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the Programme Budget
Seventy-ninth session
Geneva, 20–22 January 2020

Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget on its seventy-ninth session

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 20 to 22 January 2020

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I. Action taken by the Working Party at its seventy-ninth session

A. Agreed conclusions on the review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2021, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

The Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget,

Having considered and discussed the proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance for 2019,

1. *Takes note* of the UNCTAD proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance for 2019 as contained in document TD/B/WP(79)/INF.1, without prejudice to the necessary adjustments in light of the outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development;
2. *Requests* the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to take full account of comments and inputs provided during the seventy-ninth session of the Working Party and document TD/B/WP(79)/INF.1 for the purposes of his submission of inputs for the proposed UNCTAD programme budget for the year 2021 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for subsequent consideration by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies;
3. *Requests* the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to ensure that the relevant views expressed by member States during intergovernmental deliberations at the seventy-ninth session of the Working Party, a subsidiary body of the Trade and Development Board, are transmitted in a timely manner to the entities dealing with programmatic and budgetary issues;
4. *Urges* the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, for future programme budget cycles, to issue instructions to UNCTAD divisions to ensure coherence and a broader representation of the programme plan and performance of UNCTAD, to complement the instructions issued by the relevant United Nations entities in New York, and to share such instructions with member States in advance of the relevant session of the Working Party;
5. *Requests* the UNCTAD secretariat to seek guidance from the United Nations Secretariat on measuring the impact of the activities under the research and analysis pillar and to communicate potential improvements to the programme plan and performance information template;
6. *Stresses* the importance that UNCTAD have adequate resources to fully implement the mandate entrusted to it, following the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development;
7. *Recalls*, to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the request included in the agreed conclusions of the seventy-seventh session of the Working Party to accompany this programme plan and performance information process with supporting documentation, so as to undertake a comprehensive review of the proposed draft programme plan, and to strictly observe the agreed deadlines;
8. *Requests* the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to ensure that the future programme plan and performance information includes a clear indication of lessons learned with the resulting considerations for the programme plan;
9. *Expresses concern* about the delays in formally adopting the agreed terms of reference for future sessions of the Working Party following the agreement on the document by member States in 2018; and calls upon the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to actively support bridging the requests of the member States with the procedural requirements of the United Nations budgetary process;

10. *Invites* the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to make available to the member States of UNCTAD the documentation on the submissions he has made to the United Nations entities dealing with programmatic and budgetary issues on the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2021.

*Closing plenary meeting
22 January 2020*

B. Other action taken by the Working Party

1. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2021, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

1. At its closing plenary meeting on 22 January 2020, the Working Party adopted the agreed conclusions on this agenda item.

2. Provisional agenda for the eightieth session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 4)

2. Also at its closing plenary meeting, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda for its eightieth session (see annex I).

II. Chair's summary

A. Proceedings

3. The seventy-ninth session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget was held in Geneva from 20 to 22 January 2020. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

B. Opening statements

4. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD made a statement. Statements were made by the representatives of the following delegations: Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Panama on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; Iraq on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group; the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the Russian Federation; and Egypt.

5. In her opening statement, the Deputy Secretary-General stated that the year 2021 was part of the three-year trial period of the transition from a biennial budget cycle to an annual budget cycle, at the end of which lessons learned could inform the way forward. This was a complex process, and the secretariat had closely accompanied member States throughout the last budget cycle, making known the views of member States as expressed at the Trade and Development Board during the deliberations of the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and that UNCTAD intended to do the same for the 2021 programme plan.

6. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that the format of the programme plan and performance information document had recently undergone some significant changes, including with regard to the presentation of information, with a greater reliance on textual rather than visual interpretations as had been done for the year 2020. Other changes meant that additional strategic information was now being requested. Final instructions on the format had been received only in January 2020, after the secretariat had finalized and issued the present document, and the necessary adjustments had been made and the latest version of the document expeditiously distributed to delegates.

7. The Deputy Secretary-General underscored that the programme plan for 2021 would be reviewed and aligned with the outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. She stressed, however, that it would be challenging to make adjustments in time prior to the deliberations of the Fifth Committee in 2020. UNCTAD had already advised the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget of this constraint and discussions were in progress in order to find the best solution, with two options under consideration, namely to submit a revised version either to the November 2020 session or to the resumed session in March 2021.

C. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2021, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

8. Several representatives of regional groups expressed concern with regard to the trend of decreasing resources for UNCTAD, highlighting that UNCTAD required sufficient, predictable and stable resources to fulfil its mandate. Some representatives of regional groups noted that funding should be balanced across subprogrammes and pillars of work and not concentrated in some areas over others.

9. Several representatives of regional groups also expressed reservations about the extent to which the Working Party would be able to provide effective oversight given the changes to the format of the programme plan and performance information document. The new practice of highlighting one result per subprogramme gave a somewhat incomplete and fragmented picture, and many representatives of regional groups and delegations requested that the secretariat strive to choose examples from all three pillars of work and that could present a more representative picture of the overall work of each subprogramme.

10. Several representatives of regional groups and delegations expressed concern with regard to whether a review of the programme plan and performance information document could be comprehensive and yield meaningful results without a consideration of the linked resource implications and, in this regard, called on the finalization of discussions on the terms of reference of the Working Party.

11. The representative of one regional group welcomed changes to the format of the document, in particular that a strategy segment was now also available at the subprogramme level and that the contribution of the work of the secretariat to helping achieve the Sustainable Development Goals was now more evident.

12. The representative of one regional group expressed reservations about the choice of the highlighted result for subprogramme 1, which did not seem to be at the core of the subprogramme's business nor employ a significant part of its resources and included concepts about which there might currently not be consensus; drew attention to the fact that there appeared to be no indication of lessons learned in the preparation of the 2021 workplan; and expressed concern with regard to the increase in proposed deliverables and activities in view of the trend of decreasing resources for UNCTAD.

13. A representative of the secretariat noted that the consideration of budgetary matters was a prerogative of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. Further, the Secretary-General of the United Nations would ultimately define the final resource requirements for consideration by the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. In the absence of resource elements for 2021, other background information such as the resource allocations for 2020¹ was available to provide a more comprehensive picture.

¹ A/74/6 (Sect. 12).

III. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

14. At its opening plenary meeting on 20 January 2020, the Working Party elected Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour (Islamic Republic of Iran) as its Chair and Ms. Una Kepite (Latvia) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

15. At the same meeting, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/WP/301). The agenda was thus as follows:

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 2021, part II of the proposed programme budget.
4. Provisional agenda for the eightieth session of the Working Party.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

C. Provisional agenda for the eightieth session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 4)

16. At its closing plenary meeting on 22 January 2020, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda for its eightieth session (see annex I).

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

(Agenda item 6)

17. At the same meeting, the Working Party authorized the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report on its seventy-ninth session after the session.

Annex I

Provisional agenda for the eightieth session of the Working Party

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Technical cooperation strategy.
4. Provisional agenda for the eighty-first session of the Working Party.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex II

Attendance²

1. Representatives of the following members of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget attended the session:

China	Iraq
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Russian Federation

2. Representatives of the following States not members of the Working Party attended the session:

Albania	Mozambique
Bulgaria	Nepal
Burkina Faso	New Zealand
Colombia	Nigeria
Congo	Oman
Croatia	Panama
Cuba	Peru
Djibouti	Republic of Moldova
France	Romania
Gabon	Spain
Gambia	Sri Lanka
Guatemala	Sweden
Kenya	Syrian Arab Republic
Kuwait	Togo
Lebanon	Tunisia
Madagascar	Turkey
Malaysia	Yemen
Morocco	Zambia

² This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP(79)/INF.2.