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Working Party on the Strategic Framework and
the Programme Budget
Eightieth session
Geneva, 14 and 16 September 2020


**Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework
and the Programme Budget on its eightieth session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 14 and 16 September 2020

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I. Action taken by the Working Party at its eightieth session

A. Agreed conclusions on the evaluation of UNCTAD activities

(Agenda item 5)

The Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of evaluations for transparency, accountability and learning in accordance with the UNCTAD evaluation policy and the Norms and Standards for Evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group;
2. *Takes note* of the document “Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview” (TD/B/WP/304); and encourages the UNCTAD secretariat to continue strengthening the evaluation function, in particular to improve the utilization of evaluative knowledge for evidence-based decision-making in the design and implementation of UNCTAD projects and programmes; and therefore calls upon UNCTAD to ensure that all projects have a built-in funding component for evaluation;
3. *Welcomes* the meta-analysis of the lessons learned in 2015–2019; and calls upon UNCTAD to share information at forthcoming sessions of the Working Party on how the recommendations are being integrated into ongoing and planned technical cooperation activities;
4. *Calls for* the improved integration of cross-cutting priorities into technical cooperation programmes;
5. *Looks forward* to a new cycle of in-depth evaluations of the five subprogrammes; and calls for the presentation of the results of the first evaluation as soon as feasible after the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

16 September 2020

B. Other action taken by the Working Party

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

(Agenda item 4)

1. At its closing plenary, on 16 September 2020, the Working Party agreed upon a draft decision on the review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing, which would be presented for consideration and adoption to the sixty-seventh session of the Trade and Development Board (see annex I).

2. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

(Agenda item 5)

2. The Working Party considered the document “Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview” (TD/B/WP/304). Also at its closing plenary, the Working Party adopted agreed conclusions on this agenda item.

3. Provisional agenda for the eighty-first session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 6)

3. Also at its closing plenary, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda for its eighty-first session (see annex II).

4. Terms of reference of the Working Party

(Agenda item 7)

4. Also at its closing plenary, the Working Party agreed upon a draft decision on the terms of the reference of the Working Party, which would be presented for consideration

and adoption to the sixty-seventh session of the Trade and Development Board (see annex III).

5. During the discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat noted suggestions with regard to the timing of the sessions. The representative of one regional group emphasized that the terms of reference served to formalize the processes already in place. The representative of another regional group highlighted that the number and content of sessions detailed in the terms of reference were aimed at efficiency.

II. Chair's summary

A. Proceedings

1. The eightieth session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget was held in Geneva on 14 and 16 September 2020. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

B. Opening statements

2. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD made a statement. The following speakers made statements: the representative of Zambia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group; the representative of the European Union, on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the representative of Azerbaijan; and the representative of the State of Palestine.

3. In her statement, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD emphasized the importance of UNCTAD technical cooperation in supporting developing countries in advancing on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in recovering better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In this regard, UNCTAD aimed to finalize the new technical cooperation strategy immediately after the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XV). Overall technical cooperation expenditures had remained high in 2019, at \$43.3 million, and for the first time, more than half of expenditures, namely, 52 per cent of the total, had been delivered in support of the least developed countries. The Deputy Secretary-General stressed that this reflected the commitment of UNCTAD to strengthening technical assistance in developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable groups of countries, with regard to their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. In addition in 2019, overall voluntary funding to trust funds had rebounded strongly, reaching a record high of \$46 million (an increase of 35 per cent over 2018), thanks to increased contributions from the main funding sources, including developed countries, developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the European Union, the United Nations system and other international organizations.

4. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that, despite these encouraging facts, challenges lay ahead, in particular as the pandemic had reversed some of the progress made to date towards the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD was well placed to help developing countries better understand the implications of the pandemic with regard to development and address the priorities identified by States in recovery plans. Given the funding gaps related to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, the Deputy Secretary-General stressed the need for donors, in parallel with bilateral cooperation, to support consolidated United Nations action and joint United Nations projects through, for example, the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, led by UNCTAD; the multi-partner trust fund; and the joint Sustainable Development Goals fund. She requested member States and development partners to provide multi-year and less-earmarked contributions to UNCTAD technical cooperation, which would be critical in supporting developing countries in recovering from the pandemic. With regard to the effectiveness and efficiency of technical cooperation, she highlighted three priority areas, namely, active participation in the reform of the United Nations development system; revision of the UNCTAD Toolbox and improvement of the technical assistance request database; and strengthening of results-based management. With regard to the reform,

UNCTAD supported project officers in engaging more effectively with resident coordinators and developing joint initiatives with the United Nations Development Coordination Office to assist resident coordinators in tapping into UNCTAD expertise. The Deputy Secretary-General also noted the role of UNCTAD on the advisory committee for the United Nations COVID-19 response and recovery fund. Finally, with regard to results-based management, the Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that UNCTAD, building on its earlier accomplishments, was focusing on ways to sustain the change and to practically embed results-based management into daily work, through change agents and the sharing of best practices; and she detailed the latest progress in the development of an information technology-based interim performance monitoring and reporting system aimed at further enhancing results-based management.

5. With regard to evaluations, the Deputy Secretary-General stated that the evaluation function at UNCTAD was not only an accountability tool but an important instrument for learning and decision-making. She highlighted that in 2019–2020, a record number of independent evaluations had been conducted, largely due to the policy introduced in 2016 that required such an evaluation for any project with a budget of over \$1 million. The five completed evaluations of UNCTAD projects, presented in the document “Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview”, had found the projects largely relevant and effective, contributing to concrete changes at the national level. Following the findings, lessons and recommendations from evaluations, which offered rich sources of both quantitative and qualitative information for learning and improvement, the Deputy Secretary-General stated that the secretariat was exploring how to better feed such lessons into the design and implementation of technical cooperation. To further strengthen the evaluation function and the use of evaluations, she indicated that the UNCTAD evaluation policy would be updated in line with the new policy of the United Nations Secretariat, that UNCTAD intended to establish a trust fund in support of the evaluation function and that UNCTAD was considering ways to broaden the coverage of evaluations and/or conduct additional strategic evaluations, which would give even more valuable information on results and lessons learned. Finally, the Deputy Secretary-General stressed that the secretariat was working to improve the quality of evaluation recommendations and their related follow-up and aiming to improve communications related to evaluation work and findings to internal and external stakeholders, for better organizational learning.

C. Technical cooperation strategy

(Agenda item 3)

6. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD provided a briefing on the drafting of a new technical cooperation strategy.¹

7. The representative of one regional group recalled that as one of the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD, technical cooperation was expected to contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda and offer a coherent approach to effectively achieving the Goals. In this regard, the representative highlighted two recommendations, namely, that the main elements of the former version of the strategy, from 2003, remained valid and should be used as a basis; and that oversight and robust management by the UNCTAD secretariat should be mentioned as a key element. The representative stressed that cross-divisional cooperation, coherence and complementarity within UNCTAD and with other relevant United Nations entities should be strengthened and that solid results-based management and continuous lessons learned processes should feed into oversight and lead to the necessary decisions with regard to future technical cooperation. The strategy should therefore include robust elements on top management-level oversight and the secretariat should engage in regular exchanges with the Working Party and the Trade and Development Board to ensure a satisfactory outcome. The representative emphasized that the objective of responding to all requests for technical assistance was not feasible and not desirable and, in this regard, recommended developing a framework for technical cooperation priorities in terms of

¹ The document on points and areas to be considered in drafting the technical cooperation strategy will be issued as document TD/B/WP(80)/INF.1.

substance and by country. Such a framework should consider lessons learned and results-based management to ensure the value added of UNCTAD interventions. With regard to cross-cutting issues, the representative noted that digitalization and good governance should be mentioned and mainstreamed, to achieve lasting and sustainable results, and encouraged the secretariat to pursue its efforts with regard to gender-related issues. With regard to the reform of the United Nations development system, the representative commended the agile and effective engagement of the secretariat with the resident coordinator system and encouraged UNCTAD to continue to work closely with United Nations country teams, for more integrated assistance. The representative noted that, to ensure effective UNCTAD participation in “Delivering as one”, the European Union was supporting the development of joint work, joint programmes and other inter-agency initiatives. As the technical cooperation strategy had a long-term orientation, the representative recommended that it include an annex with a portfolio of updated cooperation products, adjusted according to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; that the recommendations of the evaluation by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network be considered during drafting; and that the strategy be supported by coordinated and coherent fundraising efforts. The representative concluded that the strategy needed to provide for the necessary cross-pillar, cross-divisional and inter-agency coherence and complementarity; provide for a real focus on results-based management processes to enable a focus on priorities with the corresponding resources; and provide for a single and coherent financing strategy.

8. The representative of another regional group welcomed the initiative to adopt a new technical cooperation strategy and emphasized that the working principles of such a strategy should ensure a predictable, stable and sufficient stream of funding to fulfil technical assistance needs in developing countries. One delegate concurred that the guiding principles of the former strategy remained valid and needed to be considered; and suggested that the new strategy take into account the cross-cutting issues that would be reviewed in a comprehensive manner at UNCTAD XV. Another delegate emphasized the importance of renewing the strategy, which should apply horizontally, across the board, to all UNCTAD technical cooperation activities; stressed the need to ensure secretariat oversight and to mainstream the cross-cutting issues related to gender, human rights and the environment; highlighted the importance of prioritization; and suggested considering the evaluation by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, as some of the recommendations might be valid when drafting the strategy.

9. All delegates who took the floor welcomed the start of drafting of the technical cooperation strategy with member States, noted that the former strategy would be used as a basis and that the new strategy would take into account all relevant lessons learned with reference to, when appropriate and agreed by member States, all sources of available and pertinent evaluation exercises from, among others, the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the United Nations Board of Auditors, as well as the evaluations of the subprogrammes. The strategy would seek coherence and enhanced collaboration between the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD, for mutually reinforced assistance, and would consider the new socioeconomic challenges faced by developing countries in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the strategy, which would be adopted and implemented after UNCTAD XV, would integrate elements from the reform of the United Nations development system and related coordination with the United Nations resident coordinator system at the country level to ensure a more coherent, integrated and efficient approach when delivering technical assistance.

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

(Agenda item 4)

10. The Working Party considered the document “Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing” and its annexes (TD/B/WP/305, TD/B/WP/305/Add.1 and TD/B/WP/305/Add.2).

11. With regard to subprogramme 1, the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies detailed some of its technical cooperation work. The Debt Management and Financial Analysis System programme continued to provide systems and support to more than 60 countries and was recognized as a key pillar of debt management efforts globally. Its work in core areas of public debt management contributed to the improvement of debt data availability and transparency and supported efforts by countries to maintain debt sustainability and reduce the risk of debt distress. These concerns remained highly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, since effective responses required Governments to effectively manage public finances, including public debt. In 2019, the division had continued to engage with the seminar series on economic globalization and had delivered two seminars in Wuhan, China, on the topics of globalization and made in China; and financing a global green new deal. Since July 2020, UNCTAD had been leading a multi-agency project on mobilizing financial resources for development in the time of COVID-19, in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. A project on South–South integration and the Sustainable Development Goals was helping to facilitate policy-sharing and peer learning between China and pilot countries of the Belt and Road initiative. Under the project on development policies for sustainable economic growth in Southern Africa, a series of workshops had been conducted to strengthen regional integration and coordination on industrial policy in the Southern African Development Community and to facilitate policy dialogues, and UNCTAD was working on a series of papers analysing the key structural challenges to the economies of the region due to the COVID-19 crisis and the most effective policy responses. In the context of an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development initiative on global value chains, productive transformation and development, UNCTAD was producing a series of policy reviews on productive transformation, in cooperation with the Development Centre of the Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and United Nations agencies in the region. In the area of statistics, under a joint project with the West African Economic and Monetary Union to improve trade in services, an information technology system had been developed, to be launched by end-2020. In addition, the number of subscriptions to the joint electronic learning (e-learning) tools for merchandise and services, from ministries and national statistics offices in developed countries, was increasing. The first phase of a joint project on illicit financial flows, with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, was nearing conclusion, while other joint projects were in progress, such as that on gender in trade, with the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In 2019, UNCTAD had continued its support to the Palestinian people in coordination with the Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian civil society, international organizations, donors and the United Nations Country Team. Efforts had been made to reintroduce the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System, to improve the quality and scope of Palestinian public financial management and establish a new round of cooperation to modernize and update the version of the Automated System for Customs Data used at Palestinian customs.

12. One delegate expressed gratitude to UNCTAD for its continued valuable assistance, which had helped policymakers identify effective development strategies aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and stated that he looked forward to the report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people.² The representative of one regional group commended UNCTAD on its work in supporting developing countries with regard to regional value chains, to foster development; requested that continued support be provided in the area of debt management to support developing countries faced with debt challenges due to the COVID 19 crisis; and stressed the importance of the work of UNCTAD on illicit financial flows, which could help countries put resources to good use, to improve the livelihood of citizens. In this regard, the UNCTAD secretariat noted that the division's current work would focus on the pandemic and the related economic crisis, including proposals presented at the Trade and Development Board on how to deal with the

² TD/B/67/5.

financial impact of the crisis. With regard to the project on illicit financial flows, UNCTAD had ongoing cooperation on this topic with the Economic Commission for Africa. Finally, the UNCTAD econometric model for the Palestinian economy was being used by the Ministry of Finance and other agencies for budget preparations, forecasting and scenario analysis and by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics to project the economic impact of the pandemic under several scenarios.

13. With regard to subprogramme 2, the Director of the Division on Investment and Enterprise, referring to the *Results and Impact Report 2019*, provided a brief overview of the impact of capacity-building projects in support of investment for development. He pointed to the relevance, quality, effectiveness and impact of the division's core products, provided member States with an overall total of the delivery of technical assistance on investment and enterprise for development and highlighted donor countries and partner organizations. He then elaborated on how the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the capacity-building pillar had been met, stressing the benefits of the strategy earlier adopted by the division based on a core product, as well as information technology-based and partnership approaches. This had allowed for breakthrough research to be carried out to provide member States with timely and critical insights on the assessment of the impact of the pandemic on foreign direct investment and global value chains and to provide informed investment policy advice. The Director provided concrete examples of activities in support of small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship carried out during the COVID-19 crisis and in the aftermath in some areas. He noted that by offering an immediate response to the situations generated by lockdown measures, the e-government solutions developed by the business facilitation programme had been singled out for, in many countries, having permitted the continuity of business operations. Finally, the Director expressed his regret concerning the dichotomy between the increasing number of outputs produced by the division and the decline in funding for technical cooperation in the area of investment and enterprise, and requested donors in a position to do so to increase the levels of their contributions.

14. The representative of one regional group expressed appreciation for the continuous, high-level delivery of the subprogramme and noted its important contribution to sustainable development. He also noted the need for additional support for investment and enterprise for development in the current context, in particular in sectors such as tourism, technology and energy and for vulnerable economies. He stressed the importance of relaying the conclusions of UNCTAD policy analysis and of experiences learned from capacity-building and exchanges of best practices to other United Nations forums, in particular at Headquarters. In this regard, the Director highlighted the new section in *World Investment Report 2020: International Production Beyond the Pandemic*, prepared in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 74/199, with a special focus on the gaps and challenges faced and the progress made in promoting investments for sustainable development as well as concrete recommendations for the advancement of investment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finally, the Director elaborated on progress made in preparations for the summit-level meeting to be held with regard to the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, including the drafting of a menu of options for consideration by leading policymakers, noting that UNCTAD was leading and coordinating discussion groups on external finance; remittances; jobs and inclusive growth; and debt vulnerability.

15. With regard to subprogramme 3, the Director of the Division on International Trade and Commodities stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had fundamentally altered the international trade landscape for decades to come. The division, through its five branches and the cross-cutting trade and gender programme, was adjusting in order to better address development challenges in light of the pandemic. The interface between trade and the environment was changing, with more locally produced goods, more trade restrictions and new sustainability requirements. There were implications for supply chains, markets and trade in green and blue goods, as well as services, in agriculture, natural products, fisheries and tourism. The post-pandemic new normal might generate opportunities in e-commerce, but might also create new challenges, for example through the increased use of medical materials that might lead to greater levels of plastics pollution. The Director highlighted that many sectors, tourism in particular, had experienced significant increases in

unemployment levels. UNCTAD was helping to address this problem in its current research, with recommendations on how to deal with shortfalls in tourism. The Director noted the continued technical cooperation work on biotrade and the blue economy. She underlined that the trade and gender programme was successfully implementing its COVID-19 adaptation strategy, without any disruption to the schedule of online courses and with the increased use of digital resources, as well as the continuation of activities on women and informal cross-border trade. With regard to competition and consumer protection policies, the Director emphasized the broad capacity-building efforts of UNCTAD at the national level, as well as participation in United Nations-wide COVID-19 response projects. The new online data entry tool on non-tariff measures would help enhance reporting, monitoring and resolutions and provide support to the African Continental Free Trade Area. In addition, the Director stated that UNCTAD continued to support platforms for national voluntary sustainability standards and activities related to services policy reviews and the creative economy, noting that UNCTAD had prepared the first-ever mapping of creative industries in Angola. Finally, the Director highlighted ongoing technical cooperation projects to integrate landlocked commodity dependent developing countries into regional and global value chains; and to promote cotton by-products in Eastern and Southern Africa.

16. With regard to subprogramme 4, the Director of the Division on Technology and Logistics detailed some of the technical cooperation work of the division, highlighting how it had adapted to the pandemic. The division had delivered over 64 per cent of UNCTAD technical cooperation activities in 2019, including its largest programme, the Automated System for Customs Data. Technical assistance delivered by the division included activities in the areas of trade facilitation; sustainable transport; science, technology and innovation; e-commerce and the digital economy; and human capacity-building, including through the Train for Trade programme and courses on key issues on the international economic agenda. The Director requested member States to further increase their contributions in these areas, in order for UNCTAD to be able to positively respond to the increasing numbers of requests from developing countries.

17. The representative of one regional group expressed appreciation for the various technical assistance programmes delivered by the division, highlighting the Automated System for Customs Data in particular in increasing customs efficiency and trade competitiveness; emphasized the need for the continued delivery of such work in support of regional integration, such as under the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and other regional trade agreement initiatives; commended UNCTAD on its organization of Africa eCommerce Week and requested that further editions be held, focused on specific countries or regional groups; and welcomed the work of the division with regard to maritime transport, noting that this was an area in which developing countries needed increased support from UNCTAD. With regard to a request from one delegate for the resumption of Automated System for Customs Data activities in the State of Palestine, which had had a positive impact in the past, the Director expressed the willingness of the division to provide such support. In addition, the Director noted that the division had received many requests for eCommerce Week and emphasized the need for funds, to be able to fulfil such requests. With regard to maritime transport, the Director noted that this was an area of long-term, well-recognized UNCTAD expertise, but that the availability of funds limited capacity to deliver more.

18. With regard to subprogramme 5, the Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes presented the different activities of the division combining research and analysis and technical cooperation. He highlighted the importance of *The Least Developed Countries Report* and the *Economic Development in Africa Report* on various subjects related to the needs of member countries. With regard to technical assistance, he detailed the different projects implemented by the division in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, in particular support to the most vulnerable economies. This was aligned with the goals and targets of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway. In this regard, to better assist developing countries in

implementing the 2030 Agenda and addressing new challenges, the division had intensified its efforts to optimize the organization and delivery of technical cooperation projects by integrating the impact of COVID-19 in analyses. The Director noted the importance of strengthening services trade policy for the integration of Africa into regional value chains. He also noted different activities carried out by the division, notably with regard to the productive capacities index; the diagnostic trade integration studies in the context of the Enhanced Integrated Framework; the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II; support to graduation from the least developed country category; and the agility of UNCTAD in the delivery of technical cooperation to support member States in addressing the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Finally, the Director focused on budget-related concerns in the context of the recruitment of experts for the implementation of technical cooperation projects and on funding constraints in fulfilling the activities of the division mandated by the General Assembly, including the vulnerability profiles submitted to the Committee for Development Policy under the Economic and Social Council.

19. The representative of one regional group welcomed the technical assistance provided in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement and the two flagship reports, and the representative of another regional group welcomed the various activities conducted in Africa, notably the joint programme of support for Angola, and emphasized that the budget-related concerns should be treated with diligence. The representative of another regional group also emphasized this matter and highlighted the need for greater technical assistance in Africa. One delegate requested clarification on the technical assistance provided for member States of the Arab Maghreb Union. In this context, another delegate recalled the importance of the work carried out by the division, which required additional resources to continue to be able to provide support to member States, including with regard to technical assistance, country vulnerability profiles and research and analysis for the two flagship reports. The Director recalled the mandate of the division and the importance of ensuring that the division responded to requests from member States. He emphasized, in light of the findings of the evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the unique contribution that UNCTAD provided to member States and the value of its engagement and support to the least developed countries and other groups of vulnerable countries. The division had limited human and financial resources to deliver its ambitious programme of work, yet UNCTAD was consistently able to deliver the high-quality research, policy guidance and technical cooperation needed to achieve concrete development outcomes.

20. A few delegates and representatives of regional groups highlighted the importance of UNCTAD technical cooperation in supporting developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. A few delegates and representatives of regional groups stressed that ensuring a stable, predictable and sufficient stream of voluntary funding for technical cooperation should be the overarching principle of the new technical cooperation strategy. In addition, a few delegates and representatives of regional groups noted their expectation that UNCTAD would better coordinate with United Nations country teams to provide for the agile, effective and efficient delivery of technical cooperation. With regard to the funding of technical cooperation, some delegates and representatives of regional groups noted with appreciation the increase in trust fund resources to a new record high in 2019 and regarded this as evidence of the value added and relevance UNCTAD technical cooperation. A few delegates and representatives of regional groups requested development partners to increase voluntary funding to UNCTAD, to meet a wider array of needs from developing countries and address funding constraints, in particular in the wake of the pandemic. A few delegates and representatives of regional groups encouraged UNCTAD to explore new sources of funding, including tapping into funds available at the country level through multi-agency cooperation, such as through the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, and requested donors to not earmark contributions so that UNCTAD could have space to shift funds or tailor programmes and projects to the needs of recipient States. One delegate stressed the importance of South–South cooperation in the mobilization of funds, although many developing countries would continue to rely on assistance from developed countries.

21. With regard to the expenditure and allocation of technical cooperation resources, the representative of one regional group expressed appreciation for the significant increase in 2019 in expenditures related to the least developed countries and support for the prioritization of the least developed countries as beneficiaries of technical cooperation. A few delegates and representatives of regional groups welcomed the continued funding support to the two leading UNCTAD technical cooperation programmes, the Automated System for Customs Data and the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System, but also requested development partners to increase funding for new and emerging areas of technical assistance, for which there remained a backlog of unfulfilled requests, such as commodities, trade and development, climate change, science and technology, the digital economy, competition and investment. A few delegates and representatives of regional groups requested UNCTAD to further diversify its technical cooperation toolbox and allocate more funds from the regular budget to investment policy reviews, trade policy framework reviews, services policy reviews and science, technology and innovation policy reviews, as well as to the courses on key issues on the international economic agenda. One delegate stressed the importance of balanced financing for the subprogrammes and considered that in the current pandemic situation, technical assistance in the areas of debt management and relief, the digital economy and new technologies, as well as new national investment policies and programmes, could be of particular interest to developing countries and the least developed countries. Another delegate encouraged UNCTAD to develop programmes for the least developed countries, small island developing States and other vulnerable countries and to enhance cooperation with United Nations country teams in delivering technical assistance. With regard to the Junior Professional Officer programme, the representative of one regional group requested donors and UNCTAD to support the participation of developing country representatives in the programme.

22. With regard to the functioning of technical cooperation, the representative of another regional group highlighted that there was scope to streamline the UNCTAD Toolbox, in particular considering the value added of technical cooperation in key areas such as electronic commerce and the digital economy, sustainable trade and business facilitation, in addition to the Automated System for Customs Data and the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System, with regard to which there was a high level of demand from developing countries. The representative also welcomed the in-house training on results-based management and encouraged UNCTAD to continue its efforts in this area. Despite progress achieved to date, the representative expressed concern that results-based management was not visible in some key UNCTAD publications, such as the Annual Report and the report on activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa³ and emphasized that UNCTAD senior management should implement results-based management with greater determination.

E. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

(Agenda item 5)

23. The Working Party considered the document “Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview” (TD/B/WP/304), in which findings from evaluations conducted in April 2019–April 2020 were presented, as well as a meta-analysis of lessons learned from evaluations conducted in 2015–2019 and an update on evaluation matters and activities in 2019–2020.

24. The representative of one regional group encouraged the UNCTAD secretariat to continue with a robust evaluation function and to adapt its work based on lessons learned from such evaluations; and noted that the next cycle of subprogramme evaluations would start with an in-depth evaluation of subprogramme 1 in 2021 and that the report would be presented to the Working Party for its consideration in 2022. The representative of another regional group commended UNCTAD on the report of evaluation activities and stated that he looked forward to the implementation of the recommendations and follow-up activities, yet noted with concern that more work needed to be done to integrate human rights and gender-related aspects, as well as to further engage the private sector with the work of

³ TD/B/67/2.

UNCTAD and, finally, emphasized the importance and usefulness of the forthcoming evaluation of subprogramme 1 and proposed receiving the report in early 2022, if possible.

III. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

25. At its opening plenary meeting, on 14 September 2020, the Working Party elected Mr. Vaqif Sadiqov (Azerbaijan) as its Chair and Ms. Neema Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

26. At the same meeting, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/WP/303/Rev.1),⁴ with the addition of an item on the terms of reference of the Working Party.⁵ The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Technical cooperation strategy.
4. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing.
5. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview.
6. Provisional agenda for the eighty-first session of the Working Party.
7. Terms of reference of the Working Party.
8. Other business.
9. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

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

(Agenda item 9)

27. At its closing plenary meeting, on 16 September 2020, the Working Party decided that the report on its eightieth session would be finalized after the session.

⁴ Approved by the Trade and Development Board through a silence procedure, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly decision 74/544 of 27 March 2020, concluded on 10 June 2020.

⁵ The relevant agenda items have been renumbered to reflect this change.

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 4)

The Trade and Development Board

1. *Reaffirms* the role of UNCTAD technical cooperation as one of the three fundamental pillars of UNCTAD; and stresses the importance of coordination among the three pillars for coherent and mutually reinforced assistance;
2. *Highlights* the relevance of UNCTAD technical cooperation in supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the spirit of leaving no one behind; stresses the importance of active participation by UNCTAD in the reform of the United Nations development system; and asks the UNCTAD secretariat to prioritize its support to developing countries to respond to socioeconomic challenges related to the coronavirus disease pandemic;
3. *Appreciates* the efforts already made by the UNCTAD secretariat with regard to results-based management; and calls upon UNCTAD to further pursue its efforts;
4. *Welcomes* the start of the drafting of a new technical cooperation strategy; and calls upon UNCTAD to finalize the strategy in close collaboration with member States and in time for its adoption and implementation immediately after the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development;
5. *Takes note with appreciation* of the increase in the overall contribution to UNCTAD trust funds in 2019; and, in particular, welcomes the increased focus of resources on the least developed countries and new avenues of cooperation with middle-income countries, underscoring the importance of more predictable, stable funding through multi-year and non-earmarked contributions to UNCTAD technical cooperation, while reaffirming the need to improve its application of the United Nations principles of transparency and accountability, as well as of results-based management;
6. *Stresses* the urgent need to address the funding gap for UNCTAD activities mandated by the General Assembly, to enable the organization to fulfil its mandate from the Economic and Social Council and ensure sustainable funding to deliver timely technical cooperation to address the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic in developing countries; and therefore calls upon UNCTAD to ensure the necessary prioritization of resources;
7. *Encourages* the UNCTAD secretariat to further explore country-level funding established in the context of the reform of the United Nations development system, such as the pooled funding mechanisms, to support the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity led by UNCTAD.

Annex II

Provisional agenda for the eighty-first session of the Working Party

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 2022, part II of the proposed programme budget.
4. Provisional agenda for the eighty-second session of the Working Party.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex III

Draft decision for consideration by the Trade and Development Board

Terms of reference of the Working Party

(Agenda item 7)

The Trade and Development Board

Noting that the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget was established by the Trade and Development Board in accordance with paragraph 23 of General Assembly resolution 1995 (XIX) and is a subsidiary body of the Board in accordance with rule 64 of the rules of procedure of the Board and is therefore subject to these rules in accordance with paragraph 3 of rule 64, as appropriate,

Acknowledging that the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget was established by the Board with the specific task of dealing with the medium-term plan and the programme budget of UNCTAD,

Approves, in accordance with its decision 540 (LXV), the following terms of reference of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget.

A. Membership

The membership of the Working Party will be the same as that of the Trade and Development Board. The cycle of rotation of its officers (Chair and Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur) will follow the established cycle of rotation as established in annex I of the rules of procedure of the Trade and Development Board.¹

B. Frequency and duration

Unless otherwise decided by the Trade and Development Board, the Working Party will meet two to three times per year, with each session lasting up to three or four days. The total number of meeting units² of the Working Party per year should not exceed 18.

The timing of the sessions will take into account the schedule of the budgetary process at the United Nations.

C. Functions and scope of work

The Working Party is tasked with reviewing the programme plan and performance information of UNCTAD, to be included in the proposed programme budget prepared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for consideration by the General Assembly; reviewing technical cooperation activities, evaluations and the publications policy and communications strategy; and any other topic mandated by the Trade and Development Board.

The Working Party serves as a forum for the discussion of cross-cutting issues in the work of UNCTAD identified in the mandates from the sessions of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, such as the promotion of sustainable development, youth and gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Working Party also serves as a forum for member States to be informed of the geographical and gender-based composition of the UNCTAD secretariat.

¹ TD/B/16/Rev.4 and Corr.1.

² 1 unit = 3-hour session.

D. Organization and content of sessions

The Working Party assists the Trade and Development Board in its oversight function with regard to the programme plan and performance information, in particular, assisting with the translation of the legislative mandates of UNCTAD into the proposed programme plan and performance information, with a view to improving its effectiveness and transparency. To achieve this objective, the Working Party will hold two or three sessions as detailed in the following sections.

Session 1: Preparatory session for the programme plan; and review of technical cooperation and evaluation

Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information

In anticipation of session 2 of the Working Party, session 1 will provide guidance and orientation for the preparation of the programme plan and performance information document of UNCTAD, to be included in the proposed programme budget.

Informal exchanges will be based on a presentation by the UNCTAD secretariat of the overall strategic vision and focus areas for the organization, including a selection of proposed highlighted results for each subprogramme and examples of performance measures considered for inclusion in the programme plan document or, at most, a tentative outline of these, including any emerging issues and lessons learned, as well as any other elements deemed relevant by the UNCTAD secretariat that will guide and/or inform the drafting of the programme plan document. The UNCTAD secretariat will circulate a non-paper to facilitate the discussion.

Review of technical cooperation activities and their financing and oversight

In accordance with the relevant mandates from the sessions of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and from the Trade and Development Board, the Working Party will review UNCTAD technical cooperation activities, with a view to, inter alia, improving their effectiveness and efficiency, enhancing transparency, sharing successful experiences and encouraging outreach towards potential recipients. The review by the Working Party will be informed by a report presented by the UNCTAD secretariat that will include the following elements:

- (a) Requests for technical assistance, by product and thematic cluster;³
- (b) The absorptive capacity of the UNCTAD secretariat, including issues related to the availability of resources (ordered by product and/or thematic cluster as appropriate) to design and implement the technical cooperation activities requested by member States;
- (c) The availability of extrabudgetary resources for the proposed theme, programme and project, as well as matters related to fundraising, improved sustainability and the predictability of extrabudgetary resources;
- (d) Resources devoted to fundraising, project management and evaluation, as well as communications with member States on technical assistance;
- (e) Past performance and/or results of technical cooperation activities, including successful experiences;
- (f) Information on efforts made to improve the management, evaluation, reporting and financing of technical cooperation activities.

The Working Party will also consider exploring options and ways to improve fundraising and the diversification of funding for technical cooperation, based on input provided by the UNCTAD secretariat.

³ The UNCTAD secretariat will provide regularly updated information on the requests received for UNCTAD technical assistance, through a dedicated online database. This will include information on the availability of funding for the requests.

Review of evaluation activities and follow-up

In accordance with the UNCTAD evaluation policy and the Norms and Standards for Evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Working Party will review the internal and external evaluation efforts of UNCTAD with a view to improving their efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. In this context, the UNCTAD secretariat must conduct evaluations in accordance with its guiding principles so that it discharges its responsibility with regard to public accountability and ensures organizational learning. The review by the Working Party will be informed by an evaluation synthesis report presented by the UNCTAD secretariat that allows for a complete reporting of all evaluation activities and promotes accountability and lessons learned. Evaluation synthesis reports are knowledge products that consolidate and share acquired knowledge and strengthen the feedback and learning loops for UNCTAD evaluations.

The Working Party will review the evaluation plan for UNCTAD, in particular with regard to the in-depth evaluations requested by the Trade and Development Board. It will discuss internal and external evaluations on the basis of the above-mentioned synthesis report. The Evaluation and Monitoring Unit coordinates the follow-up of evaluations and ensures that the progress report to be submitted to the Working Party on the annual in-depth evaluations it requested is prepared and presented in a timely manner.

Session 2: Review of the programme plan and performance information

The Working Party will examine the programme plan and performance information of UNCTAD to be included in the proposed programme budget, with a view to making any necessary recommendations to the Trade and Development Board. The review will be based on whether the balance of activities and priorities assigned, as proposed by the UNCTAD secretariat, is appropriate in the light of the directives and guidelines given by the governing bodies of UNCTAD, notably during session 1 of the Working Party, and in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

Accordingly, the Working Party will take this action to assist the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in formulating the proposed programme budget, for subsequent review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly.

At the subsequent session of the Working Party, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD will share with member States the non-post and post-related requirements of UNCTAD as detailed in the proposed programme budget.

Session 3. Other topics decided by the Trade and Development Board

The Trade and Development Board may also decide on the organization of a third session of the Working Party to evaluate the following:

- (a) Publications policy and communications strategy, focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of communications in publications;
- (b) Long-term strategic planning or another topic within the purview of the functions of the Working Party and with due respect for the prerogatives of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies on administrative and budgetary matters.

E. Outcomes

The outcomes of sessions of the Working Party may include agreed conclusions, draft decisions and recommendations for the consideration of the Trade and Development Board and, if required, action to be taken by the UNCTAD secretariat. The decisions taken by the Board are brought to the attention of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, as appropriate, relevant bodies in New York.

F. Organizational matters

The Working Party will approve at each session the provisional agenda for the following session.

Documentation for all substantive agenda items of the Working Party will be made available to member States at least four weeks before the start of the session.

The terms of reference of the Working Party may be amended by the Trade and Development Board upon recommendation by the Working Party.

The calendar of sessions and the work undertaken at each session are shown in the table.

<i>Session and duration</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Scope of work</i>
Early October; up to four days, with a one-day break in between	Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information	Provide guidance and orientation for the preparation of the UNCTAD programme plan and performance information document
	Review of technical cooperation activities and their financing and oversight	Serve as a forum for member States on issues with regard to technical cooperation, including matters related to the financial structure and the improved sustainability and predictability of resources, as well as the effectiveness of UNCTAD technical assistance
	Review of evaluation activities and follow-up	Consider the evaluation synthesis report on all evaluation activities and consider the annual in-depth internal and/or external evaluation of an UNCTAD subprogramme and provide substantive guidance on the direction of the subprogrammes based on the evaluation reports
January; up to three days	Review of the programme plan and performance information	Examine and make any necessary recommendations on the UNCTAD programme plan and performance information document in advance of its submission to the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget and its subsequent review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly
As determined by the Trade and Development Board and/or the Working Party; up to three days	Evaluation of publications policy and communications strategy or long-term strategic planning or another topic as decided by the Trade and Development Board	Consider other issues identified in the terms of reference as within the purview of the Working Party or other topics as decided by the Trade and Development Board, with due respect for the prerogatives of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies on administrative and budgetary matters

Annex IV

Attendance*

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

China	Russian Federation
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	United Republic of Tanzania
Iraq	Vanuatu
Malawi	

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

Algeria	Lesotho
Angola	Madagascar
Austria	Mexico
Azerbaijan	Morocco
Bahamas	Mozambique
Bahrain	Myanmar
Barbados	Netherlands
Belgium	Oman
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Pakistan
Brazil	Panama
Burkina Faso	Philippines
Chile	Portugal
Congo	Romania
Djibouti	South Sudan
Egypt	Spain
El Salvador	State of Palestine
Gambia	Sudan
Germany	Switzerland
Guatemala	Syrian Arab Republic
Italy	Togo
Jordan	Turkey
Kuwait	Zambia
Latvia	Zimbabwe
Lebanon	

3. 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(80)/INF.2.