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Report of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance on its eighty-first session

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 18 to 20 January 2021

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I. Action taken by the Working Party at its eighty-first session

A. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2022, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

Agreed conclusions A

The Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance,

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of member States' role in the preparation of the annual proposed programme plan and performance information of UNCTAD and, by extension, of the corresponding budget proposal, and calls upon the UNCTAD secretariat to take due account of the membership's comments expressed during this session in the preparation of the proposed programme plan for the year 2022 and programme performance for the year 2020;
2. *Appreciates* the secretariat's efforts in the swift organization of this preparatory session, the shared non-paper and the constructive approach;
3. *Recalls* the agreed conclusions on the review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan for the year 2021 and performance information for the year 2019, and calls upon the secretariat to work on the improvement of performance measurement indicators to better reflect the impact of the activities under its three pillars of work, as well as to reflect the lessons learned from its actions in the proposed actions for 2022;
4. *Underlines* the importance of adjusting to the realities of the pandemic through an increased focus on and use of digital solutions in its work across the three pillars, and invites the secretariat to reflect this in the planned 2022 deliverables;
5. *Highlights* the importance of coordination among divisions in the secretariat and invites UNCTAD to ensure coherence and a harmonized narrative to better reflect the overall objectives and proposed actions for the programme plan and performance information for the year 2022;
6. *Recognizes* that the sought implementation of its newly adopted terms of reference in relation to the programme plan and performance information drafting will require certain adjustments, and looks forward to addressing the noted suggestions and identified shortcomings at its session in October 2021;
7. *Highlights* the importance of the role of the UNCTAD office in New York in enhancing the visibility of the work of UNCTAD and its linkages with relevant United Nations bodies, including the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) and Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee) of the General Assembly;
8. *Stresses* that adequate liquidity levels, a clear prioritization of resources on issues of membership consensus and the limitation of actions within the mandate to avoid duplication with the work of other organizations are fundamental, to guarantee the fulfilment of the mandate of UNCTAD.

*Opening plenary meeting
18 January 2021*

B. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2022, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

Agreed conclusions B

The Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance,

Having considered and discussed the proposed programme plan for the year 2022 and programme performance for 2020,

1. *Concurs with* the proposed draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2022, part II of the proposed programme budget, as contained in document TD/B/WP(81)/INF.1;
2. *Requests* the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to take full account of comments and inputs provided during the eighty-first session of the Working Party and document TD/B/WP(81)/INF.1 for the purposes of his submission of inputs for the proposed UNCTAD programme budget for the year 2022 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for subsequent consideration by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies;
3. *Takes note with appreciation* of the information provided to member States on the proposed resources for UNCTAD for the year 2021 and the geographical representation and gender balance of UNCTAD staff, as well as the use of internships within the UNCTAD secretariat for the year 2020, and encourages the continued provision of such information.

*Closing plenary meeting
20 January 2021*

C. Other action taken by the Working Party

Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2022, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

1. At its opening plenary meeting on 18 January 2021, the Working Party adopted the agreed conclusions of the preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information under this agenda item, which had been adopted on 22 October 2020 through a silence procedure in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly decision 74/544 of 27 March 2020.
2. At its closing plenary meeting on 20 January 2021, the Working Party adopted agreed conclusions under this agenda item.

II. Chair's summary

A. Opening statements

3. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD made a statement. Statements were made by the representatives of the following delegations: Afghanistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States; Pakistan on behalf of the Asia–Pacific Group; Guatemala on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; Barbados on behalf of small island developing States; Nigeria; and the State of Palestine.

4. In her opening statement, the Deputy Secretary-General stated that the year 2022 was the third year of the three-year trial period of the transition from a biennial budget cycle to an annual budget cycle. In order to make this review process more efficient and meaningful, the secretariat had worked closely with member States and engaged with them

in the framework of the preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information, held in October 2020, and feedback from member States had helped to shape the programme plan and performance information document.

5. The Deputy Secretary-General provided an overview of the document, which covered the overall orientation and intended highlights for 2022 for each subprogramme. From the programmatic and substantive side, there were no changes in organizational objectives and the programme plan for 2022 remained in line with the mandates of UNCTAD, reflecting its commitment to promoting an inclusive global economy, by informing national and international policies, while giving due consideration to the needs and interests of developing countries. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that while the mandates of UNCTAD remained unchanged, this was subject to the agreed outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XV), scheduled to take place in October 2021. The secretariat would explore the possibility of aligning the proposed work programme with the outcome of UNCTAD XV at the earliest opportunity allowed by the programme planning and budgeting process.

6. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that the document included new sections covering the impact of the pandemic on programme performance in 2020, with specific examples provided under each subprogramme. For 2022, the planned deliverables and activities reflected the likely ongoing challenges to be faced by member States in relation to the pandemic. She also noted that the programme plan and performance information reflected the impact of liquidity constraints on activities planned for 2020, which had caused the delay or postponement of some deliverables, with specific examples in this regard also provided under each subprogramme. The Deputy Secretary-General underscored that the programme plan for 2022 would be submitted to Headquarters for review in February 2021 and that the secretariat would continue to ensure that this process was transparent and, if any adjustments to the programme plan were generated under the guidance of Headquarters, would bring these to the attention of member States.

B. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2022, part II of the proposed programme budget

(Agenda item 3)

7. A few representatives of regional groups expressed their satisfaction that, despite the impact of the pandemic on the programme of work and deliverables, the secretariat had quickly adopted online working methodologies to advance the trade and development-related issues of developing countries and had identified new and modified activities to support member States on issues related to the pandemic.

8. In addition, a few representatives of regional groups noted their satisfaction with the fact that the secretariat continued to give priority consideration to the needs and interests of developing countries in the programme plan and encouraged the secretariat to pay further attention to all developing countries, including the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as middle-income countries and other countries that might be in vulnerable situations for a variety of reasons.

9. The representative of one regional group acknowledged the secretariat's efforts to prepare the programme plan and performance information document in accordance with the guidance from member States as expressed at the preparatory session held in October 2020 and noted its satisfaction at the inclusion in the document of this feedback and of comments expressed by member States.

10. A few representatives of regional groups noted their concern about the impact of the ongoing liquidity crisis on the work of the secretariat and took note of the various facets of such impacts on the work of the secretariat in 2020, as reflected in the document.

11. In addition, a few representatives of regional groups welcomed the secretariat's continuous cooperation with other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and private sector entities, and stressed the importance

of partnerships with other United Nations entities, along with the possible benefits this could have, for example in the areas of migration, job creation, medication and vaccination, in particular during the pandemic, as well as with regard to climate change.

12. A few representatives of regional groups underlined the importance of coordination between the subprogrammes and initiatives to ensure coherence and maximize impacts, and further encouraged the secretariat to continue cross-fertilization and cooperation across the subprogrammes in all areas of its work.

13. The representative of one regional group noted that evaluation was an important instrument for further improving performance and encouraged the secretariat to explore how the feedback from evaluations could be further integrated into programme plans.

14. The representative of another regional group commended the efforts of the secretariat to continuously integrate the gender dimension into its planned activities and encouraged the secretariat to continue its efforts to build a culture of results-based management across the organization.

15. Several representatives of regional groups expressed their views on specific aspects of the draft programme plan and performance information, such as the performance indicators and deliverables.

16. With regard to a query from the representative of one regional group as to whether the programme plan included activities financed through both the regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, the secretariat confirmed that this was the case and that the plan reflected all planned activities, including those financed through extrabudgetary resources.

17. The representative of one regional group stated that the group accepted the modification of the language referring to the reform of the international financial architecture in the interest of consensus, given the request of other groups. However, the representative emphasized that this should not be considered a precedent with regard to the position of the group on this matter, in particular in the lead up to UNCTAD XV, and that this agreement was solely for the purpose of this session and with the scope and nature of the programme plan in mind.

III. Organizational matters

A. Proceedings

18. The eighty-first session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance was held from 18 to 20 January 2021 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, with physical and remote participation. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

B. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

19. The Working Party decided to elect its officers through a silence procedure in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly decision 74/544 of 27 March 2020. As no objections were received by 15 January 2021, the Working Party elected Ms. Cecilia Gutiérrez (Ecuador) as its Chair and Ms. Charline van der Beek (Austria) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

20. The Working Party decided to adopt, through a silence procedure in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly decision 74/544 of 27 March 2020, the provisional

agenda for the session (TD/B/WP/307). As no objections were received by 18 January 2021, the agenda was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 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.

D. Provisional agenda for the eighty-second session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 4)

21. At its closing plenary meeting on 20 January 2021, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda for its eighty-second session, to be submitted to the Trade and Development Board for its approval (see annex I).

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

(Agenda item 6)

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

Annex I

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

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing.
4. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview
5. Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information.
4. Provisional agenda for the eighty-third session of the Working Party.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex II

Attendance¹

1. Representatives of the following members of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance attended the session:

Afghanistan	Gabon	Netherlands
Algeria	Georgia	Nigeria
Angola	Germany	Oman
Austria	Greece	Pakistan
Azerbaijan	Guatemala	Panama
Barbados	India	Peru
Benin	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Portugal
Bhutan	Iraq	Republic of Korea
Botswana	Italy	Romania
Brazil	Japan	Russian Federation
Bulgaria	Jordan	Saudi Arabia
Burkina Faso	Kenya	Senegal
Burundi	Kuwait	Slovenia
Cambodia	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Spain
Canada	Latvia	Sri Lanka
Chile	Lebanon	State of Palestine
China	Lesotho	Switzerland
Colombia	Malawi	Syrian Arab Republic
Congo	Malaysia	Thailand
Croatia	Maldives	Tunisia
Cuba	Mexico	Turkey
Czechia	Mongolia	Ukraine
Djibouti	Morocco	United Republic of Tanzania
Ecuador	Mozambique	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Egypt	Myanmar	Viet Nam
France	Nepal	Zambia
		Zimbabwe

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

Holy See

3. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

European Union

¹ This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP(81)/INF.2.