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**Trade and Development Board**  
**Working Party on the Programme Plan and**  
**Programme Performance**  
Eighty-second session  
Geneva, 1–4 November 2021

## **Report of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance on its eighty-second session**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 1 to 4 November 2021

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## Introduction

The eighty-second session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 1 to 4 November 2021. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

### I. Action taken by the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance at its eighty-second session

#### A. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

##### Agreed conclusions

*The Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance*

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of independent evaluations for transparency, accountability, learning and evidence-based decision-making, in accordance with the UNCTAD evaluation policy and the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group;
2. *Notes* the assessment by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the UNCTAD evaluation function, and requests the secretariat to report to the Working Party on the follow-up of the recommendations issued;
3. *Expresses appreciation* for the quality and clarity of the annual evaluation report for 2020–2021 (TD/B/WP/310), and encourages the secretariat to continue strengthening evaluation work, including by ensuring that the recommendations issued are targeted and actionable;
4. *Requests* the secretariat to strengthen the results-based management of its projects, in particular during the project design phase, the sustainability of projects, and the integration of human rights and gender considerations in its work, as well as delivering on other key findings of the evaluations presented;
5. *Looks forward* to considering the evaluation of subprogramme 1 at its eighty-fourth session in 2022, calls on the secretariat to use the previous evaluation of the subprogramme as a reference point, and highlights the importance of selecting an appropriate evaluation team to ensure the relevance and utility of the evaluation and of the recommendations issued.

4 November 2021

#### B. Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information

##### Agreed conclusions

*The Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance*

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of member States' role in the preparation of UNCTAD annual proposed programme plan and programme performance, and calls upon UNCTAD secretariat to take due account of the membership's comments expressed during the session in the preparation of the proposed programme plan for 2023;
2. *Appreciates* the presentations provided by the secretariat and the linkages to the Bridgetown Covenant, as well as the non-paper shared, and calls upon the secretariat to provide the requested non-paper sufficiently in advance of the Working Party session to facilitate the discussion, in accordance with the agreed terms of reference;
3. *Calls* on the UNCTAD secretariat to ensure balanced implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant through its midterm and long-term planning, through adjusted

implementation of the 2022 work programme, and to reflect the Bridgetown Covenant in the planned deliverables and linked resources distribution in the proposed programme plan for 2023;

4. *Underlines* the importance of the context and lessons learned from its recent work on programme planning and of reflecting these appropriately in the 2023 programme plan document, ensuring their link to the chosen highlighted results;
5. *Emphasizes* the importance of reflecting the work across all three pillars in the 2023 planned results and ensuring objective and measurable performance measures;
6. *Highlights* the importance of coordination and cross-fertilization among divisions of 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 programme performance for 2023;
7. *Commends* the adjustments made by the UNCTAD secretariat to deliver its output through virtual and hybrid means, and requests that such modalities continue to be used, where appropriate, as they facilitate participation of capital-based experts;
8. *Notes* the limitations imposed through shorter duration of meeting units when interpretation is provided with remote participation, and calls on the UNCTAD secretariat and the United Nations Office at Geneva to coordinate to ensure adequate and effective use of conference services for UNCTAD intergovernmental meetings;
9. *Calls* upon the secretariat to implement the terms of reference in respect of the duration of the session.

4 November 2021

## C. Other action taken by the Working Party

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

(Agenda item 3)

1. At its closing plenary meeting, on 4 November 2021, the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance agreed upon a draft decision on the review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing, which would be presented to the seventy-first executive session of the Trade and Development Board for consideration and adoption (see annex I).

### 2. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview

(Agenda item 4)

2. Also at its closing plenary meeting, following consideration of the document entitled "Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview" (TD/B/WP/310), the Working Party adopted agreed conclusions on the agenda item (see chapter I, section A, above).

### 3. Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information

(Agenda item 5)

3. Also at its closing plenary, the Working Party adopted the agreed conclusions on the agenda item as contained in a non-paper circulated on 2 November 2021 (see chapter I, section B, above).

## II. Chair's summary

### A. Opening plenary meeting

4. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD opened the session. The following speakers made opening statements: the representative of Afghanistan, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of Botswana, on behalf of the African Group;

the representative of the European Union, on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on behalf of the JUSSCANNZ group; the representative of the State of Palestine, on behalf of the Arab Group; the Russian Federation, on behalf of the Eurasian Economic Union; and the representative of Pakistan.

5. In her opening statement, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD highlighted the importance of UNCTAD technical cooperation in supporting developing countries in addressing the challenges exacerbated or revealed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and in building resilience to future economic shocks and supporting sustainable development.

6. She explained that COVID-19 had had a significant impact on UNCTAD technical cooperation in 2020 due to pandemic-induced lockdowns and travel restrictions. Overall voluntary funding to UNCTAD trust funds fell by 28 per cent, to \$33.3 million in 2020, after hitting a historic high of \$46 million in 2019. A significant decrease from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and the United Nations system and other international organizations, largely contributed to the drop. Nevertheless, developed countries continued strengthening their funding support, and the funding base of UNCTAD technical cooperation was further broadened. She called on member States and development partners to enhance funding support to UNCTAD technical cooperation. Voluntary contributions, particularly multi-year contributions with limited earmarking, were critical for UNCTAD to plan well and deliver its technical cooperation on a timely basis.

7. On delivery, she indicated that overall technical cooperation expenditures amounted to \$35 million in 2020, dropping by 19 per cent compared with 2019. The share of least developed countries in total technical cooperation expenditures fell to 45 per cent in 2020. She highlighted the main actions taken by UNCTAD to minimize the pandemic's impact on project implementation and address new requests from developing countries. Actions had included quick adjustment of the work programme to prioritize COVID-19-related technical assistance; swift adoption of hybrid or online modes in delivering capacity-building activities and advisory services; and collaboration with other United Nations entities to deliver a "One United Nations" response to the COVID-19 crisis.

8. She highlighted three priority areas for the effectiveness and efficiency of UNCTAD technical cooperation: adapting UNCTAD technical cooperation to be aligned with the United Nations development system, strengthening results-based management and preparing a new technical cooperation strategy. On United Nations reform, she highlighted the efforts made by UNCTAD to enhance communication and cooperation with resident coordinator offices, which was key to access new funding sources, deliver technical cooperation activities and increase the visibility of UNCTAD at the country level. On results-based management, she informed participants of the roll-out of the Umoja integrated planning, management and reporting system at UNCTAD. Finally, among other things, the new technical cooperation strategy would address synergy between research and technical cooperation, cooperation with partners and stakeholders, and mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues such as gender and climate change, as well as have a strong focus on results.

9. On evaluation, she noted that the background paper contained results from four evaluations completed in 2020. All projects evaluated were found to be effective in achieving their goals and demonstrated efficient and cost-effective resource utilization. She further noted that greater emphasis on results-based management principals would be of benefit to projects moving forward and that the sustainability of results remained challenging. She also outlined the efforts of the secretariat to better incorporate evaluation lessons into the design and implementation of UNCTAD technical cooperation activities.

10. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD emphasized that the current session was aimed at discussing with member States how to reflect the Bridgetown Covenant, the outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in the 2023 programme plan. Though the 2022 programme budget process

was nearly finalized, she clarified that the secretariat would take into consideration the outcome of the Conference during implementation of the 2022 programme plan.

11. On the overall orientation of the 2023 programme plan, she reconfirmed that UNCTAD would continue to address COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges and focus on a better recovery, while being guided by the four transformations outlined in the Bridgetown Covenant.

12. She summarized the key lessons learned and substantive takeaways from 2021 underpinning the 2023 programme proposal and noted that particular attention would be paid to the cross-cutting issues of gender and climate change highlighted in the Bridgetown Covenant. UNCTAD would look at decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and continue integrating a gender perspective into all deliverables and results, including from the perspective of the pandemic's disproportionate negative impact on women and girls.

13. The representatives of many regional groups expressed concern about the significant decrease in trust fund resources in 2020, which had also impacted technical cooperation activities in support of the most vulnerable developing countries. Several representatives stressed the importance of matching the increasing needs of member States with an adequate level of resources. They called on sufficient, stable and predictable funding for UNCTAD technical cooperation to address the priorities and needs of beneficiary countries and to implement the Bridgetown Covenant. The representative of one regional group stressed the need to increase contributions to the Trust Fund for the Least Developed Countries and to increase unearmarked funds for financing technical cooperation projects. The representative of another regional group commended developed countries for their increased contributions to UNCTAD technical cooperation in 2020.

14. The representatives of several regional groups highlighted the importance of the new technical cooperation strategy in guiding UNCTAD technical cooperation and in addressing the matter of unfulfilled technical cooperation requests. They expressed the expectation that past comments and suggestions provided by member States on the fundraising strategy concept paper be considered when formulating the new technical cooperation strategy. For instance, they expected that UNCTAD would play a more proactive role in helping beneficiaries match their needs with donor funding, which could be achieved by packaging technical cooperation requests into comprehensive multi-year, regional or thematic programmes or by seeking funding for unearmarked or soft-earmarked programmes. The representative of one regional group expected that the new technical cooperation strategy could help to address emerging issues that continued to trigger humanitarian and socioeconomic crises. Another regional group requested that the new technical cooperation strategy consider the substantial increase in regional components in the technical cooperation work of UNCTAD. Another regional group looked forward to receiving the draft technical cooperation strategy before long.

15. On the delivery of technical cooperation, the representatives of several regional groups and one delegate appreciated UNCTAD efforts in adapting activities to help beneficiary countries overcome the pandemic's negative impact, which included, inter alia, adjustment of its work programme to address urgent requests related to COVID-19, delivery of capacity-building activities in online or hybrid modes, and collaboration with other United Nations entities to deliver a "One United Nations" response to the pandemic. The representative of one regional group acknowledged the contribution of UNCTAD technical cooperation to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 8, 9, 15 and 17, and the tailor-made assistance provided by UNCTAD to help the least developed countries achieve structural economic transformation. She also appreciated ongoing UNCTAD work towards women's empowerment, economic development and regional integration through research and analysis and UNCTAD efforts in mainstreaming a gender perspective into its technical cooperation. Another regional group appreciated technical cooperation programmes delivered by UNCTAD for developing countries, especially the least developed countries, such as the Automated System for Customs Data, electronic commerce (e-commerce) and investment programmes.

16. The representative of one regional group stressed that, looking forward, UNCTAD should enhance cooperation and consensus-building between member States, cooperate closely with other agencies on trade and development affairs, have a particular focus on emerging issues, such as integrating climate, digital matters and women's empowerment into trade and development affairs when delivering on the Bridgetown Covenant, and enhance results-based management. The representative of another regional group hoped that the share of technical cooperation for countries in transition would increase in the future. The representative of another regional group requested continued support from UNCTAD in the operationalization of the Agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area and support in intellectual property-related discussions which would ramp up diversified production of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics and promote technology transfer. She also highlighted that assistance on matters related to recovery from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and in addressing previously existing inequalities and vulnerabilities remained a priority.

17. The representatives of several regional groups emphasized the importance of evaluations for strengthening UNCTAD. They also noted that the Office of Internal Oversight Services had assessed UNCTAD as having a robust evaluation function. One regional group highlighted that research work could not be linked to tangible outcomes and called for evaluation teams that would be undertaking the new cycle of subprogramme evaluations to incorporate such considerations into their work. Another regional group shared concerns that the sustainability of projects remained an issue and called for support for follow-on projects based on successful pilot initiatives that were funded through the United Nations Development Account.

## **B. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing**

(Agenda item 3)

18. The Chief of the Technical Cooperation Section of UNCTAD made an introductory statement on the agenda item documentation (TD/B/WP/311, TD/B/WP/311/Add.1 and TD/B/WP/311/Add.2).

19. The representatives of several regional groups welcomed the adjustments made by the secretariat to prioritize pandemic-related technical cooperation to address the most urgent needs of developing countries. Some regional groups encouraged UNCTAD to continue applying hybrid and online delivery models in future technical assistance, as appropriate. Some regional groups noted with concern the decrease in the share of the least developed countries in technical cooperation delivery in 2020 and hoped the trend would be corrected in the coming years. One regional group recognized the importance of South-South cooperation and commended developing countries on financial and in-kind donations to UNCTAD. Another regional group also requested that a gender lens be included in the technical cooperation activities.

20. Regarding the new technical cooperation strategy, one regional group highlighted the importance of member States being involved in the preparation of the strategy and recommended that previous comments on a fundraising strategy be considered in the new strategy.

21. On results-based management, some regional groups welcomed the introduction of the integrated planning, management and reporting system in UNCTAD technical cooperation. One regional group commended the Division on Investment and Enterprise and the Division on Technology and Logistics on connecting the work of different pillars and ensuring results assessments. He also welcomed the plan of the secretariat to set up working groups to implement recommendations of the assessment of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network and wished to hear regarding the operationalization of the working groups and their deliberations. One regional group welcomed the introduction of gender markers to all new projects.

22. On partnerships, one regional group acknowledged the progress made by UNCTAD in working with other agencies to avoid duplication and welcomed the continued

improvement of cooperation and coordination. Another regional group encouraged UNCTAD to continue promoting partnerships with resident coordinator offices. Another regional group commended the holistic approach of the support programme for the African Continental Free Trade Area.

23. With regard to subprogramme 1, the representative of the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies presented technical cooperation work under clusters 10 and 11. Work covered assistance delivered in debt management, sustainable funding and development policies for sustainable economic growth in Southern Africa. The representative further presented technical assistance in the area of statistics, to the Palestinian people and by the Virtual Institute.

24. The representative of one regional group expressed appreciation for the division's technical cooperation work, noting that many of the countries in the group were benefiting from it. She took note of the good results achieved, in particular those of the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System programme and the Virtual Institute. She also took note of the division's work in Palestine and the resources needed to support the territory. The regional group looked forward to a briefing to mark the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System programme's fortieth anniversary. For its future work, the regional group encouraged the division to focus on the main topics of the Bridgetown Covenant that were within its purview. Finally, she expressed the importance of adaptation and flexibility in the provision of technical cooperation.

25. With regard to subprogramme 2, the representative of the UNCTAD Division on Investment and Enterprise said that, in 2020, the focus had been on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on member States, providing immediate response to the pandemic while developing longer-term solutions to facilitate recovery and resilience. A successful three-pronged approach was used, based on a core product, information technology enhancement and partnerships. The approach allowed for changes in the areas of delivery methods (increased reliance on online tools); the structure of activities, with the development of advisory services on how to cope with new challenges; and the nature of the assistance provided.

26. The representative of one regional group commended the division for its prompt reaction to the crisis, including through specific assistance provided on international investment agreements and enterprise development and the development of online instruments. New initiatives launched by the division at the seventh World Investment Forum were also acknowledged, and the importance of continuing to work with small and medium-sized enterprises was noted.

27. With regard to subprogramme 3, the representative of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities presented an overview of the technical cooperation activities of 2020, highlighting work on women cross-border traders, biotrade, non-tariff measures, trade policy formulation, cotton by-products and consumer protection.

28. In response, one regional group noted the high demand from developing countries for activities related to competition and consumer protection and expressed appreciation for the development of online courses on trade barriers in languages other than English. The delegate also praised the expansion of the work programme on biotrade, to encompass the oceans economy through the new topic of blue biotrade.

29. With regard to subprogramme 4, the representative of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics presented the division's technical cooperation activities, which represented 64 per cent of total UNCTAD technical cooperation expenditures. She noted that the Bridgetown Covenant required more work from the division in the areas of trade facilitation and e-commerce and the digital economy, including technical assistance.

30. The representative of one regional group noted the early adaptation of its technical assistance activities to the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to move to online trainings, when possible, such as for the port management programme, which allowed for greater reach of capacity-building activities. She also noted the division's adoption of regional approaches to provide assistance to larger number of countries, such as e-commerce regional strategy work with the Economic Community of West African States, and

highlighted various technical assistance initiatives stemming from the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and encouraged the secretariat to pursue efforts in that regard. She also noted the partnerships developed with resident coordinator offices to raise funds for technical assistance activities. Finally, she expressed concern at the large number of technical cooperation requests to the division that remained pending due to lack of funding and called for ways to be found to mobilize resources to address those requests.

31. With regard to subprogramme 5, the representative of the UNCTAD Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes focused on the areas of strengthening regional integration, building resilience and economic diversification.

32. The division had made every effort to strengthen regional integration, particularly in technical assistance related to rules of origin (including for the African Continental Free Trade Area, and participation in negotiations at the World Trade Organization and supporting the least developed countries), and through regional value chains and the implementation of a project on transit, transport and trade facilitation for West African countries.

33. To support building resilience, the division provided the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries with technical assistance, including on the UNCTAD productive capacities index, preparation of General Assembly-mandated vulnerability profiles for the least developed countries that meet graduation criteria for the first time, support through United Nations resident coordinators (drafting of common country assessments for Ghana and the Sudan) and through comprehensive national programmes (such as the European Union–UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola: Train for Trade II). The diversification of economies was the third main area of technical assistance for which the division had been undertaking research for landlocked developing countries, in particular in the development of nutraceuticals.

34. He concluded by recalling the division's mandates and lack of financial and human resources to meet the needs of the least developed countries, calling on member States to support them through contributions to the Trust Fund for the Least Developed Countries. Contributions were necessary to ensure the continuity of existing activities and to enable the division to positively respond to the numerous technical cooperation requests received from the least developed countries.

35. The representative of one regional group particularly took note of the call for support to the least developed countries.

### **C. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview**

(Agenda item 4)

36. A representative of the UNCTAD secretariat presented the overview report on the agenda item (TD/B/WP/310) and reiterated the value of evaluation in contributing to learning at UNCTAD and to ensure the continued accountability and credibility of the institution. She explained efforts under way to enhance the dissemination of evaluation outcomes and recommendations and better incorporate knowledge gained through evaluation into future programming. Finally, she outlined the evaluation work ahead of UNCTAD, including an evaluation of subprogramme 1 and three joint United Nations Development Account projects focused on COVID-19.

37. The representatives of several regional groups and one delegate praised UNCTAD on the overview report and the evaluation outcomes achieved in the period covered in the document.

38. In consideration of continuing programming challenges, some regional groups and one delegate remarked on the need to enhance project sustainability. One regional group and some delegates stressed the need for greater incorporation of results-based management principles, including inclusion of theories of change, in project design. They also shared similar concerns regarding human rights and gender mainstreaming in the work of UNCTAD. One regional group recalled the need to expand evaluation activities to cover all the work of UNCTAD.



39. One delegate stated the need to improve the logical framework of projects, the identification of problems and indicators with baseline values and objectives, beneficiaries, and possible solutions, as well as carrying out risk evaluations.

40. One regional group called on the secretariat to ensure appropriate selection of an evaluator for subprogramme 1 and called on the forthcoming new evaluation to draw on results from previous subprogramme evaluations.

41. In response to points raised by delegations, the UNCTAD secretariat stated that a competitive process was under way to ensure the best candidate was engaged for the subprogramme 1 evaluation, and that the first cycle of subprogramme evaluations would serve as a baseline for the new cycle of evaluations. The secretariat also acknowledged points raised regarding results-based management, project sustainability and human rights and gender mainstreaming, and that the secretariat was actively pursuing ways to address those issues in future UNCTAD programming.

#### **D. Preparatory session for the programme plan and performance information**

(Agenda item 5)

42. The Chief of the UNCTAD Resources Management Service provided an overview of the budgetary process, key milestones and an overview of some expected changes to the format of the 2023 programme budget document.

43. In response to the issue of timely circulation of a non-paper prepared for discussion raised previously by some regional groups, he clarified that the primary aim of the non-paper was to provide a general outline of the substantive information presented during the meeting, to accompany discussions between member States and divisions. It had been agreed that the non-paper would not be a pre-session document with a specific submission deadline ahead of the opening of the session. In addition, to prepare information useful for member States, the secretariat had needed to undertake internal consultations which required a certain amount of time. That intensive consultation process could only begin after conclusion of the quadrennial conference three weeks prior, as the secretariat needed to mainstream the new outcome document into the results proposed for 2023. The discussion to follow would confirm the effort.

44. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of some regional groups requested that the secretariat outline the strategy and long-term plan for implementing and addressing the entirety of the Bridgetown Covenant over the next three years until the sixteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. The Chief explained that the current session of the Working Party, where member States and the UNCTAD secretariat had the opportunity for a substantive discussion on the 2023 programme plan, was driven by the timing of the United Nations Secretariat's budgetary process. In parallel, the UNCTAD secretariat would also continue preparation and planning to mainstream the Bridgetown Covenant into the programme of work.

45. One regional group highlighted that addressing the impact of COVID-19 could not wait until the outcome of the 2023 programme budget was ready and encouraged the secretariat to start work on the issue immediately.

46. The Director of the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies recalled that the Bridgetown Covenant called for a holistic view of development to deal with a post-pandemic world characterized by an uneven recovery between developed and developing countries. Developing countries were at risk of another lost decade and failing to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Subprogramme 1 would thus focus work on policy options for developing countries to build resilience to external shocks; promote a transformative agenda with a renewed role for industrial policy; analyse South-South cooperation trends; and examine how development finance could be improved, including further work on debt sustainability and illicit financial flows. He underlined that the complexity of the climate change-development nexus represented one of the key challenges for the international community

for the foreseeable future and that UNCTAD would continue work on a Global Green New Deal.

47. The representative of one regional group and the director agreed that work on Palestinian issues needed to be strengthened. The representatives of some regional groups underlined the importance of debt and finance issues and supported UNCTAD work on climate and development.

48. The Director of the UNCTAD Division on Investment and Enterprise elaborated on challenges for building back better. First, new development policies and smart investment promotion strategies were required. Second, the lack of pipeline projects at the ready in developing countries remained a barrier to attracting international project finance. Third, the need to boost investment in Sustainable Development Goal sectors required further promoting investment from all sources. The Bridgetown Covenant reconfirmed the previous mandates of subprogramme 2 and broadened their scope, such as for tax, national and international policy frameworks and investment promotion.

49. Several regional groups expressed satisfaction with the division's work and its analysis of mandates. Regarding the expected results, some regional groups advised avoiding measurements that could lead to subjectivity or be overly ambitious in the absence of established causality between interventions of the subprogramme and foreign direct investment flows, suggesting instead to assess the implementation of the recommendations formulated.

50. The Officer-in-Charge of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities presented programme plan and performance information for subprogramme 3.

51. Some regional groups, recognizing the variety of the division's work, noted that the inputs presented in the document should be more succinct. They also highlighted the need for trade and environment work to be well coordinated across the organization to avoid overlaps, while creating appropriate synergies. Furthermore, the proposed highlighted result should incorporate aspects from the three pillars of work of UNCTAD more broadly and with a greater emphasis on regular budget activities.

52. On the commodities work programme, one regional group noted the emphasis on commodity dependent developing countries but pointed out that many other countries faced significant challenges, particularly net food importers.

53. One regional group noted the importance of division work on non-tariff measures, World Trade Organization engagement and climate, and emphasized the crucial role integration organizations could play. The delegate outlined competition policy as an example of ongoing success, highlighting transborder cartels and the digital economy as key areas. More human and financial resources were called for in that regard. Another regional group praised division work on competition and consumer in the Arab region, calling for more support for the division in the area and also on environmental work.

54. The Director of the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics explained how the pandemic and recovery had underpinned the importance of digitalization and trade logistics in development strategies. She noted that the Bridgetown Covenant asked UNCTAD to strengthen both aspects of subprogramme 4 in the future work programme of UNCTAD.

55. The representatives of some regional groups expressed interest in synergies across the three pillars of UNCTAD work, for example, in the context of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy and of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

56. The representatives of some regional groups also expressed satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the division's work, stressing appreciation for the edition of the *Digital Economy Report* on cross-border data flows and work on maritime transport, in the current context of high prices for containers and congestion in maritime transport. They also appreciated the Automated System for Customs Data, including single windows, stressing the beneficial impact in terms of economic opportunities. Several regional groups

emphasized that subprogramme 4 should receive additional resources to strengthen work in the areas of e-commerce and the digital economy and trade facilitation, as set out in the Bridgetown Covenant.

57. The Director of the UNCTAD Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes focused on the mandate from the fifteenth session of the Conference for the division, particularly priority and urgent issues from subprogramme 5, lessons learned in 2021, issues expected to impact the 2023 programme plan and proposed areas for the 2023 highlighted result and linkages to the Bridgetown Covenant.

58. The subprogramme's objective aimed at strengthening the effective integration of African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and vulnerable and structurally weak economies. He particularly underscored the trade and development needs of the least developed countries, productive capacities and structural transformation, issues of inequality and vulnerability, climate and environmental objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, support to African countries in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and contribution to United Nations discussions on the multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States. He shared positive lessons learned for 2021, including on virtual and hybrid training and capacity-building workshops; creation of the productive capacity index and training, a specific programme on rules of origin and a regional programme on trade facilitation. Regarding issues expected to impact the 2023 programme plan, he underlined a multidimensional update of the productive capacities index, integrating the climate change and other parameters.

59. The representative of one regional group particularly welcomed the division's technical assistance and research, notably the productive capacities index and vulnerability index. She asked about work on the three pillars of UNCTAD, particularly on the division's consensus-building work. The representative of another regional group, while welcoming the work carried out, commented on the lessons learned, proposals and the productive capacities index, raising the question of measurement and implementation of the index in countries.

60. The Director recalled that the division worked in synergy with other divisions and development partners on the productive capacities index and the vulnerability index. The consensus-building pillar was thus well reflected in the work of the division.

61. Making final comments, one delegate recalled the need to secure an appropriate budget to implement the mandates of the Bridgetown Covenant, including those related to the question of Palestine.

62. The representative of one regional group indicated that effective planning of the meeting was needed, for example, by scheduling only one presentation from each division director that would include all content to be presented. She also asked the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to prepare a briefing for member States on the results of the budget process after consideration by the Fifth Committee in New York.

### **III. Organizational matters**

#### **A. Election of officers**

(Agenda item 1)

63. At its opening plenary meeting, on 1 November 2021, the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance elected Ms. Lucy N. Kiruthu (Kenya) as Chair and Ms. Alison Urquizo Olazabal (Peru) as Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

#### **B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

(Agenda item 2)

64. Also at its opening plenary meeting, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda, as contained in document TD/B/WP/309 and Corr.1. The agenda was thus as follows:

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.
6. Provisional agenda of the eighty-third session of the Working Party.
7. Other business.
8. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

#### **C. Provisional agenda of the eighty-third session of the Working Party**

(Agenda item 6)

65. At its closing plenary meeting, on 4 November 2021, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda of its eighty-third session, as contained in a non-paper of the same date (see annex II).

#### **D. Other business**

(Agenda item 7)

66. There were no further issues presented for consideration by the Working Party.

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

(Agenda item 8)

67. At its closing plenary meeting, on 4 November 2021, the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance approved the report of the session and authorized the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur, under the authority of the Chair, to finalize the report to the Trade and Development Board.

## 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 3)

##### *The Trade and Development Board*

1. *Reaffirms* the role of UNCTAD technical cooperation as one of the fundamental pillars of the organization, and stresses the importance of synergies among the three pillars for coherent and mutually reinforced assistance;
2. *Commends* UNCTAD for having ensured continuation of technical cooperation activities amid difficult circumstances due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and appreciates the UNCTAD response to COVID-19 through swift adaptation of its technical cooperation, innovative approaches and reinforced partnership with other United Nations entities;
3. *Welcomes* the adjustments made by UNCTAD to adapt with online deliverables, such as the organization of hybrid meetings together with local stakeholders and the United Nations system at the country level, and encourages the secretariat to build on best practices and to continue the approach to reach a larger audience;
4. *Calls* upon the secretariat to reflect the Bridgetown Covenant in future technical cooperation activities;
5. *Appreciates* the work achieved by the UNCTAD secretariat in strengthening inter-agency and interdivisional cooperation for increased impact at the country level, and in furthering results-based management, including the roll-out of the new United Nations Secretariat-wide integrated planning, monitoring and reporting system, and looks forward to being informed about the subsequent phases of the roll-out of the integrated planning, monitoring and reporting system and on further efforts on results-based management;
6. *Stresses* the importance of sufficient and predictable funding for ensuring effective technical cooperation, and requests that the UNCTAD secretariat make adequate provision for fundraising in the new technical cooperation strategy; also encourages multi-year contributions to UNCTAD technical cooperation, including to the Trust Fund for the Least Developed Countries, to increase the sustainability of UNCTAD technical assistance, while reaffirming the need to improve the application of the United Nations principles of transparency and accountability, as well as the results-based management;
7. *Encourages* UNCTAD to broaden and diversify its donor base and to explore new funding opportunities, such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, partnerships with resident coordinator offices, blended finance and public-private partnerships;
8. *Takes note* of the new date for the technical cooperation strategy, and calls upon UNCTAD to finalize this strategy in close collaboration with member States in time for its consideration at the eighty-third session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance.

## **Annex II**

### **Provisional agenda of the eighty-third session of the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance**

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 2023, part II of the proposed programme budget.
4. Technical cooperation strategy.
5. Provisional agenda of the eighty-fourth session of the Working Party.
6. Other business.
7. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

## Annex III

### Attendance\*

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

Algeria	Madagascar
Angola	Malawi
Austria	Malaysia
Barbados	Mexico
Belarus	Morocco
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Nepal
Botswana	Netherlands
Brazil	Nicaragua
Burkina Faso	Nigeria
Burundi	Pakistan
Canada	Panama
China	Peru
Colombia	Portugal
Djibouti	Russian Federation
Ecuador	Serbia
Egypt	Slovenia
Gabon	South Africa
Gambia	Spain
Greece	Sri Lanka
Guatemala	State of Palestine
Honduras	Switzerland
India	Togo
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Tunisia
Iraq	Turkey
Jamaica	Uganda
Japan	United Arab Emirates
Jordan	United Republic of Tanzania
Kenya	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Kuwait	Viet Nam
Lebanon	Zambia
Libya	Zimbabwe

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

European Union

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\* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP(82)/INF.1.