



**United Nations
Conference
on Trade and
Development**

Distr.
GENERAL

TD/B/COM.2/ EM.17/1
7 September 2005

Original: ENGLISH

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Commission on Investment, Technology
and Related Financial Issues

Expert Meeting on Positive Corporate Contributions to the Economic
and Social Development of Host Developing Countries

Geneva, 31 October - 2 November 2005

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ANNOTATIONS*

I. Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Positive corporate contributions to the economic and social development of host developing countries
4. Adoption of the report of the Meeting

* This document was submitted on the above-mentioned date as a result of processing delays.

II Annotations to the provisional agenda

Item 1: Election of officers

1. It is recommended that the Expert Meeting elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson-cum-Rapporteur.

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda

2. The provisional agenda is reproduced in section I above. A detailed programme will be made available one week before the meeting.

Item 3. Positive corporate contributions to the economic and social development of host developing countries

3. At its ninth session in March 2005, the Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues decided to convene an Expert Meeting on positive corporate contributions to the economic and social development of host developing countries, in pursuit of the mandate contained in the São Paulo Consensus of June 2004, paragraph 58, which calls for UNCTAD to 'carry out analytical work with a view towards facilitating and enhancing positive corporate contributions to the economic and social development of host developing countries'.

4. The concept of corporate responsibility (CR) involves a broad range of fundamental social and economic development issues, including human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and good governance. At its core lies the economic dimension. In fact, the immediate significant impact of firms and their good corporate behaviour is in the economic area and especially on development. This goes beyond philanthropy and such normative issues as paying ones taxes, abiding by the rule of law in host countries and refraining from bad corporate behaviour (such as employing restrictive or discriminatory business practices). Indeed, companies can and do do more: they engage in technology transfer and training of local personnel, they build up local and cross-border supplier linkages, create employment and entrepreneurship, invest in poverty-ridden areas and engage women workers and entrepreneurs in these processes; in brief, they proactively join in the economic development process.

5. The scope of the economic dimension of the CR concept needs to be explored with a view to identifying the elements that could constitute the parameters through which positive corporate contributions are, and can be better, achieved.

6. The Expert Meeting will commence this process by identifying the areas that are in the common interest of countries and firms, and determining what companies think the economic dimension of the CR concept could involve. The Meeting will hence look into examples of company and industry guidelines and best practices, country policies in encouraging such practices and current projects. It will provide first answers to what this concept should entail and how it should be pursued in the future, with a view to developing a common language and understanding concerning the economic and development dimension of CR.

7. To facilitate the discussions, the UNCTAD secretariat will prepare an issues note on positive corporate contributions to the economic development of host developing countries that will look into (a) investment in poor countries; (b) the provision of goods and services; (c) the creation of employment, enhancement of skill levels of the local workforce and the creation of linkages; (d) the transfer of technology to host countries; (e) ethical business behaviour; (f) contribution to public revenue generation; and (g) minimizing negative effects of business restructuring. In addition, experts are expected to prepare brief papers on the subject under discussion. These papers will be made available at the Meeting in the form and language in which they are received.

Documentation

TD/B/COM/2/EM.17/2 Positive corporate contributions to the economic and social development of host developing countries

Item 4. Adoption of the report of the Meeting

8. The report of the Expert Meeting will be submitted to the Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues at its next session (Geneva, March 2006). The Expert Meeting may wish to authorize the Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chairperson, to prepare a final report after the conclusion of the Meeting.

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