three major funding sources cutting their allocations. The sole exception was contributions from the United Nations system and other international organizations, which increased by 22 per cent compared with 2021. The United Nations as a whole was experiencing a decrease in voluntary contributions. In the first eight months of 2023, though, UNCTAD received \$30 million in extrabudgetary resources for technical cooperation. If that trend continued, voluntary funding might be higher than in 2022. Developed economies contributed \$9.4 million to UNCTAD trust funds, representing 23 per cent of overall voluntary funding in 2022. Funding from developing economies in 2022 amounted to \$15.5 million, accounting for 37 per cent of total trust fund resources, with most of that funding, as in the past, allocated to activities in their respective economies, mainly to implement Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) programmes.

18. Of extrabudgetary resources received by UNCTAD, some were channelled through "Delivering as one" funding mechanisms to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity led by UNCTAD. In 2022, UNCTAD access to that type of funding mechanism reached a record high, more than tripling the amount in 2021. From 2018 to 2022, a total of 242 requests required funding. She called on member States and development partners in a position to do so to enhance

funding support to UNCTAD technical cooperation and encouraged consideration of multi-donor and multi-year approaches, for UNCTAD to address requests in a timely manner, better plan technical cooperation activities and deliver in an agile and effective way.

19. Total technical cooperation expenditures increased by 16 per cent in 2022; delivery reached a new high of \$54.5 million. Almost 90 per cent of technical cooperation delivery was achieved through the 28 *UNCTAD Toolbox* products, with ASYCUDA, DMFAS and electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the digital economy the three largest technical cooperation products in 2022. Technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries showed an increase of 40 per cent compared with 2021. Thus, half of total technical cooperation delivery was for those countries.

20. She underscored that, in undertaking technical cooperation activities, UNCTAD had actively engaged with resident coordinator offices, yielding good results, as illustrated by the rising number of common country analyses and cooperation frameworks that UNCTAD had contributed to and increased access to multi-donor trust fund resources at the country level. Her office was working closely with the Technical Cooperation Section to enhance the results orientation of operational activities and clarify how technical cooperation projects and programmes contributed to the relevant output and outcome indicators in the overarching results framework. As part of implementing the technical cooperation strategy, a technical cooperation committee had been established and a task group had been created on implementing the United Nations integrated planning, management and reporting system.

21. The overview of independent evaluation activities at UNCTAD included the results of seven evaluations conducted on UNCTAD projects, a synthesis of lessons learned and the workplan for the following year. Greater emphasis had been placed on lessons learned and identifying common patterns, trends and recurring themes from across evaluations to generate insights and uncover underlying factors. Overall, beneficiary countries appreciated UNCTAD technical cooperation projects. Demand for assistance had increased, highlighting the comparative advantage of UNCTAD in providing specialized knowledge and quality research. Continued improvement was needed in results monitoring and following up at the country level to collect and report data on longer-term outcomes. The sustainability of project outcomes could also be strengthened with targeted measures and continued stakeholder engagement. Development of further operational guidance was needed for project managers on mainstreaming cross-cutting United Nations issues. The evaluation policy was updated in 2023 to reflect the latest United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards. The evaluation function continued to perform well and would continue to be strengthened, through tools, guidance, dissemination of evaluation results and establishment of a formal system for tracking recommendations.

22. The external evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2 would be presented by the evaluation team and the Division on Investment and Enterprise. The yearly evaluations of subprogrammes ensured the minimum level of evaluation coverage stipulated by the United Nations Secretariat and helped decision-making. The results for subprogramme 2 were positive. The evaluation assessed the subprogramme as highly relevant and efficient, found evidence of significant impact and that the subprogramme had contributed to an enhanced understanding of investment trends and policies, resulting in increased foreign direct investment inflows. Partnerships had been successful, though there was potential for development. UNCTAD welcomed the evaluation's six recommendations and had started working on leveraging partnerships, resource mobilization, improved communication and more systematic inclusion of United Nations cross-cutting issues. In addition, an update of the management response to the 2022 evaluation of subprogramme 1 had been provided. UNCTAD was on track in implementing the evaluation recommendations, and the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies was participating in and contributing to the latest results-based management efforts.

Discussion on technical cooperation

23. With regard to the funding of technical cooperation, the representatives of many regional groups and many delegates took note of the decline in extrabudgetary resources for UNCTAD technical cooperation in 2022 following the record high in 2021 and some called on development partners to enhance their financial support to UNCTAD technical cooperation, particularly in the form of non-earmarked contributions.

24. On the delivery of technical cooperation, several regional groups and many delegates encouraged UNCTAD to continue delivering technical assistance, with priority given to structurally weak economies and those with a challenging environment, and to ensure the necessary resources for implementing projects and programmes in those economies.

25. Many delegates appreciated UNCTAD technical cooperation efforts in actively participating in the reform of the United Nations development system, as reflected in the strengthened links with resident coordinators, significant increase in funds mobilized through “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms and participation in a rising number of common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. They also recognized the efforts being made by UNCTAD to create synergies among the three pillars of UNCTAD work on which the positive technical cooperation results were anchored, as well as to enhance collaboration with other agencies. Several regional groups and many delegates welcomed improvements in results-based management and integrating cross-cutting issues in technical cooperation activities. One regional group encouraged UNCTAD to continue those efforts, such as refining the overarching results framework and harmonizing results reporting across the institution.

26. Looking forward, one regional group and many delegates encouraged UNCTAD to make use of best practices from developing countries in the design of technical cooperation activities, address gaps in financing for development and ensure a smooth transition for graduating least developed countries, and some delegates encouraged UNCTAD to consider new economic models. Another regional group and several delegates called on UNCTAD to focus technical cooperation in Africa on trade facilitation, technology and innovation, debt management, financial inclusion and capacity-building, which would help African countries build resilience to future crises and support efforts in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Another regional group and another delegate noted the decrease in technical cooperation expenditures in Latin America and the Caribbean and requested that UNCTAD pay special attention to demand from the region. Some regional groups and several delegates urged UNCTAD to continue delivering assistance to the Palestinian people and allocate the necessary resources to ensure the fulfilment of paragraph 127 (bb) of the Bridgetown Covenant. One delegate suggested that UNCTAD use models and tools, such as the productive capacities index, in technical cooperation activities, assess the effects of the climate-related shocks on climate vulnerable countries, address growing debt problems and participate in the reform of the existing global financial infrastructure, and bridge the digital divide between the least developed countries and developed economies. Another delegate encouraged UNCTAD and developed countries to consider cooperation with the Brazilian Cooperation Agency to deliver demand-driven technical cooperation in various areas of interest to developing countries.

Discussion on the 2025 programme plan

27. The representative of one regional group expressed appreciation for the performance report provided by the secretariat on the implementation of deliverables in 2022 and, in line with the agreed conclusion from the previous session, looked forward to the same report for 2023.

28. The representatives of some regional groups appreciated the reports on UNCTAD staff geographical and gender representation and called on the secretariat to continue providing that information and take actions towards improving it.

29. The representative of one regional group commended the preparation of documentation for the preparatory session and the continuously improved consultation practices for the preparation of the programme plan and performance information. One

delegate requested that the non-paper on agenda item 5 be provided more in advance to facilitate preparation.

30. Several regional groups noted the need for continued improvements on effective and harmonized results reporting across all UNCTAD work and strengthening of results-based management, including refining the overarching results framework and performance indicators.

31. Some regional groups and one delegate encouraged UNCTAD to continue delivering assistance with priority to structurally weak economies, such as the least developed countries, countries in Africa and those with specific environmental challenges.

32. As part of considerations for 2025 programme plan, the regional groups and delegate encouraged UNCTAD to continue supporting developing countries in harnessing the potential of digital technologies and bridging the digital divide through the use of technology and to make models and tools, such as the productive capacities index and utilization of beyond gross domestic product (GDP) metrics, central to its work.

33. In addition, they noted the importance of addressing the high cost of debt, debt restructuring and exploring innovative financing mechanisms to ensure debt sustainability, in supporting developing economies to build resilience. While noting that the proposal for the 2025 programme plan addressed the priorities, they requested continued UNCTAD assistance in that area of work.

34. The representative of another regional group expressed appreciation for UNCTAD work to help the Palestinian people despite limited resources. He added that the Bridgetown Covenant required a review of the budget for the Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit to ensure for adequate resources. His regional group had submitted an official request to the secretariat in that regard.

35. One delegate appreciated UNCTAD collaboration with the International Trade Centre and the programmes related to empowering Palestinian refugees, women and girls and developing small and medium-sized enterprises. He expressed concern regarding the staffing of the Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit, which was operating with reduced staffing since the retirement of the Chief of Section. He also stressed that the limited extrabudgetary funding currently available to the Unit was scheduled to expire by the end of 2023. The 2023 programme budget proposal contained the establishment of a regular P-3 post for the Unit. The General Assembly approved a P-2 in lieu of a P-3, which he considered insufficient to handle such a sensitive portfolio. He expressed hope that a regular P-3 position for the Unit would be included in the upcoming budget submission.

B. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

(Agenda item 3)

36. The Chief of the Technical Cooperation Section of UNCTAD presented an overview of UNCTAD technical assistance delivered in 2022. He highlighted the increased resources mobilized through the “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms in 2022, though total voluntary funding to UNCTAD trust funds decreased to \$41.5 million. He stressed the high level of delivery in 2022. Expenditures pertinent to the least developed countries reached a record high of \$26.7 million, accounting for about half of technical cooperation delivery. He underlined the evolving structure and functioning of technical cooperation to better implement the recommendations of member States. He emphasized the enhanced engagement of UNCTAD in United Nations reform, updated database to record technical cooperation requests, strengthened results-based management, better integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment in technical cooperation and implementation of the technical cooperation strategy. The way forward included exploring a broad donor base for technical cooperation and further engaging in United Nations reform. In response to a question from one regional group, he explained the status of preparation of the updated version of the *UNCTAD Toolbox* and efforts to maintain or reduce the number of *Toolbox* products.

37. Some regional groups encouraged UNCTAD to further engage in United Nations reform as that demonstrated that UNCTAD was building on its comparative advantage at the country level when delivering activities in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. They also encouraged UNCTAD to continue to foster an interdivisional approach to create coherence and synergies between the three pillars of work and asked for a reduced number of *UNCTAD Toolbox* products. In addition, one regional group and one delegate requested consideration of broadening the sponsorship of Junior Professional Officers from developing countries.

38. A representative of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics presented the technical cooperation activities under subprogramme 4.

39. The representative of one regional group stated that members of the group provided support to technical cooperation work in trade facilitation and digitalization, which was valued by beneficiaries, as evidenced by the number of requests. His regional group stood ready to accompany those requests and had allocated resources to a trade facilitation project in the Pacific and ASYCUDA projects; some members of the group were key donors of the multi-year programme on the digital economy. One delegate noted the importance of the port decarbonization pilot project to foster new sustainable practices. Scaling up good work on women entrepreneurs in e-commerce and the digital economy was also a priority. Several delegates praised the subprogramme work for delivering transformative impact, by collecting revenues through the ASYCUDA system. Resource mobilization had been the main challenge thus far to achieve an upgrade of ASYCUDA and implementation of the single window. Another delegate stressed the benefits from the single window, such as the reduction in traffic at border crossings, and the importance of continuing science, technology and innovation policy reviews.

40. The division representative said that 60 formal requests had been received that remained unfulfilled. The work of the subprogramme had been shown to increase revenues for countries, improve efficiency and reduce carbon footprints at various levels: customs, ports and cross-border trade. She noted that the work of the subprogramme had contributed to the readiness of countries to engage in e-commerce and the digital economy.

41. A representative of the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies presented technical cooperation work under subprogramme 1 in 2022, undertaken by each branch, and the upcoming activities planned, and thanked donors for their financial contributions.

42. The representative of one regional group underlined the group's long-standing support for DMFAS and its continuing importance for debt sustainability in developing countries. He also called for further discussion on improving the measurement of the long-term developmental impact of various projects. One delegate joined in underlining the importance of DMFAS and reiterated that the Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit needed additional staff to execute its mandate. Some delegates highlighted the difficult debt situation in many developing countries and the importance of UNCTAD continuing its work on debt sustainability, as well as the nexus between development finance and climate adaptation and mitigation.

43. A representative of the UNCTAD Division on Investment and Enterprise presented an overview of the technical cooperation activities of the subprogramme, which were grounded on five policy frameworks: the Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development, the Reform Package for the International Investment Regime, the Global Action Menu for Investment Facilitation, the Entrepreneurship Policy Framework and the Accounting Development Tool. The division had demonstrated its ability to provide immediate and impactful support in response to the global crisis. He acknowledged the positive assessment of the evaluations conducted on technical assistance projects and elaborated on new tools developed by the division to better monitor the impact of subprogramme interventions. A recent evaluation of two of the division's technical assistance programmes had been similarly positive. He noted that the programmes were relevant and efficient, responding to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries.

44. The representative of one regional group and many delegates recognized the work of the division, stressing the focus on sustainable development. One regional group and one

delegate said that the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement was an opportunity for UNCTAD to support developing countries in its implementation. They also highlighted the importance of progressively focusing on climate and the energy transition.

45. The division representative elaborated on the current and future work of the division on financing the energy transition, stressing that the issue was a key track of the 2023 World Investment Forum. He announced work on a technical assistance/capacity-building programme to support member States and provided an update on work in support of investment facilitation and promotion, particularly in the Sustainable Development Goals sector.

46. A representative of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities presented the technical cooperation activities undertaken. She provided an overview of activities in the areas of trade policy and trade intelligence, commodities and sustainable export diversification, trade through a gender lens, and competition and consumer policies for inclusive trade.

47. The representative of one regional group highlighted the importance of the work of the division on non-tariff barriers, competition and consumer policies and gender. Given the high number of requests for assistance on competition and consumer policies, he asked whether there was a way to refocus more UNCTAD resources on those issues.

48. Several delegates recognized the contributions of the division in capacity-building for women cross-border traders, regional integration by addressing non-tariff barriers, export diversification and the creative economy. They stressed the need for the division to broaden its work on leveraging critical minerals to move out of commodity dependence. Some delegates welcomed division work on trade institution building in preparation for accession to the World Trade Organization.

49. The division representative said that analytical work on critical minerals would be expanding. She thanked member States for the constructive partnership on collecting non-tariff barriers data in Africa towards increased transparency of trade. More information on the results of work in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area would be shared in 2024.

50. A representative of the UNCTAD Division on Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes presented the highlights of technical assistance to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as research work. The main objectives of assistance were transforming economies through diversification and transforming to a more sustainable and resilient future. He highlighted fostering economic and export diversification; building productive capacities; improving trade, transit and transport logistics; building resilience in small island developing States; enhancing trade and market access; supporting least developed country graduation; and supporting multilateralism. He cited results obtained in Angola, the participation of West Africa in value chains, the success of the productive capacities index and launch of a second-generation index and vulnerability profiles for the least developed countries.

51. The representative of one regional group welcomed technical assistance to the least developed countries and referred to evaluation of the impact of policies implemented in relation to the productive capacities index, as well as work on geographical indications in Africa as the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization had signed agreements with the World Intellectual Property Organization. One delegate requested clarification on UNCTAD work on geographical indications compared to the work of the World Intellectual Property Organization, as well as industrial challenges and in the context of climate change. Another delegate, welcoming UNCTAD technical assistance, noted the forthcoming launch of a cooperation memorandum between his country and UNCTAD to cooperate with the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area in Lusaka. Several delegates welcomed the assistance provided to five least developed countries for their upcoming graduation.

52. The division representative thanked delegations for their support and explained that the national productive capacities gap assessment drew on the productive capacities index

as a foundation for evidence-based policymaking. He clarified that work on geographical indications was entirely consistent with that of the World Intellectual Property Organization. The division worked with producers and Governments to identify niche products, with a high potential for export, and assisted them in the development and application of geographical indications. He noted that there were many requests that lacked funding.

53. A representative of the UNCTAD Statistics Service introduced the technical cooperation and statistical capacity development activities undertaken. She highlighted that the service focused on producing quality, open-source data; coordinating statistical activities across UNCTAD; and building country capacity in trade and development statistics and the Sustainable Development Goals. E-learning courses on merchandise and service statistics had trained 8,600 country participants since 2016, 44 per cent of whom were women.

54. The representative of one regional group noted how reliable statistics underpinned the core work of UNCTAD; the work of the service supported evidence-based outputs. He also noted that work on measuring illicit financial flows allowed policies to be assessed quantitatively and stressed the importance of measuring gender in trade.

55. One delegate stressed the importance of statistics to measure trade and economic activity, within the context of sustainable development. He noted the strong statistical outputs from the relatively small team with financial resource constraints and encouraged the secretariat to reconsider the human resource limitations to further enable the work.

56. Another delegate noted the success of the Statistics Service as a stand-alone entity, which had strengthened statistical activities. He noted how UNCTAD efforts to measure trade in services could complement national projects on measuring the creative economy.

57. Some delegates welcomed progress on a project on measuring South–South cooperation; one delegate requested further member State briefings on progress in the field, as it was linked to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and measuring progress beyond GDP, feeding into the upcoming Summit of the Future.

C. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities

(Agenda item 4)

1. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

58. Under the agenda item, a representative of the secretariat presented an overview report (TD/B/WP/323) containing synthesized results obtained from six independent evaluations completed between June 2022 and July 2023. The report also contained the evaluation plan for the following year, consisting of nine ongoing or new evaluations to be completed between July 2023 to July 2024.

59. Evaluation findings showed that UNCTAD technical cooperation projects continued to be highly appreciated by recipient countries and were fully relevant to their development needs. In the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNCTAD interventions were crucial in supporting member States to combat the pandemic's economic impacts. Likewise, evaluations demonstrated that UNCTAD was flexible and innovative in continuing the delivery of projects despite the major disruptions linked with the pandemic. The report also noted several areas for improvement for UNCTAD, specifically regarding the integration of performance indicators, sustainability of project results, communication and dissemination of project outputs and mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues.

60. Several regional groups and one delegate reiterated their support for evaluation as a key management tool in ensuring the continuous improvement of UNCTAD work. Several regional groups highlighted the findings related to communication and cross-cutting issues and called for UNCTAD to ensure that evaluation recommendations in relation to those areas were fully implemented.

61. The secretariat representative confirmed that implementation and tracking of recommendations was a core focus for the year ahead.

2. External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2: Investment and enterprise

62. A three-member evaluation team presented the results of the evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2, on investment and enterprise (TD/B/WP/324).

63. The evaluation team found that subprogramme 2 work continued to be highly relevant to UNCTAD mandates and the Sustainable Development Goals. Overall, subprogramme 2 efficiently managed its resources towards achieving desired outcomes, while there remained some room for improvement in monitoring and tracking progress. Subprogramme 2 had been highly effective in achieving its intended outcomes and consistency in delivering planned results, often exceeding expectations in both quantity and quality. Subprogramme 2 contributions were evident through lasting policy and legislative reforms and the foreign direct investment performance of beneficiary countries, although causality was difficult to establish. Subprogramme 2 had been highly successful in leveraging external partnerships, many non-traditional to the United Nations. However, there was scope for increasing the depth of those partnerships, in particular with Geneva-based member State delegates. The subprogramme had taken important steps to address gender mainstreaming. There was, however, a need to better integrate other equity and inclusivity related matters, which to date was limited to some exceptions.

64. The evaluation team made six recommendations for subprogramme 2: regularly conduct a portfolio review of its products and services; streamline its monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanisms; enhance the coordination and collaboration of the division within UNCTAD as well as with other United Nations entities; enhance resource mobilization efforts in UNCTAD and the Division on Investment and Enterprise; further enhance communication and dissemination of division outputs; and strengthen human rights and gender mainstreaming initiatives.

65. The Director of the UNCTAD Division on Investment and Enterprise presented a management response to the evaluation. He noted that the evaluation underscored the robustness of the strategy implemented by subprogramme 2 in recent years and confirmed the conclusions of previous assessments of the subprogramme and its activities, particularly with regard to the consistent implementation of results-based management and alignment with mandates provided by member States.

66. Several regional groups and delegates welcomed the evaluation results, which mirrored their own assessment and appreciation for the quality of subprogramme 2 work. Some regional groups and several delegates concurred with the evaluation conclusions and recommendations and called for further outreach and collaboration with Geneva-based delegates. One regional group and some delegates also concurred with the recommendation calling for continuous monitoring and reporting of subprogramme 2 products. Some regional groups drew attention to the importance of mainstreaming gender and other cross-cutting issues.

67. In response, the Director confirmed the endorsement of all recommendations and reiterated the commitment of the secretariat and the division to work with member States on their implementation.

68. One delegate commented on the nature of foreign direct investment data used for analysis in the *World Investment Report*. In response, the Director elaborated on the complex nature of foreign direct investment data and the leadership role of the subprogramme in improving definitions and foreign direct investment statistics.

D. Preparatory session for the 2025 programme plan and performance information

(Agenda item 5)

69. In his opening statement, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD provided an overview of the non-paper for 2025; the changes to the template and the review process for the 2025 programme budget; a recapitulation of the programme budget process; and an update on the 2024 proposed budget.

70. Touching on the non-paper, he underscored the connection between the proposed results and the results-based framework, thus showing how results contributed to a high-level outcome at the organizational level, namely, the four transformations of the Bridgetown Covenant. He stressed that, as the framework was in place, UNCTAD started using it to structure work on monitoring delivery and measuring contributions. He added that as the organization was refining indicators, reporting on progress made should be possible soon.

71. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of several regional groups commended the overall improvement in the non-paper and the linkages with the Bridgetown Covenant and overarching results framework.

72. The representative of one regional group pointed out that some performance indicators related to certain results options could be improved to be more outcome oriented. He welcomed the addition of the organigram into the Delegates Portal and expressed appreciation for how sustainability, as the main cross-cutting issue, was defined in the non-paper. He also noted that continuous attention should be dedicated to the deliverables table in the upcoming draft document, to ensure they were reported consistently across all subprogrammes.

73. The representatives of several regional groups and one delegate expressed appreciation for the coordination efforts mentioned, particularly the ones in relation to the World Trade Organization working group, gender committee and on small island developing States and the development of an organizational strategy for those countries. They requested more information and details on that work, through a dedicated session or other regular communication venues and channels.

74. The representative of another regional group also appreciated UNCTAD engagement with the Global Crisis Response Group and its work, noting the progress and results.

75. Some regional groups noted the importance of continuing to pay attention to gender from trade and development perspective. The representative of one regional group welcomed the management report on UNCTAD gender representation and asked the secretariat, if possible, to provide gender statistics by division in the report.

76. Some regional groups and one delegate noted the potential of the digital economy for development. To be successful, it should be managed well, and they thus stressed the importance of UNCTAD work focused on making countries ready to benefit from the digital economy.

77. One delegate noted that further consideration had to be given to frontier technologies as they presented opportunities for development but could also result in inequalities. UNCTAD should thus focus on helping developing countries in navigating the issue. He also welcomed recent International Maritime Organization and UNCTAD cooperation for the launch of the *Review of Maritime Transport*.

78. Some regional groups and several delegates noted the importance of dealing with a high cost of debt and growing debt vulnerabilities and the relevance of UNCTAD work in the area, particularly timely updates for member States on the issue.

79. One regional group and several delegates noted the importance and role of the climate financing, as a crucial element to achieve sustainable development. Providing relevant analysis and creating capacities could help developing countries to find innovative climate finance mechanisms and make better decisions to face the climate crisis. The representative of another regional group noted that that area of work might not be the best comparative advantage of UNCTAD.

80. Some regional groups and delegates agreed on the crucial role of foreign direct investment and the need to define a strategy to harness investment contributing to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, noting the importance of UNCTAD continuing its work in the area, and specifically in investment in a green transition for developing countries.

81. One regional group noted its support for UNCTAD work oriented towards sustainable resilience and economic diversification through trade, in particular regional trade integration and the benefits it could bring, notably in the African Continental Free Trade Area. Another regional group and one delegate commended the UNCTAD work on policies to minimize the impacts of particular vulnerabilities of developing countries and stressed the usefulness of tools such as the productive capacities index. They invited UNCTAD to continue perfecting the index to support member States with fundamental information for their policymaking.

82. One regional group and several delegates agreed on the importance of reinforcing multilateralism, increasing South–South cooperation and the use by developing countries of trade policies, including those directed towards cutting emissions.

83. Another delegate proposed adding text to the non-paper document, under subprogramme 3, in section 1, on a study on trends, developments and challenges for international trade, as well as recommendations, in relation to the application of unilateral economic, financial or trade coercive measures. Several delegates supported the proposal to add text on unilateral economic coercive measures under subprogramme 3.

84. The representatives of some regional groups stated their disagreement with the proposed additional language as UNCTAD had no mandate regarding unilateral economic coercive measures, which were mentioned in the Bridgetown Covenant only as part of analysis, while paragraph 127 (g) of the document clarified the work on non-tariff measures.

85. The Chief of Staff of UNCTAD thanked delegations for their comments and feedback on the agenda items of technical cooperation, evaluation and the programme plan, which would be brought to their attention for review at the next session of the Working Party in January 2024.

86. In response to questions and issues raised during the discussion under agenda item 5, he clarified that the objective of the World Trade Organization internal working group was to enhance coherence of UNCTAD work in areas that concerned that Organization and to foster positive engagement between the two institutions. The two focal points at the senior level were the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the responsible Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Meetings were held periodically to foster positive management, engagement and mutual support. He stated that, internally, a working group with all divisions represented was chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General to foster coherence in how UNCTAD interacted with the World Trade Organization.

87. The Chief of Staff indicated that, on reporting on deliverables in reference to the previous agreed conclusions, where UNCTAD was asked to explore how to do this, as in the past in the context of the previous session of the Working Party, the secretariat again planned to present the report in the same format together with the draft programme plan submitted to the Working Party.

88. He noted that, currently, reporting on gender statistics at the corporate level was provided by Secretary-General of UNCTAD to the United Nations Secretariat. However, the request for gender statistics by division would be brought to the attention of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

89. Finally, on the timely submission of the non-paper to facilitate greater preparation in advance of the preparatory session, he clarified that the non-paper was prepared with the idea of distribution in the conference room on the day of a session to facilitate engagement between delegates and divisions. The non-paper did not have advance submission requirement of four weeks as did official documents that were provided for formal review in January. He added that, each year, the secretariat made an effort to circulate the non-paper some days in advance of the programme plan session; for the current session, it had been provided three days in advance.

E. Closing plenary meeting

90. At the closing plenary meeting, some delegates requested that their statements made under specific agenda item discussions be reflected in the report of the current session. The representative of one regional group noted that, while delegations could request inclusion of certain issues in the report, holding informal sessions allowed for in-depth conversations. He recognized that there were differences of opinion on some matters that had been discussed at length at previous conferences, as reflected in outcome documents, and suggested that the focus of efforts and resources should be on the many issues for which there was consensus.

91. The Chair confirmed that comments made by those delegates would be included in the Chair's summary of the report of the session.

92. The representatives of some regional groups and some delegates encouraged the secretariat to continuously improve on the new result-based management tool used for UNCTAD work. They considered it important that the secretariat provide frequent briefings on the *UNCTAD Toolbox* and different projects that UNCTAD was implementing, as well as ensure that permanent representatives were informed of projects and outcomes, particularly those being implemented in their countries. They called on developing country partners, and members in a position to do so, to increase contributions to UNCTAD funds, particularly in the form of non-earmarked contributions, to allow the broader membership to benefit from UNCTAD technical cooperation projects.

93. The representative of one regional group underscored that the importance of donor funding countries could not be overstated. Continued financial support from donors, capacity-building initiatives and assistance on policy reform were essential to effectively implement the Goals and promote inclusive and sustainable development. She further recognized the role of UNCTAD in promoting inclusive and sustainable development in her region, integrating sustainability principles into trade and investment policies and advancing the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. She also recognized the commitment of UNCTAD to Agenda 2063 and continued partnership with the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, urging UNCTAD to continue to design and deliver technical cooperation in a flexible and innovative way to help developing countries in building resilience to better address current and future crises and support efforts in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

94. One delegate noted that, as one of the three pillars of UNCTAD, technical cooperation activities went hand-in-hand with socioeconomic development. His delegation had contributed towards development, structural change and moving to a green, digital economy for developing countries. He requested further information on the streamlined *UNCTAD Toolbox* and welcomed the external evaluation of subprogramme 2, as they helped to the relevance, efficacy, transparency and results of UNCTAD work. He hoped the secretariat would draw on recommendations and strengthen partnerships, as well as promote synergies between divisions and strengthen gender equality. He believed member States had an important role in putting together a plan of technical cooperation projects.

95. Another delegate noted the upcoming strategic events for UNCTAD and the importance of maintaining momentum. He likewise expressed interest in briefings so that delegates could be prepared to collaborate.

III. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

96. At its opening plenary meeting, on 2 October 2023, the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance elected Mr. Jesús Mario Chacón Carrillo (Mexico) as Chair and Mr. Thomas Nauta (Kingdom of the Netherlands) as Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

97. Also at its opening plenary meeting, on 2 October 2023, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda, as contained in document TD/B/WP/322. The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing.
4. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities:
 - (a) Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview;
 - (b) External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2: Investment and enterprise.
5. Preparatory session for the 2025 programme plan and performance information.
6. Provisional agenda of the eighty-seventh session of the Working Party.
7. Other business.
8. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

C. Provisional agenda of the eighty-seventh session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 6)

98. At its closing plenary meeting, on 6 October 2023, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda of its eighty-seventh session, as contained in a non-paper dated 3 October 2023 (see annex II).

D. Other business

(Agenda item 7)

99. There were no further issues presented for consideration by the Working Party.

E. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 8)

100. At its closing plenary meeting, on 6 October 2023, the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance approved the report of the session and authorized the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex I

Draft decision for consideration by the Trade and Development Board

Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

(Agenda item 3)

The Trade and Development Board

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the technical cooperation activities carried out by the UNCTAD secretariat in cooperation with the beneficiaries and development partners;
2. *Takes note* of the decrease in extrabudgetary contributions in 2022 after the record high in 2021, and takes note with satisfaction of the significant increase in funds mobilized through “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms;
3. *Reaffirms* the role of UNCTAD technical cooperation as one of the three fundamental pillars of UNCTAD, and stresses the importance of coordination among those pillars for coherent and mutually reinforced assistance;
4. *Requests* UNCTAD to pursue its efforts in providing member States with demand-driven, innovative and responsive technical assistance, in line with its mandate and the UNCTAD technical cooperation strategy, and requests the secretariat to present the streamlined *UNCTAD Toolbox* currently under preparation by the next session of the Working Party;
5. *Encourages* UNCTAD to further strengthen its interdivisional approach to develop and implement comprehensive products on priority themes with the aim of reaching the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals pertinent to trade;
6. *Encourages* UNCTAD to pursue further its efforts in engaging in United Nations development system reform with enhanced collaboration with the United Nations resident coordinator system, in cooperation with partner agencies from the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, as well as to promote and to disseminate technical cooperation and assistance provided by UNCTAD programmes in developing countries, including through domestic and regional agencies and organizations;
7. *Stresses* the importance of sufficient and predictable funding to ensure effective technical cooperation, and encourages countries in position to do so to provide UNCTAD with multi-year contributions, including to the trust fund for the least developed countries, to increase the sustainability of UNCTAD technical assistance, underlining the importance of results-based management and the relevance of non-earmarked funding, while reaffirming the need to continue improving the application of good governance, transparency and accountability.

Annex II

Provisional agenda of the eighty-seventh session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2025, part A of the proposed programme budget.
4. Provisional agenda of the eighty-eighth session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex III

Attendance*

1. Representatives of the following members of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance attended the session:

Albania	Morocco
Angola	Namibia
Bahamas	Nepal
Barbados	Nicaragua
Belarus	Nigeria
Cambodia	Pakistan
Cameroon	Peru
China	Portugal
Egypt	Russian Federation
Gabon	Spain
Georgia	State of Palestine
Honduras	Switzerland
India	Thailand
Indonesia	Togo
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Trinidad and Tobago
Iraq	Tunisia
Jamaica	United States of America
Japan	Viet Nam
Kenya	Yemen
Kuwait	Zambia
Latvia	Zimbabwe
Mexico	

2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:
European Union

* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP(86)/INF.1.