

Distr.: Restricted  
15 August 2018

English only

**Trade and Development Board  
Working Party on the Strategic Framework  
and the Programme Budget**

Seventy-sixth session

Geneva, 3–5 September 2018

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 5:

Africa, least developed countries and special programmes

## **Management response to the external evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 5: Africa, least developed countries and special programmes<sup>1</sup>**

### *Executive summary*

The Trade and Development Board, at its sixty-second annual session, requested the UNCTAD secretariat to conduct an independent evaluation of subprogramme 5 on Africa, least developed countries and special programmes (SP5). The evaluation assessed the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, partnerships and human rights and gender equality aspects of SP5 in the period 2013–2017.

The UNCTAD secretariat takes note of the conclusion that each of the outputs produced under SP5, including publications and technical cooperation and consensus-building efforts, are of high quality and relevant to the UNCTAD mandates on trade and development, in particular for Africa, the least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and other economies with specific structural vulnerabilities. In addition, the evaluation noted that the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (ALDC) had been efficient in meeting its targets for various outputs, including a 93 per cent implementation rate for publications.

The evaluation emphasized that efforts to rebalance the product portfolio of SP5, including research and technical cooperation activities, could enhance the impact and sustainability of activities. At the same time, an enhanced results-based monitoring system could enable the better measurement of outcomes and country-level impacts directly linked to programme activities and technical cooperation initiatives. The evaluation noted that SP5 had made significant strides in achieving its intended outcomes to build productive capacities for economic development and poverty reduction, and underscored that UNCTAD should assess the human and financial resource allocations under which SP5 operated, to inform interdivisional resource (re)allocations.

The secretariat wishes to express its sincere appreciation for the external evaluation

<sup>1</sup> See TD/B/WP/292 and TD/B/WP(76)/CRP.2.



of SP5 and commends the evaluation team for their dedication and professionalism in producing an independent and objective evaluation.

This response is divided into three chapters. The first provides a brief overview of the background and context of the evaluation. The second contains a summary of the main findings from the evaluation report and general observations from the secretariat on the results of the evaluation. The third concludes with a response from the secretariat to each of the proposed recommendations.

## I. Evaluation context

1. The objective of SP5 is to promote the development of national policies and international support measures to build productive capacities for economic development and poverty reduction in Africa, least developed countries and other groups of countries in special situations (landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and other structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies) and to progressively and beneficially integrate them into the global economy. ALDC is vested with substantive responsibility for the implementation of SP5.

2. Work under SP5 is carried out through an approach that maximizes synergies between the three pillars of research and analysis, technical cooperation and consensus-building. ALDC produces two of the eight flagship reports of UNCTAD, namely the *Economic Development in Africa Report* and *The Least Developed Countries Report*, as well as other research, for example on trade and poverty, rules of origin, geographical indications and market access. The policy recommendations and findings from research analysis are made available to member States as a basis on which to negotiate agreed outcomes. The recommendations and complementary policy briefs are also intended for consideration by member States in policymaking at national and/or regional levels. ALDC also provides request-driven technical cooperation, based on priorities established by beneficiaries, and implemented by staff through the Enhanced Integrated Framework. ALDC has been active in implementing Development Account projects to develop policy responses to specific needs. Finally, ALDC provides support for intergovernmental deliberations on key national and international issues.

## II. Summary of key findings and secretariat response

3. This chapter summarizes the key findings and conclusions under the main components of the evaluation, namely the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and partnerships aspects of SP5. It also contains comments by the secretariat on various aspects of the evaluation.

### Relevance

4. The evaluation noted that SP5 had made significant strides in achieving its intended outcomes in Africa, least developed countries and other groups of countries in special situations, to help integrate them into the global economy. The work of ALDC was therefore vital to the successful implementation of the mandate of UNCTAD as specified in the Nairobi Maafikiano and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. In the period covered by the evaluation, ALDC operated under the Doha Mandate and the Nairobi Maafikiano. The Nairobi Maafikiano states that UNCTAD should strengthen its special focus on the trade and development needs of the least developed countries across all areas of its mandate, in accordance with the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action)

and other relevant outcomes on the least developed countries.<sup>2</sup> Further, the Nairobi Maafikiano refers in particular to the other regions and countries within the scope of the mandate of ALDC, namely Africa, including through support for the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development; landlocked developing countries, including through support for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024; small island developing States, including through support for the implementation of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway; and structurally weak and vulnerable small economies.<sup>3</sup>

6. The evaluation noted the strong demand for technical cooperation activities from SP5. However, limited resources constrained the ability of SP5 to deliver technical cooperation at an adequate scale. SP5 might need to rebalance its product portfolio between research and analysis and technical cooperation to enhance the impact and sustainability of its activities. In this regard, ALDC has already begun to undertake a programmatic approach to the organization of activities and will seek a multi-year approach to project and programme development, as human and financial resources allow. In addition, the evaluation recognized the efforts made under SP5 to increase extrabudgetary resources to expand its technical cooperation portfolio, for example in the funding obtained from the European Union for a recently launched joint project in Angola.

7. With regard to the research products developed under SP5, the evaluation found that publications were of high quality and exceed the expectations of stakeholders. The publications were critical to stakeholders in enhancing their understanding of important and emerging issues in trade and development. In addition, stakeholders recognized the importance of high-quality research in order to inform the development of effective technical cooperation activities. As noted in the evaluation report, ALDC has already begun to link the findings from research to technical cooperation activities. For example, a Development Account project to address efficiencies in services trade in Africa, including in tourism, financial services and logistics, has been proposed based on the findings in the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2017: Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth*.

## Efficiency

8. Staffing costs comprise over 92 per cent of the total expenditures of SP5 of around \$6 million per year, with travel, at 2 per cent, and other expenses accounting for the remainder. The evaluation noted that both the regular and extrabudgetary resources of ALDC had generally been decreasing, with a slight increase in 2017.

9. The evaluation noted that ALDC had been efficient in meeting its targets for various outputs, including a 93 per cent implementation rate for publications.

## Effectiveness

10. The evaluation highlighted that SP5 had made substantial progress on most of its stated outcomes and that stakeholders generally held positive views with regard to its products. Survey respondents found publications to be highly useful; over 80 per cent rated these products as either useful or very useful. In addition, respondents rated the flagship reports highly and noted that they had contributed to national policy discussions. The evaluation noted that policy relevance, credibility and independence were the leading attributes of the work of SP5. The evaluation also noted the strategic match with regard to the quality of research under SP5.

11. The evaluation highlighted the strong demand for technical cooperation from SP5 and noted that it was highly relevant in policy deliberations. Over 90 per cent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of technical cooperation provided. Several stakeholders reported having used it for a relevant purpose such as policy

<sup>2</sup> TD/519/Add.2, paragraph 10 (a).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, paragraphs 10 (b)–(e).

formulation, planning and the training of others. The evaluation noted that small technical cooperation projects might limit effectiveness and efficiency and welcomed recent SP5 efforts with regard to creating a consolidated regional programmatic approach.

### Impact and sustainability

12. The evaluation stated that SP5 had significant potential to harness its technical expertise and forge partnerships within and beyond UNCTAD. In this regard, the secretariat emphasizes the creation of regional centres of excellence as a strategy to boost impacts and ensure the sustainability of activities. For example, the recently created centres of excellence on fisheries in Mauritius and Viet Nam, for countries in Africa and Asia, respectively, aim to provide follow-up support and create synergies with national Governments, local universities and training centres and industry representatives.

13. The evaluation recognized the scope for improved human rights and gender-sensitive situation analysis, prioritization and planning under SP5. The evaluation noted some good practices of mainstreaming of gender-equality aspects into publications and technical cooperation initiatives, such as a project on geographical indications in Benin that targeted women producers. However, the evaluation stated that there was enhanced potential for ALDC to improve the incorporation of the human rights and gender equality agenda into its programming. In this regard, the secretariat emphasizes that a lack of data, including gender-sensitive statistics, significantly limits the extent of analysis. SP5 has made substantial efforts to overcome such limitations and incorporate gender-sensitive analysis, through the use of household surveys and other microdata, to ensure that gender equality perspectives are incorporated into analysis, in particular in flagship reports. For example, gender-related aspects of migration were mainstreamed into the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2018: Migration for Structural Transformation*, which includes a recommendation to adopt gender-specific elements in migration policies.

### Partnerships

14. The evaluation noted that, in general, SP5 had been successful in forging partnerships with direct beneficiaries. However, there was a need for greater institutionalization of such partnerships. In addition, the evaluation noted that increased partnerships, such as those currently being implemented with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, could enhance the impact of SP5 programming.

## III. Management response to the evaluation recommendation

15. Responses to each of the seven recommendations made in the evaluation report are provided in the following table.

<i>Evaluation recommendation</i>	<i>SP5 management response</i>
Portfolio and resource rebalancing	Recommendation accepted
1. ALDC is encouraged to continue rebalancing its portfolio and to fine-tune its strategy by increasing emphasis on technical cooperation and follow-up support. UNCTAD should undertake an evaluation to revisit workplans and budgets, to inform interdivisional resource (re)allocations.	ALDC will seek to further its engagement to increase its technical cooperation work, subject to the availability of additional human and financial resources. SP5 will continue to use the findings of its analytical research to propose evidence-based policies and design more effective technical cooperation strategies. Management agrees to undertake an internal UNCTAD-wide evaluation of the workplan and human and financial resources to guide the operations of the secretariat and to inform future programme budget submissions of UNCTAD to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, to ensure the full, efficient and effective

*Evaluation recommendation**SP5 management response*

## Sustainability considerations

2. ALDC should make sustainability considerations an integral part of its interventions, as follows:

- (a) Build in thematic continuity in research and programmatic continuity in technical cooperation;
- (b) Ensure periodic follow-up and synergies in research and technical cooperation interventions.

implementation of UNCTAD mandates.

Recommendation accepted

Within its capacity, and subject to funding availability, SP5 will further develop synergies in its research and technical cooperation interventions. ALDC has already begun to implement this recommendation. For example, the creation of regional centres of excellence, including the centres of excellence on fisheries in Mauritius and Viet Nam, for countries in Africa and Asia, respectively, aims to provide some of the follow-up and sustainability-related support highlighted in the evaluation. In addition, ALDC develops its technical cooperation programmes based on the findings in flagship reports and other publications. For example, based on the research findings in the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2017*, SP5 prepared a Development Account project to support the upgrading of services sectors in Africa, including tourism, financial services and logistics.

## Fundraising

3. UNCTAD and ALDC should develop strategies for raising extrabudgetary resources to increase the technical cooperation portfolio, to better meet stakeholder needs.

Recommendation accepted

The secretariat has previously presented two resource mobilization strategies for consideration by member States, in 2011 and 2013. Building on these proposals, the secretariat will undertake renewed efforts to develop a comprehensive extrabudgetary resource mobilization strategy and funding mechanism. Aligned with an UNCTAD-wide fundraising strategy, ALDC will formulate a coherent strategy to secure additional extrabudgetary resources for technical assistance, focusing on a programmatic approach to building productive capacities and fostering structural transformation in Africa, least developed countries and other groups of countries in special situations (landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and other structurally weak, vulnerable and small economies). As noted by the evaluation, ALDC has secured additional resources to support the implementation of technical cooperation activities, including a comprehensive, multidivisional programme to promote economic diversification in Angola through a joint European Union-UNCTAD project. ALDC will continue to examine various strategies for fundraising and continue to pursue multi-donor, multi-year approaches, to enhance the longer term impact and sustainability of results. This will require close cooperation with other divisions and the Technical Cooperation Service.

The secretariat invites countries in a position to do so to consider providing additional extrabudgetary resources, including through the Trust Fund for the Least Developed Countries, in support of the work of UNCTAD.

## Partnerships

4. The management of UNCTAD and ALDC should develop an overarching road map for increased partnerships and collaboration at the

Recommendation accepted

This recommendation is already being implemented. ALDC has actively taken substantial steps to develop partnerships, including for technical cooperation projects and research and analysis initiatives. In addition, ALDC has drafted a

*Evaluation recommendation**SP5 management response*

institutional level, as follows:

- (a) Increase incentives for staff to actively seek collaboration, both in-house and with other United Nations entities;
- (b) Institutionalize and strengthen collaborations with other United Nations agencies;
- (c) Increase the number of United Nations country teams in areas in which UNCTAD carries out substantial work.

model business plan to enhance partnerships. Further efforts will be made to institutionalize and strengthen ongoing partnerships with United Nations entities and donors. SP5 has collaborated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on various research initiatives, including a project on socioeconomic prospects for the Sahel and a Development Account project on services trade in Africa. ALDC has also organized joint events with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States on energy in the least developed countries and with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on policy options for countries in East Africa. Building on the initiatives detailed by the secretariat in its report entitled *From Actions to Results: Implementation of the Nairobi Maafikiano in a Changing Environment*, UNCTAD will build on the creation of smart partnerships and draft a road map for intensifying cooperation. In line with the ongoing United Nations development system reform and the enhancement of country teams, UNCTAD will endeavour to increase its presence on country teams in all countries in which it carries out substantial work, including through the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity.

## Integration

5. UNCTAD should consider a matrix organizational structure for its office in Addis Ababa. The office should continue to report directly to the Office of the Secretary-General, yet should also have stronger linkages and reporting responsibilities to the director of ALDC.

## Recommendation accepted

UNCTAD management welcomes efforts to further define integration and synergies between ALDC and the Regional Office for Africa. Under the coordination of the Office of the Secretary-General and in compliance with the terms of reference of the Regional Office, ALDC will strive to work toward building a clear communications channel and mechanism for information sharing between SP5 and the Regional Office. SP5 will explore the increased use of technology to support productivity gains and develop stronger linkages and closer collaboration with the Regional Office.

## Results-based management

6. ALDC should institute the systematic collection of data on its purported impacts and outcomes, as follows:

- (a) Improve the results-based monitoring system for the better measurement of outcomes and impacts;
- (b) Involve member States and partner agencies in monitoring and evaluation;
- (c) Assign specific results-based management roles and responsibilities to staff and partners.

## Recommendation accepted

ALDC will attempt to implement this recommendation in cooperation with UNCTAD-wide efforts to evaluate, improve and enforce the results-based management framework to support the measurement of outcomes and impacts. In line with enhanced UNCTAD-wide strategies for technical cooperation proposals, improved results-based management and monitoring strategies are already incorporated into all SP5 project proposals. UNCTAD may need to provide further training and capacity-building to all staff to enhance the quality of data reported. SP5 will endeavour to keep member States informed and will engage in continued dialogue to provide information on programmes and updates on project activities.

## Equity considerations

## Recommendation accepted

---

*Evaluation recommendation**SP5 management response*

---

7. UNCTAD and ALDC should increase current efforts and integrate human rights and gender equality issues in interventions, to better deliver on the mandates and commitments of the United Nations.

Under the coordination of the Office of the Secretary-General, ALDC will continue to enhance its efforts to ensure a systematic human rights and gender equality-based approach in future programming. SP5 has already appointed a gender focal point to review all publications and technical cooperation proposals in accordance with the checklist for mainstreaming gender equality and women's economic empowerment in technical cooperation projects and with the strategy for gender mainstreaming in UNCTAD research and analysis. ALDC will continue to mainstream the human rights and gender equality agenda into its research and publications. This will require the availability of further enhanced sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data from member States, to carry out research and analysis.

---