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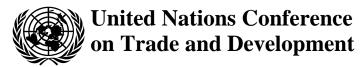
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  Review of the implementation of UNCTAD's
  communications strategy and publications policy

Report to the Working Party on implementation of the UNCTAD communications strategy, including the publications policy

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat[*]

Executive summary

> The UNCTAD secretariat has been asked by the Trade and Development Board to report annually on its implementation of the UNCTAD communications strategy and publications policy, which were mandated by the Accra Accord and adopted by the Board at its fifty-sixth session.
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> This report to the Working Party summarizes recent and ongoing efforts to meet the strategies' objectives of (a) contributing to UNCTAD's mandate; (b) enhancing the visibility of UNCTAD's work; (c) ensuring effective dissemination; and (d) mainstreaming good communications practices. The report also illustrates how the organization is using its outreach and communications to respond to immediate policy challenges facing the developing world and transition economies, in keeping with the communications strategy and publications policy.
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> New initiatives include (a) the creation of a Communications Editorial Board to strengthen outreach and enhance internal communications; (b) increased use of new tools and technologies, including improvements to the organization's Internet and Intranet; (c) strategic messaging through publications, public events and efforts to work with United Nations country teams to disseminate UNCTAD's knowledge; (d) greater alignment with the United Nations system-wide communications strategy; and (e) attempts to incorporate UNCTAD's technical cooperation work more closely into its outreach to policymakers, including through the creation of a technical cooperation portal on the website.
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> These initiatives will require allocation of additional resources.

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

Introduction

1. In its agreed conclusions 499 (LVI), the Trade and Development Board requested the secretariat to report to the Board annually on the implementation of the UNCTAD communications strategy (TD/B/56/9/Rev.1) and publications policy (TD/B/56/10/Rev.1), through the Working Party. This report combines a discussion of the implementation of both documents, since they are interrelated. It is the first report of this kind, and since the strategy and the policy were adopted only in September 2009, the purpose of this report is to share with member States some of the steps under way in the spirit of the Accra Accord (UNCTAD/IAOS/2008/2, paras. 186 and 187). The key objectives of UNCTAD's communications and outreach activities are to (a) contribute to the implementation of UNCTAD's mandate, as set out in the Accra Accord; (b) enhance the visibility, credibility and impact of UNCTAD's work, through well-targeted communications and outreach, including modern engagement and dissemination methods; (c) ensure effective dissemination to and feedback from main target groups; and (d) mainstream good communications practices throughout the organization.

I. Recent initiatives in communications and outreach

2. The following non-exhaustive overview illustrates how UNCTAD is enhancing outreach and communications, notably in response to immediate policy challenges facing the developing world and economies in transition, and offers some examples of recent innovations and initiatives, using the issues analysed in the communications strategy as its organizing framework (see table 1 in TD/B/56/9/Rev.1, pp.6–8).

3. To strategically ensure better coordination of content, the Deputy Secretary-General has created a Communications Editorial Board, which will begin work in February 2010. This will serve to enhance internal communications as well as to tighten and focus the messaging and outreach to international audiences. One of the Communications Editorial Board's main functions will be to share information on the full range of communications-related activities of all divisions in order to help establish the organization's communications priorities.

4. In terms of methods and tools, UNCTAD avails itself of intergovernmental conferences and expert meetings and their side events, training programmes, its technical cooperation work, its publications, as well as press work to reach its target groups. It also utilizes information products such as campaigns, newsletters, websites, brochures, annual reports and, more recently, blogs and other social networking instruments. The UNCTAD secretariat is striving to use these tools in new and more creative ways.

A. Positioning and strategic messaging: relevance and newsworthiness

5. In 2009, UNCTAD's research and analysis, policy dialogue and consensus building processes focused on the impact of the global economic and financial crisis. The findings were disseminated in a range of publications, starting with *The Global Economic Crisis: Systemic Failures and Multilateral Remedies,* which examined the systemic dimensions of the crisis and formulated proposals for policy action. This analysis was deepened in the *Trade and Development Report 2009: Responding to the Global Crisis – Climate Change Mitigation and Development,* as well as in a separate report entitled *Global Economic Crisis: Implications for Trade and Development.* The secretariat's background note on "Evolution of the international trading system and of international trade from a development perspective: Impact of the crisis" (TD/B/56/7)" prepared for the fifty-sixth session of the Trade and Development Board (September 2009), and the United Nations

Secretary-General's report on "International trade and development" (A/64/177) presented at the sixty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, both examined the impact of the crisis on international trade and the trading system, as well as on developing countries.

6. Similarly, the *World Investment Report (WIR) 2009* provided a detailed examination of the impact of the current global financial and economic crisis on foreign direct investment (FDI). The *Economic Development in Africa Report 2009* discussed *Strengthening Regional Economic Integration for Africa's Development;* and *The Least Developed Countries Report 2009* provided unique perspectives on the impact of the crisis, and identified policy options and opportunities for change, and argued that the impact of the global economic crisis was likely to be so severe in least developed countries (LDCs) that "business as usual" was no longer possible. The *Information Economy Report 2009* also focused on the implications of the global economic crisis on information and communication technologies. The Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes Policy Handbook looked at *Enhancing the Role of Domestic Financial Resources in Africa's Development*. In addition, UNCTAD published three policy briefs last year on the crisis.

7. Apart from the pertinent flagship and ad hoc reports, UNCTAD convened a public symposium (May 2009) on the topic "The economic crisis and development: the way forward". This format proved efficient in reaching a very broad range of stakeholders, with over 360 civil society representatives, officials from member States, parliamentarians, private sector entities, academia and intergovernmental organizations participating actively. The Secretary-General is now convening a second public symposium for spring 2010, and further information on the theme and sub-themes will be shared with member States in due course. The Raul Prebisch Lecture Series, resumed in 2009, featured a high-profile speaker, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, who addressed an audience of more than 600 delegates, civil society, academics and United Nations staff on the impact of the economic crisis and the issues before the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

8. As part of the new communications strategy, the Communications, Outreach and Information cluster in the Office of the Secretary-General will be liaising with the United Nations system-wide communications strategy. Internally, efforts are underway to generate an incisive mission statement, with an in-house "motto contest" in which staff will be invited to capture UNCTAD' mission in one simple phrase.

9. In terms of processes, some progress has been made in terms of improving the scheduling of flagship publications (see paragraphs 35 and 36 of the publications policy) to address the bunching that occurred in earlier years, to give delegations more lead time to prepare for the substantive discussions at the Trade and Development Board, as well as to facilitate higher media visibility and coverage.

B. Targeting key audiences

10. Specific communications products to disseminate UNCTAD's work more strategically and effectively are being developed and piloted for each target group; the secretariat will develop an evaluation plan to gauge their effectiveness.

Box 1. Technical cooperation: In-country policy work

UNCTAD's technical cooperation work, including that being carried out within the United Nations Chief Executives Board (UN-CEB) Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, is increasingly integrated into United Nations joint programmes at the country level. As a result, despite being a non-resident agency, UNCTAD delivers technical assistance aligned with national development strategies. Trade, productive capacity and related development matters are increasingly included in the United Nations country plans to enable a coherent and comprehensive approach to economic development. This is a central conduit for outreach directly to policymakers and technical experts in countries, and has been enhanced through recent cooperation initiatives across the United Nations system and with a selected set of countries. In 2009, the cluster designed joint programmes on trade and related matters in Albania, Belarus, Bhutan, Cape Verde, Georgia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Panama, Rwanda, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam.

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1. Policy briefs for policymakers

11. These position papers are designed to keep governments, civil society, think tanks, academic institutions and the media abreast of UNCTAD research, analysis and policy ideas on major global economic and trade and development issues and trends. As of mid-December 2009, 10 policy briefs had been issued. The most recent such papers have addressed the financial and economic crisis, South–South cooperation and regional integration and trade as an engine for growth, climate change and the Palestinian economy.

2. UNCTAD's *Issues in Brief* series

12. UNCTAD's *Issues in Brief* series, intended for the general public, has been redesigned, with several new issues to be published this year. They illustrate the effectiveness and real-life impact of UNCTAD's technical cooperation programmes – such as the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS), investment policy reviews and commodities work – and the findings of its key research and analysis.

3. Press releases and information notes for the media

13. Press releases are issued to UNCTAD's vast electronic mailing list of media contacts to publicize newsworthy events such as the launching of flagship reports and country-level or regional events and project activities. The information notes are longer texts alerting the media to upcoming meetings that may warrant attention and possible news coverage. A survey of journalists carried out in 2009 will help in fine-tuning these products.

4. E-mail alerts and electronic mailings for civil society

14. These were used as a vehicle for outreach and dissemination of information to a wide range of civil society organizations in different regions.

5.   UNCTAD *Annual Report*

15.   In the UNCTAD *Annual Report,* the secretariat presents its main accomplishments for the year in an attractive and "user-friendly" format designed to appeal to the general public, delegates and policymakers.

6.   Exhibitions

16.   Photographs, pamphlets, reports and/or booklets provide further information and are a useful outreach tool for the general public. Photo and text panels were displayed at the September 2009 meeting of the Trade and Development Board to celebrate UNCTAD's 45th anniversary, and later at Geneva's Palexpo during the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU's) annual Telecom conference. The display will also feature at the United Nations Expo 2010 in Shanghai, and will be available in print in early 2010.

C.   Delivering and disseminating

17.   All of UNCTAD's dissemination is carefully targeted. For example, the flagship reports are launched in the global media hubs – Geneva, Paris, London, New York, Delhi, Johannesburg, Addis Ababa and Bangkok – as well as in selected developing countries, in order to reach key media in the developing world. For the main UNCTAD reports, 102 press conferences were organized worldwide in 2009. For launches of flagship publications such as the *Trade and Development Report* and *Least Developed Countries Report*, Communications, Information and Outreach worked closely with United Nations information centres and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and with government ministries, think tanks and universities. For the *World Investment Report*, UNCTAD cooperates closely with investment promotion agencies and other local and national partners.

Box 2. Communicating with the media in 2009 – some examples

Trade and Development Report 2009: 11 press conferences

Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, China, France (in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), India, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom. In September, the President of the General Assembly hosted a briefing on the report for delegates in New York.

World Investment Report 2009: 58 press conferences

Albania, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Greece, China (Hong Kong), Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States,

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Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of these were organized in cooperation with investment promotion agencies and other entities.

Least Developed Countries Report 2009: 10 press conferences

Bangladesh, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Nepal, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Uganda.

Economic Development in Africa: 8 press conferences

France, Ghana, Sweden, Belgium, Senegal, South Africa, Ethiopia, Switzerland and a presentation organized in Japan after the official launch.

Information Economy Report 2009: 10 press conferences

Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, India, Lebanon, Morocco, Peru, Switzerland, Thailand and Indonesia.

18.   To enhance its outreach to policymakers directly, UNCTAD is exploring how to work more strategically with United Nations country teams using the field presence of UNDP. In order to gauge the quality and usefulness of its flagship reports, the secretariat has conducted a readership survey, whose findings will be submitted to the Working Party for review at its current session.

19.   With respect to Internet presence, UNCTAD is re-prioritizing its online activities so as to (a) enhance the coherence, quality, timeliness of its content; (b) upgrade its technical platform; and (c) increase resources and skills. UNCTAD has more than 85 websites built on several different platforms and located at different locations. A process to connect the various websites with a common "branding" will be undertaken by mid-2010. In order to develop the UNCTAD website into a strategic communications channel offering quality, real-time information that adheres to user requirements, an online communications and knowledge-sharing strategy is in the making. This will help unify the UNCTAD communications process in order to better serve and prioritize specific audiences and use state-of-the-art technology for searches and document management, along with such social media tools as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. The 2009 Raúl Prebisch Lecture, for example, is now available on YouTube, as is the annual end-of-year web message of the UNCTAD Secretary-General.

20.   The website introduced a technical cooperation portal in 2009, accessible to delegates and to the public at large, which provides information by subject matter and by country on each technical cooperation project. The *Global Investment Trends Monitor* and the *Investment Policy Monitor,* both introduced in 2009, are providing timely, online quarterly information and analysis on the latest global FDI trends and prospects and investment policy developments. Another example is the recently revamped webpage of the Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit (*APPU*).

Box 3. Outreach work in the UNCTAD New York office

The UNCTAD New York office, too, is becoming more involved in outreach and communications, for example, by providing briefings and training for specific audiences on UNCTAD's flagship reports and other publications, and on emerging issues (including the food and financial crises). For specialized professional audiences, including think tanks, the New York office offers sessions on such themes as globalization, trade, investment, science and technology, in response to specific requests, or at the initiative of UNCTAD.

D.   Engaging stakeholders

21.   One intensive form of UNCTAD outreach is through its trainings and substantive briefings and presentations. These include the work of the Virtual Institute, the regional training courses under Paragraph 166 of the UNCTAD-X Plan of Action, and TrainForTrade, as well as group visits and briefings in Geneva for groups of policymakers, academics and student visitors. For example, the World Trade Organization Trade Policy Courses, briefing sessions for new diplomats, and the annual Graduate Study Programme organized by the United Nations Information Service are well-established conduits of information-sharing. In 2009 alone, more than 60 groups and 2,000 participants were briefed. In addition, and as a result of the impact of UNCTAD's work on the global financial crisis, UNCTAD economists have been increasingly requested to participate in parliamentary hearings, seminars, conferences and expert meetings at the national, regional and international level, to present the results of research work and provide advisory services on the policy recommendations to tackle the crisis.

Box 4. The Virtual Institute, TrainForTrade and Regional Courses on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda

The **Virtual Institute** works with universities in developing and transition countries to strengthen their teaching and research capacity and increase policy relevance of their work. It operates through (a) a website with a searchable database of trade-related studies; (b) multimedia presentations featuring UNCTAD experts presenting UNCTAD's research; (c) the development of teaching materials for the university context; and (d) professional development workshops and fellowship programmes.

TrainForTrade is a capacity-building programme which addresses international trade, investment and finance, sustainable tourism and port management.

> The **Regional Courses on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda** ("Paragraph 166") are designed for policymakers working on UNCTAD issues, to show the linkages between international trade, finance, investment and technology, and their impact on development. It equips policymakers with a thorough understanding of the various linkages existing in the world economy, as well as related policies, which puts their specific work in a broader development context in their countries. There are also short courses for diplomats at Geneva-based missions to make them aware, in a concise manner and a more academic than negotiating setting, of UNCTAD's research on topical trade and development issues.

22.   The 2009 Public Symposium on the economic crisis and development mentioned above is one example of a more dynamic form of engagement with stakeholders. Similarly, in cooperation with the Global Compact and the Principles for Responsible Investment, UNCTAD in November 2009 hosted a high-level dialogue on sustainable stock markets, with the participation of executives of stock exchanges, security regulators and large institutional investors at United Nations Headquarters, and organized a Global Entrepreneurship Week, geared at fostering a global culture that recognizes entrepreneurs as drivers of economic and social prosperity. The Biotrade seminar and exhibit in January 2010, including a fashion show organized by a non-governmental organization, is another example of UNCTAD's reaching out to new stakeholders and using new forms of engagement.

23.   In terms of processes, a consultation with a core group of civil society organizations (CSOs) based in Geneva in December 2009 solicited their proposals and needs with regard to outreach events and material. As a follow-up, the CSO Unit will produce fact sheets on civil society participation in UNCTAD events and on topical issues.

E.   Creating an effective communications culture across UNCTAD

24.   Effective communications begins from within, and indeed the communications strategy is subtitled "UNCTAD – a communicating organization". The initiative of the Secretary-General to convene interdivisional, issue-oriented task forces is a key element in this approach. The secretariat has also strengthened the internal processes for reviewing documents which encourages more staff interaction on policy and technical issues, as well as enhancing the quality of the documents issued.

25.   The Intranet is being revamped; it contains information on UNCTAD's work as well as on staff matters. The Intranet blog, and other forms of up-to-date in-house communications, will feed into the new dynamism surrounding outreach and communications. For example, to enable staff to track UNCTAD's coverage by the media, clips captured by media search engines are posted daily on the Intranet, and the *UNCTAD Press Monitor* is circulated on a weekly basis. These processes are meant to reinforce a sense of cohesion of purpose across the secretariat, as well as have positive feedback loops into outreach and communications.

II. Outlook

26.   As illustrated in this report, the UNCTAD secretariat has begun implementing the communications strategy and the publications policy. To sustain and enhance its communications and outreach activities, UNCTAD will have to increase the human and financial resources allocated for these activities. The secretariat is currently exploring possible internal and external sources in order to support technological innovation and extend and deepen outreach.

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