



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
14 July 2025

Original: English

Trade and Development Board Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance

Ninetieth session

Geneva, 22–26 September 2025

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

Summary

In 2024, UNCTAD continued to deliver technical cooperation at full throttle. Total technical cooperation expenditures were \$56.48 million, nearly level with the record high in 2023. About one third of technical cooperation expenditures in 2024 supported the least developed countries. With 47 per cent of total delivery, ASYCUDA remained the leading technical cooperation product of UNCTAD.

Voluntary funding to UNCTAD technical cooperation reached a new high in 2024, exceeding, for the first time, \$56 million; 13 per cent higher than in 2023, due to increased funding from both developing and developed economies. The share of developing economies in total trust fund resources rose to 47 per cent, the highest level since 2020, and developed economies accounted for 24 per cent.

Enhanced delivery was accompanied by the improved functioning of technical cooperation. In 2024, UNCTAD further enhanced the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency of operational activities through mutual fertilization of its three pillars of work and by leveraging internal and external partnerships, delivering results-oriented and gender-sensitive projects and updating requests data in a timely fashion. In the context of United Nations reform, UNCTAD continued to deepen engagement with the resident coordinator system and was involved in 46 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks worldwide and had access to over \$4 million in funds through the “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms.



Introduction

1. This report has been prepared to facilitate the annual policy review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD by the Trade and Development Board and will be submitted to the Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance, in line with the provisions set out in paragraph 220 of the Accra Accord and in a series of decisions taken by the Board in 2008–2024, through which the Board recommended more structured interaction between the secretariat, potential beneficiaries and donors, to be carried out within the framework of the Working Party, which is the main mechanism for consultations among member States on all technical cooperation issues.
2. An overview is provided of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing in 2024. The main trends in the funding and delivery of such cooperation are analysed and the key actions taken by UNCTAD to improve the structure and functioning of technical cooperation are highlighted. Some good examples and lessons learned are also shared. Finally, conclusions and suggestions for the way forward are provided.
3. Within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, UNCTAD continued to advocate for the inclusion of non-resident agencies in the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks at the country level; and increased emphasis on United Nations assistance in trade and related areas.

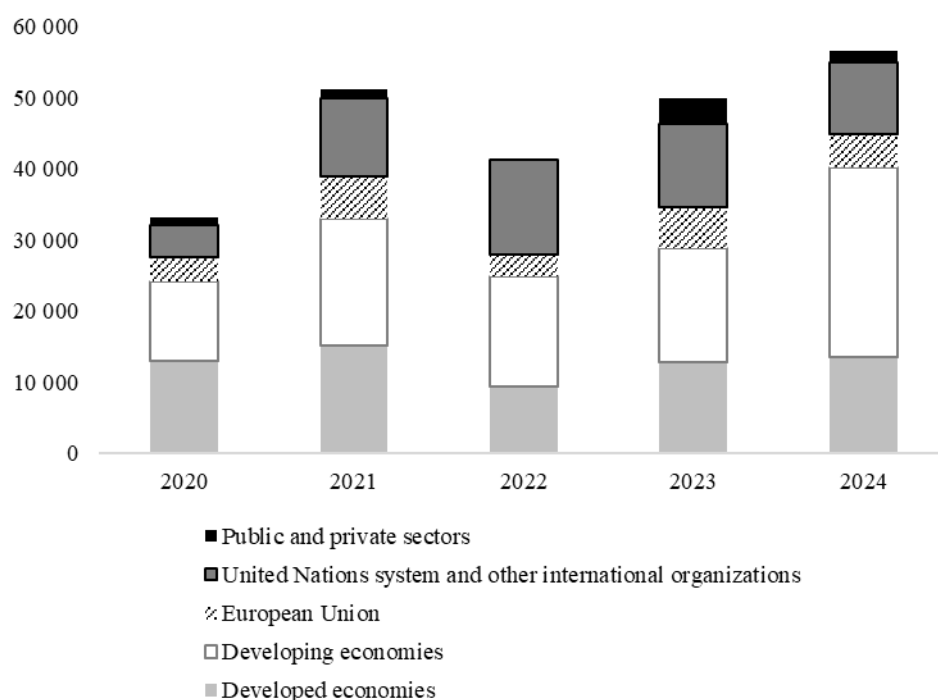
I. Funding sources

4. UNCTAD technical cooperation activities are financed through the following two main sources:
 - (a) Funding for trust funds, which refers to the financial resources provided for UNCTAD technical cooperation trust funds by individual Governments, the European Union, the United Nations system and other international organizations and the private and public sectors;
 - (b) The United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account.
5. Contributions received under the “Delivering as one” initiative to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity are included in the aggregate funding for trust funds. In view of the importance of the Inter-Agency Cluster in repositioning the United Nations development system to better support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNCTAD access to “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms is reported on in chapter I, section C. Contributions to the Junior Professional Officer Programme of the United Nations are not included in UNCTAD trust fund resources and are reported on separately in chapter I, section D.

A. Trust fund resources

6. Voluntary funding to UNCTAD technical cooperation trust funds continues to fluctuate. Following an increase of 20 per cent in 2023, total extrabudgetary resources for technical cooperation registered further growth, by 13 per cent, to reach a new record high of \$56.62 million. Greater contributions from developing and developed economies contributed to the overall increase of voluntary funding in 2024, although contributions from the three other funding sources declined (figure 1).¹

Figure 1
Origins of UNCTAD trust fund resources
(Thousands of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD.

Notes: Total excludes contributions to the United Nations Junior Professional Officer Programme. A major part of funding from developing economies is self-financing, and may be derived, for example, from proceeds of loans or grants from international financial institutions for activities in the countries that provided funding (see TD/B/WP/338/Add.2, table 15). Contributions from developing and developed economies in 2020 were revised according to the new classification.

7. After a rebound in 2023, contributions of developed economies to UNCTAD technical cooperation trust funds continued to trend upward, amounting to \$13.58 million, or 24 per cent of total voluntary funding and 7 per cent higher than in 2023. In 2024, with contributions of \$3.84 million, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remained the largest developed economy contributor, followed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany and Switzerland. Combined, the contributions from these four donors represented 76 per cent of the total contributions of developed economies to UNCTAD technical cooperation. About 4 per cent of developed economy contributions

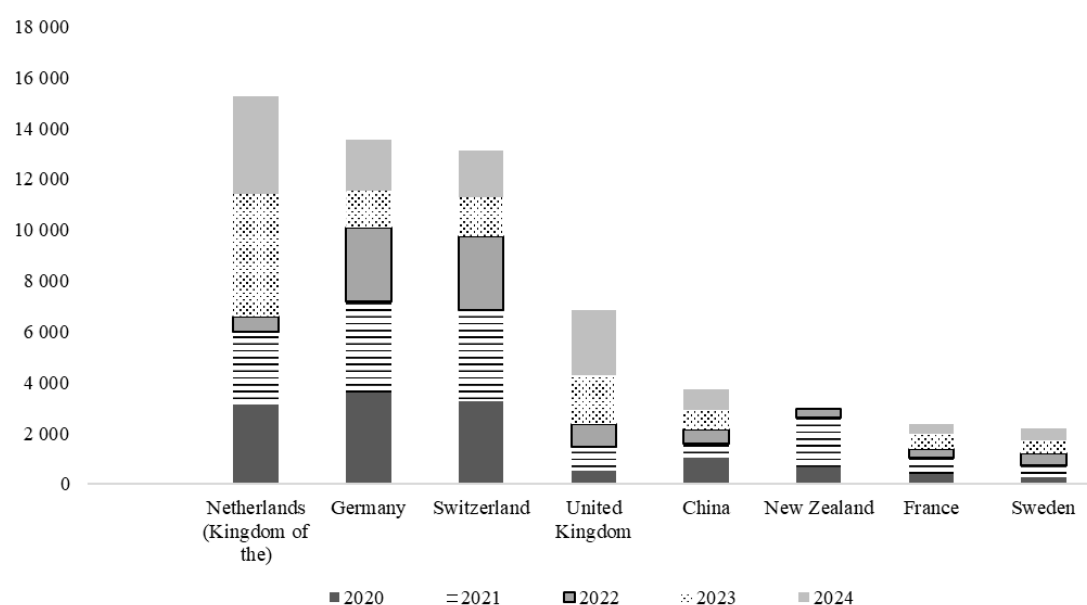
¹ The classification of economies by development status is intended for statistical convenience and does not express a judgement about the stage reached by a particular country or an area in the development process. Since December 2021, the United Nations Statistics Division no longer maintains the categorization of developing and developed regions in the standard country or area codes for statistical use (M49 standard), but the categorization can continue to be applied. In the classification applied by UNCTAD, the Republic of Korea is part of the developed country group (as recorded at the sixty-eighth session of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD (see TD/B/68/3); for more information, see UNCTADstat database, classifications.

were self-financed, such as the contribution of Albania for the maintenance of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World system of the Customs Administration. With regard to total contributions accumulated over the last five years, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland continued to be the largest developed economy donors, each contributing over \$13 million in this period (figure 2). In 2024, contributions from developed economies were mainly directed towards technical cooperation programmes or areas such as ASYCUDA; the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS); electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the digital economy; sustainable trade and the environment; trade facilitation; and investment for development.

Figure 2

Accumulated contributions by major developing and developed economy contributors

(Thousands of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD.

8. Contributions from developing economies, following a modest increase in 2023, rose by 65 per cent year-on-year, to a high of \$26.64 million in 2024. Accordingly, the share of developing economies in total trust fund resources increased from 32 to 47 per cent. Contributions from Angola and Iraq, at \$9.25 million combined, mainly to implement ASYCUDA projects, accounted for 35 per cent of developing economy funding. It is noteworthy that 96 per cent of funding from developing economies was for financing projects or activities in their respective economies, mainly to implement ASYCUDA (85 per cent) and DMFAS (5 per cent). Only 4 per cent of developing country funding (\$1 million) was aimed at supporting UNCTAD technical cooperation to benefit other developing economies. This includes \$0.8 million from China, which remained the largest contributor within this category, and \$0.2 million from Saudi Arabia to support the Global Supply Chain Forum.

9. Contributions from the European Union decreased by 20 per cent compared with in 2023, to \$4.67 million in 2024, yet this amount was 7 per cent higher than the average of \$4.37 million in 2019–2023. Accordingly, the share of the European Union in total trust fund resources also decreased, from 12 to 8 per cent. Contributions were directed to supporting three ASYCUDA projects, including a project titled “Improving Pacific islands customs and trade” and a project on supporting Parties to the Central European Free Trade Agreement in monitoring and reporting non-tariff barriers and implementing the dispute settlement mechanism. Together, the European Union and its member States contributed \$12.40 million to UNCTAD technical cooperation in 2024, representing 22 per cent of total trust fund resources.

10. Contributions from the United Nations system and other international organizations decreased by 12 per cent, from \$11.57 million in 2023 to \$10.20 million in 2024. Within the United Nations system, the largest contributors were the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the latter contributed \$2.74 million to finance ASYCUDA projects in Afghanistan, Madagascar and Turkmenistan. Among other international organizations, the African Development Bank, with yearly contributions of \$1.58 million, was the largest contributor.

11. Contributions from the public and private sectors totalled \$1.54 million in 2024, down from the high of \$3.62 million in 2023. This includes \$0.58 million from a privately held development company in the United Kingdom to support the implementation of a business facilitation project in the State of Palestine; and contributions from the port authorities of many developing countries to support the Train for Trade programme.

B. United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account

12. United Nations regular budget resources for technical cooperation activities are provided under the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account, that is, sections 23 and 35, respectively, of the United Nations programme budget. In 2024, expenditures under the regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account rose to \$4.37 million, mainly due to the significant increase of expenditures under the Development Account.

13. Expenditures under the regular programme of technical cooperation amounted to \$2.02 million in 2024, a marginal increase from \$1.99 million in 2023. They were mainly used for advisory services and training activities, such as the UNCTAD courses on key issues on the international economic agenda, known as paragraph 166 courses. In 2024, UNCTAD delivered two regional courses, for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific. Resources were also used to support developing countries in producing and implementing e-commerce strategies; the group of the least developed countries at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on issues regarding rules of origin; and climate negotiators from the Group of 77 and China with regard to negotiations and outcomes of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to help developing countries achieve climate goals while continuing on paths towards sustainable development.

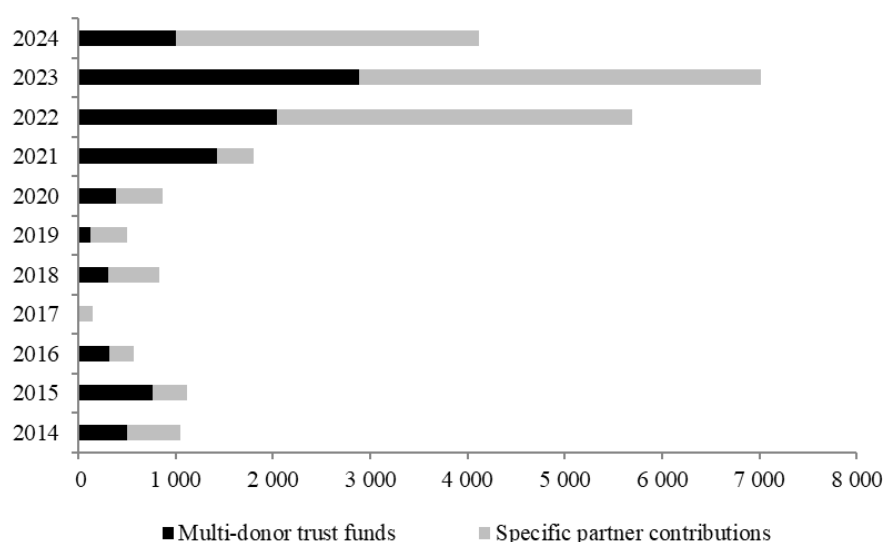
14. In 2024, 19 Development Account projects, including joint projects UNCTAD led or participated in, registered expenditures of \$2.34 million, 42 per cent higher compared with in 2023. The accelerated delivery of several projects contributed to this increase. The theme of the 18th tranche of the Development Account is “Supporting Member States to catalyse digital transformation and an enabling policy environment for a sustainable, responsible, and inclusive digital society that leaves no one behind, with a focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. Under this tranche, four UNCTAD projects with a total budget of \$2.86 million were endorsed for funding by the Development Account Steering Committee, which accounted for 15 per cent of the funding envelope of the tranche. UNCTAD will lead a joint project on better statistics on digital services trade for gender-responsive trade policy and will be responsible for implementing three projects on improved investment policymaking to foster an inclusive, responsible and sustainable digital economy; gender-responsive science, technology and innovation policies for inclusive digital transformation; and digitalization and artificial intelligence-powered transparency on trade-related regulations for gender-sensitive policymaking. Project implementation is expected to start in 2026, following approval of the Development Account budget by the General Assembly.

C. “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity

15. Led by UNCTAD, with the participation of 15 resident and non-resident United Nations agencies, the Cluster is an inter-agency mechanism dedicated to the coordination of trade and development operations at the country level. The Cluster is involved in a number of United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks and delivers joint programmes with funding secured through new financing mechanisms developed in support of the reform of the United Nations development system, such as “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms.

16. In 2024, UNCTAD access to “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms, consisting of specific partner contributions and multi-donor trust funds, amounted to \$4.12 million. This figure was below the record high levels in 2022 and 2023, yet was more than double the 10-year average in 2014–2023, reflecting an overall positive trend (figure 3).

Figure 3
UNCTAD access to “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms
(Thousands of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD.

1. Specific partner contributions

17. Specific partner contributions are direct contributions to one or more agencies given by one or more donors to support inter-agency operations. In 2024, UNCTAD received contributions amounting to \$3.11 million. This included contributions made by other Inter-Agency Cluster agencies, including from UNDP, in support of operations on trade facilitation in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan; and from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, to build capacity for improved market access in Mozambique.

2. Multi-donor trust funds

18. Multi-donor trust funds are pooled funding mechanisms managed by the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, with a structure that involves the representatives of the United Nations system, national Governments and donors. In 2024, UNCTAD received allocations of \$1.01 million from the Office, to support continuous participation in the Pacific Digital Economy Programme and two new joint programmes in Ghana and Rwanda financed by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund; in Ghana, UNCTAD works with UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund on leveraging digital

ecosystems for increased productivity among microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises; and in Rwanda, UNCTAD partners with the International Organization for Migration, the International Trade Centre and the United Nations Capital Development Fund to amplify digital opportunities in cross-border trade.

D. Financing of junior professional officers

19. In addition to the funding sources mentioned above, some donors support the junior professional officers programme of UNCTAD, carried out under the Junior Professional Officer Programme of the United Nations.

20. In 2024, nine junior professional officers worked at UNCTAD, equal to the number in 2023, in four divisions and in the Office of the Secretary-General (Division on Technology and Logistics, four; Division on International Trade and Commodities, two; and remaining divisions and Office, one each).² Six countries contributed to the junior professional officers programme, namely China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom. Germany sponsored three officers, France sponsored two officers and China, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom sponsored one officer each. In 2024, UNCTAD engaged in discussions with potential new donors, to further expand the funding base of the programme; Finland and Qatar have confirmed interest in sponsoring one officer each.

21. The programme offers a unique opportunity for young professionals to participate in the analytical and operational work of UNCTAD. For many, the training received at UNCTAD has been a springboard to subsequent career development. The demand by the UNCTAD secretariat for junior professional officers far exceeds the supply. The secretariat therefore reiterates the request for donors in a position to do so to consider sponsoring junior professional officers, particularly those from developing countries.

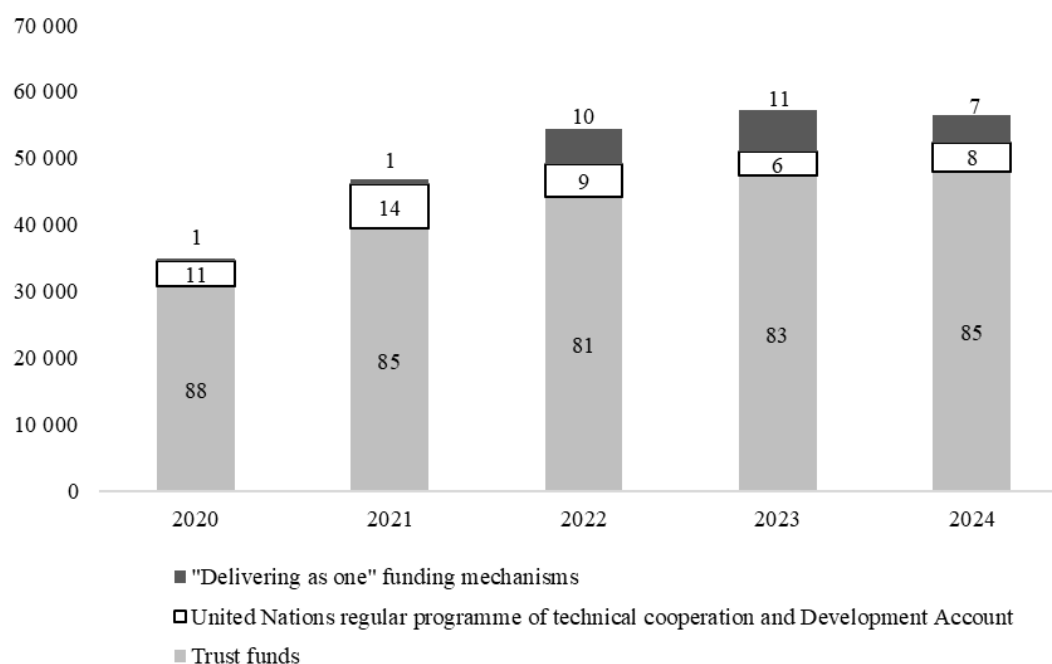
II. Expenditures and allocation of technical cooperation resources

22. In 2024, total technical cooperation expenditures remained at a high level, of \$56.48 million, only 1 per cent below the record high of \$57.27 million in 2023.³ Expenditures under trust funds rose slightly, to \$48.04 million, accounting for 85 per cent of total expenditures in 2024. Expenditures under “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms decreased by 34 per cent from the exceptional high in 2023, to \$4.08 million, representing 7 per cent of yearly technical cooperation expenditures. Expenditures under the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account increased by 20 per cent, to \$4.37 million; accordingly, the corresponding share of total expenditures increased from 6 to 8 per cent (figure 4).

² See TD/B/WP/338/Add.2, table 9.

³ See TD/B/WP/338/Add.2, table 2.

Figure 4
Technical cooperation expenditures, by funding source
(Thousands of dollars and percentage)



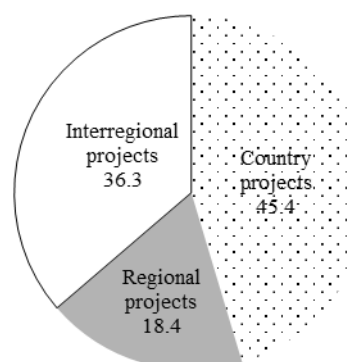
Source: UNCTAD.

A. Expenditures by type of project

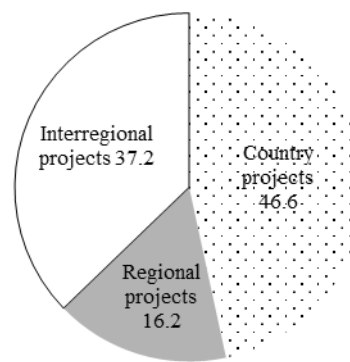
23. UNCTAD technical cooperation projects are delivered at the interregional, regional and country levels. In 2024, expenditures under interregional and country projects increased marginally; expenditures under regional projects decreased by 13 per cent. In terms of share of total technical cooperation expenditures, the shares of interregional and country projects increased and that of regional projects decreased, from 18.4 to 16.2 per cent (figure 5).

Figure 5
Project expenditures as share of total technical cooperation expenditures, by type of project
(Percentage)

(a) 2023



(b) 2024



Source: UNCTAD.

24. In 2024, expenditures under country projects reached \$26.31 million, up by 1 per cent from 2023, with 38 per cent related to projects in the least developed countries. Most country projects were self-financed, including resources made available by donors from bilateral aid programmes, focusing on customs modernization and reform and debt management. Country project expenditures under three regions increased, including by 30 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean; in Asia and Oceania, there was a decrease of 13 per cent.

25. Expenditures under regional projects decreased by 13 per cent, from \$10.51 million in 2023 to \$9.14 million in 2024, due to a significant decrease in regional project expenditures in Africa, at 45 per cent.

26. Interregional projects are thematic projects that benefit more than one geographic region. In 2024, expenditures under this category totalled \$21.03 million, a relatively stable level, compared with \$20.78 million in 2023. Expenditures under interregional projects have contributed to the delivery of a variety of technical cooperation products.

B. Expenditures by product

27. In 2024, expenditures under the 28 technical cooperation products of UNCTAD reached \$50.13 million, representing 89 per cent of total annual technical cooperation delivery (see table). ASYCUDA alone accounted for 47 per cent of expenditures, confirming the importance of this long-standing technical cooperation product. The programme was followed by DMFAS, e-commerce and the digital economy and business facilitation, representing, respectively, 8.9, 8.8 and 6.6 per cent of delivery. Six products each accounted for 1–4 per cent of total delivery, and combined, represented 14 per cent of delivery. The remaining 18 products accounted for less than 1 per cent each of delivery, including two products without expenditures in 2024. The product “investment guides” has been discontinued and related work has been subsumed under “business facilitation”.

Technical cooperation expenditures in 2024, by theme and product

<i>Product</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Expenditures, 2024 (Thousands of dollars)</i>	<i>Share of total (Percentage)</i>
Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development			
Investment policy reviews	8, 17	176	0.31
Services policy reviews	8, 9, 17	5	0.01
Trade policy framework reviews	17	38	0.07
Science, technology and innovation policy reviews	9	7	0.01
E-commerce and the digital economy	8, 9, 17	4 953	8.77
Investment guides	9, 17	–	0.00
Non-tariff measures	3, 8, 17	1 048	1.85
Trade negotiations and the international trading system	10, 17	83	0.15
Sustainable trade and the environment	12, 13, 14, 15	1 896	3.36
Investment promotion and facilitation	9, 17	195	0.35
Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience			
Support to graduation from least developed country status	8	153	0.27
DMFAS – Debt Management and Financial Analysis System	17	5 019	8.88
UNCTAD contributions to the Enhanced Integrated Framework	9, 17	–	0.00
Market access, rules of origin and geographical indications for the least developed countries	8, 10, 17	54	0.10
Breaking the chains of commodity dependence	8, 9	14	0.02
Sustainable and resilient transport and logistics services	8, 9, 13, 14	1 118	1.98

<i>Product</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Expenditures, 2024 (Thousands of dollars)</i>	<i>Share of total (Percentage)</i>
Fostering economic efficiency, improving governance			
Voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection law and policy	8, 10	10	0.02
Business facilitation	8, 16	3 744	6.63
Trade facilitation	10, 16	2 003	3.55
ASYCUDA – Automated System for Customs Data	9, 15, 17	26 704	47.28
Statistics	17	478	0.85
Enabling accounting and reporting on the private's sector contribution to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals	12, 17	368	0.65
Investment and public health	3, 9	11	0.02
International investment agreements	17	82	0.15
Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks	8, 9, 10, 12, 17	151	0.27
Empowering people, investing in their future			
Trade, gender and development	5, 8	21	0.04
Entrepreneurship for sustainable development	4, 8	755	1.34
Train for Trade	8, 9, 14, 17	1 050	1.86
		50 134	88.76

Source: UNCTAD.

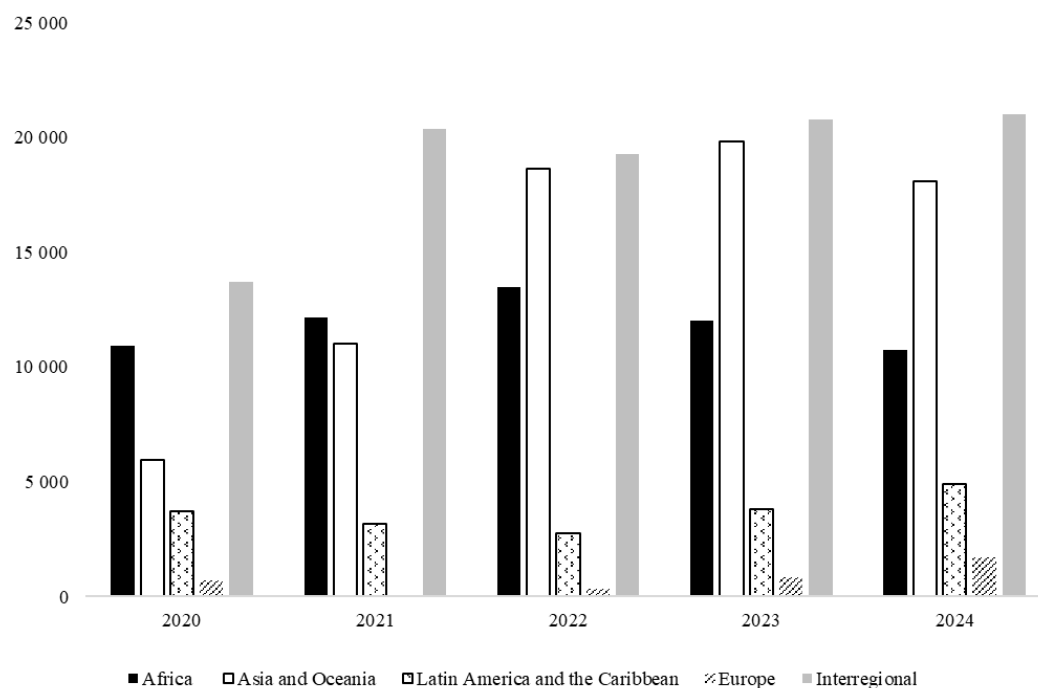
28. Measured by expenditures, UNCTAD technical cooperation is particularly relevant in achieving four Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goal 8 on promoting economic growth and productive employment and decent work; Goal 9 on building infrastructure, promoting industry and fostering innovation; Goal 15 on protecting, restoring and promoting life on land; and Goal 17 on the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. In 2024, an estimated \$18.12 million or 32 per cent of total expenditures directly contributed towards achieving Goal 17; \$11.95 million or 21 per cent of total expenditures contributed towards achieving Goal 9; 17 per cent contributed towards achieving Goal 15; and 10 per cent contributed towards achieving Goal 8.⁴

C. Expenditures by region

29. In 2024, expenditures under regional and country projects totalled \$35.45 million, or 63 per cent of total delivery. Of these expenditures, \$10.77 million was spent in Africa, a decrease of 10 per cent from 2023 (figure 6). The share of African country and regional projects in total technical cooperation expenditures continued to trend downward, to 19 per cent in 2024 (figure 7). Enhanced delivery under several products (e.g. ASYCUDA; business facilitation; sustainable and resilient transport and logistics services; and trade facilitation) did not offset reduced expenditures under other products (particularly DMFAS; investment and public health; trade, gender and development; and UNCTAD contributions to the Enhanced Integrated Framework).

⁴ See TD/B/WP/338/Add.2, table 5.

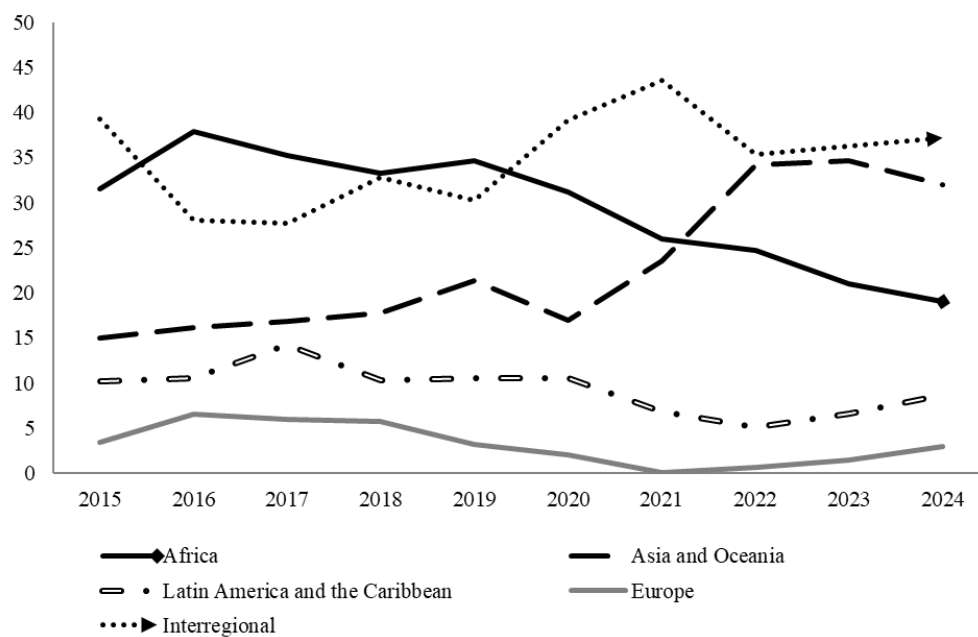
Figure 6
Technical cooperation expenditures, by region, for regional and country projects
 (Thousands of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD.

Note: No expenditures were recorded in North America in 2024.

Figure 7
Share of total annual technical cooperation expenditures, by region
 (Percentage)



Source: UNCTAD.

Notes: Only expenditures under regional and country projects are considered in calculating the share of a particular region. No expenditures were recorded in North America in 2024.

30. Following three years of growth, expenditures under regional and country projects in Asia and Oceania decreased to \$18.09 million in 2024. Despite the decrease by 9 per cent, expenditures remained at a high level, as did the share of total expenditures, at 32 per cent. The reduction of \$1.74 million was due to the decrease of expenditures under several products, particularly ASYCUDA, under which expenditures in the region decreased by \$1.56 million compared with in 2023.

31. After a recovery in 2023, expenditures under regional and country projects in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to increase, to \$4.90 million in 2024, a year-on-year increase of 29 per cent. Accordingly, the share of total expenditures rose from 7 to 9 per cent. The increase was mainly due to greater delivery under ASYCUDA and several other projects implemented in the region, including an e-commerce strategy development project in Trinidad and Tobago, a project on sustainable export diversification strategies in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and a regional integration and industrial policy project in Latin America.

32. Expenditures under regional and country projects in Europe reached \$1.70 million, double the amount in 2023. The increase was mainly due to ASYCUDA projects in Albania and the Republic of Moldova. Accordingly, the share of total expenditures rose from 1.5 to 3.0 per cent.

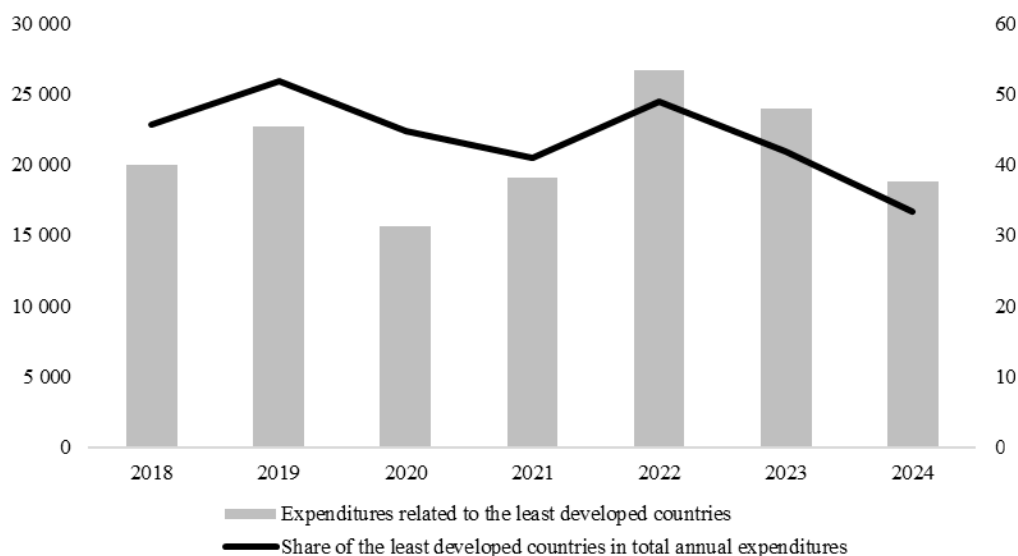
D. Expenditures in support of the least developed countries

33. In 2024, technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries totalled \$18.79 million, including \$9.93 million related to the implementation of country projects, mainly under ASYCUDA, which accounted for 87 per cent. Compared with in 2023, least developed country-related expenditures decreased by 22 per cent, registering the lowest level since 2021. Accordingly, the share of total delivery decreased from 42 to 33 per cent (figure 8). Several factors contributed to this decrease, particularly the 19 per cent reduction in country project expenditures in the least developed countries under ASYCUDA; the completion of the European Union–UNCTAD joint programme of support for Angola: Train for Trade II; and the significant decrease in expenditures related to regional projects in Africa, including finalization of a least developed country-focused project on transit, transport and trade in West Africa funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

Figure 8

Technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries

(Thousands of dollars and percentage)



Source: UNCTAD.

34. In 2024, through a joint project with the Economic Commission for Africa, UNCTAD continued to support five of the least developed countries, namely, Cambodia, the Comoros, Djibouti, Senegal and Zambia, in structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from least developed country status. At end-2024, a vulnerability profile had been prepared for each beneficiary country, impact studies of the African Continental Free Trade Area had been drafted for the four countries in Africa and validation workshops had been held in Cambodia, the Comoros, Senegal and Zambia. These activities helped improve understanding of graduation issues among beneficiary countries and enhance capacity to formulate resilience-building policies. As a next step, technical assistance will be provided in requesting beneficiary countries, in developing industrial policy and enhancing productive capacities.

35. In 2024, the multi-donor trust fund for the least developed countries supported capacity-building and training for the group of the least developed countries at WTO. However, in 2024, no new contributions were received for the trust fund. The lack of sustainable funding limits UNCTAD support for the least developed countries, including in developing a more systematic and long-term programme of support.

III. Structure and functioning

A. Follow-up to intergovernmental decisions

1. UNCTAD engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system

36. Six years after a repositioning, the resident coordinator system has become the core of the United Nations development system in supporting member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2024, UNCTAD further deepened engagement with the resident coordinator system through intellectual inputs, enhanced reporting and participation in fund mobilization efforts. UNCTAD expertise on a broad range of development issues related to trade, investment, finance and technology added value to the work of country teams and contributed to integrated results at the country level. Building on cooperation with agencies of the Inter-Agency Cluster, UNCTAD was involved in a record high of 46 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks. UNCTAD staff continued to engage with the resident coordinator system by contributing to common country analyses and the narrative parts of frameworks, with policy advice. UNCTAD project managers also gradually increased participation in planning and reporting exercises under priority frameworks, including through the United Nations Info platform.

37. In 2024, with regard to country-level resource mobilization, UNCTAD continued to work closely with the resident coordinator system. For example, UNCTAD, through a competitive process and under the leadership of resident coordinators, has access to the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund. UNCTAD is a non-resident agency, but is among the main participating United Nations organizations in two flagship joint programmes financed by the Fund, to provide multi-year assistance in Ghana and Rwanda.

38. UNCTAD also coordinates with the resident coordinator system in the design and delivery of technical cooperation activities. For example, UNCTAD discussed possible collaboration on operational work on competition law and policy with the Resident Coordinator Offices in Albania, Bangladesh and Georgia. The UNCTAD Statistics Service benefited from support from the Resident Coordinator Offices in India, Malaysia and Namibia in delivering capacity-building projects, including the facilitation of UNCTAD collaboration with national stakeholders. In Tunisia, preparation of the investment policy review report led to the establishment of a partnership with UNDP and the Resident Coordinator Office, which will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the recommendations.

39. To further equip project managers with knowledge and tools to better engage with the resident coordinator system, UNCTAD launched a series of training sessions in December 2024. The first session brought together UNCTAD project managers and an economist from the Resident Coordinator Office in Mozambique, who was invited to share

insights on resident coordinator offices' expectations of UNCTAD, and discussions focused on how UNCTAD work on policy issues could better articulate and add value to operations developed at the country level. Also in December 2024, UNCTAD released a test version of the country dashboard, which provides project managers with an overview of UNCTAD activities related to a particular country, including a section on coordination with resident coordinator offices. This new tool is aimed at supporting project managers in better communicating with resident coordinator offices and target countries.

2. Synergies among the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD

40. The three pillars of consensus-building, research and analysis and technical cooperation are mutually reinforcing. The Bridgetown Covenant stresses that UNCTAD should continue its work through the three pillars, building on the Nairobi Maafikiano and based on the policy analysis in the Covenant.⁵

41. In 2024, for example, UNCTAD completed a project on technology assessment in the energy and agricultural sectors in Africa, to accelerate progress on science, technology and innovation. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 2023/4 on science, technology and innovation for development, encouraged countries to consider conducting "technology assessment and foresight exercises as a process to encourage structured debate among all stakeholders towards creating a shared understanding of the implications of rapid technological change". The project design originated during discussions at meetings of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the findings contributed to substantive discussions at sessions of the Commission, including the twenty-eighth session in April 2025, at which the report of the Secretary-General on technology foresight and technology assessment for sustainable development, which integrated key project findings, was considered. The project was referred to in *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development*, in which UNCTAD suggested using technology assessments to evaluate the opportunities and challenges arising from artificial intelligence and identify actions to strengthen the innovation system. As the first United Nations project on technology assessment using a participatory approach, the project has raised interest among many developing countries in undertaking technology assessment exercises; and contributes to discussions on the potential for implementing international technology assessments.

3. Interdivisional and inter-agency cooperation

42. In 2024, many technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD were implemented through interdivisional and/or inter-agency cooperation. The value of internal and external partnerships in pooling technical expertise, mobilizing additional resources and enhancing the synergies of UNCTAD operational activities is widely recognized. In the context of the reform of the United Nations development system, these partnerships have been reinforced.

43. The e-commerce and the digital economy programme has benefited from the contribution of eTrade for all partners. In 2024, 22 partners engaged in various UNCTAD-led activities and several partners demonstrated long-term commitment to the objectives of the initiative. For example, the Economic Research Institute for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and East Asia continued to support activities under e-trade for women, a dedicated initiative to support women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries, by providing expert and financial support to the masterclass for South Asia and the in-person community gathering in Southeast Asia. The World Intellectual Property Organization offered specialized learning sessions on intellectual property through its academy in the masterclasses for Francophone Africa and South Asia. The Organization, along with other partners such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, International Trade Centre and United Nations Capital Development Fund also provided expertise during the peer reviews of e-trade readiness assessment reports.

44. In 2024, UNCTAD launched a new interdivisional and inter-agency project titled "Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of

⁵ See TD/541/Add.2, paragraph 127.

the Caribbean Community”. Developed at the request of countries of the Caribbean Community, the project is aimed at enhancing the statistical and analytical capacities of beneficiary countries, to develop evidence-based policies for increased resilience and transformation through trade in services. Its design and implementation builds on the data-related expertise of the UNCTAD Statistics Service and the trade in services policy-related expertise of the Division on International Trade and Commodities, as well as the regional presence of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and its collaboration with UNCTAD in the Statistical Commission. In addition, in developing and conducting e-learning on trade in services statistics, the project will build on the e-learning expertise of the Train for Trade team in the Division on Technology and Logistics. By leveraging the strength of internal and external partners, the project can better address the demand of the Caribbean Community and deliver expected results more effectively.

4. Requests from developing countries

45. According to data retrieved from the (internal) UNCTAD request database on 21 May 2025, in 2024, UNCTAD received 64 formal requests for technical cooperation from 40 countries and eight international and regional organizations. The three products that received the highest number of requests were competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks (11), e-commerce and the digital economy (8) and non-tariff measures (8). In 2020–2024, there was a total of 200 requests for which funding was required. Of these, the three products registering the highest number of requests with funding required were investment policy reviews; competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks; and non-tariff measures.

46. To address pending requests, UNCTAD continued to explore new funding sources, including funding from the private sector. In 2024, UNCTAD began delivery of a new interdivisional project titled “UNCTAD sustainable development initiatives”, due to financial contributions from the Foundation to Promote Open Society. With a total budget of \$2.1 million, the project consists of three components on debt, climate finance and illicit financial flows, to be implemented by three UNCTAD divisions and services over two years.

47. In addition, UNCTAD continued to seek less-earmarked multi-year contributions, to reduce uncertainty and ensure the continuity of operational activities. For example, both the DMFAS and the e-commerce and the digital economy programmes have established a group of core donors that provide programmatic funding with multi-year horizons; the former has six core donors and the latter has five. Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Switzerland are the core donors of both programmes. In 2024, the DMFAS programme signed a multi-year funding agreement with France and the Kingdom of the Netherlands contributed approximately \$1.6 million to support the programme over 2024–2025. Renewing a long-standing partnership, Sweden, a core donor of the e-commerce and the digital economy programme, contributed close to \$1 million to bolster work in 2024–2025.

5. Strengthening results-based management

48. In 2024, UNCTAD continued efforts to implement results-based management, culminating in the development of an online reporting tool for member States, providing access to the overarching results framework for 2022 and 2023 and including performance indicators for both outputs and outcomes, with baseline data established in 2021. The indicators reflect the contributions and impacts of UNCTAD activities in advancing implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant and the framework enables the detailed tracking of how each activity contributes to work areas outlined in the Covenant.

49. In 2024, divisions further strengthened the tracking and reporting of technical cooperation results. For example, the e-commerce and the digital economy programme completed development of an e-trade reform tracker; prepared a road map and training materials to support deployment of the tool in a well-sequenced manner; and drafted a model licence agreement, to guide adoption of the tool by requesting partner countries and ensure the necessary commitment and accountability from all parties involved.

An interactive demonstration of the functionalities of the tracker in May 2024 led to official requests for deployment from Fiji, Kenya, Mauritania and Solomon Islands.

50. The Division on Investment and Enterprise continued to enhance the Investment Policy Hub, through innovation and the expansion of databases on investment policy measures and laws. In 2024, artificial intelligence tools were tested, to automate and scale up the monitoring, collection and classification of policy measures in the Investment Policy Monitor, and the data set was reclassified, to enable more granular analysis of trends in key areas. The Investment Laws Navigator was expanded with a new section on foreign direct investment screening laws, with ongoing mapping efforts, to enable cross-country comparisons of key legal features. These advancements strengthened UNCTAD ability to monitor national investment policy developments and assess the extent to which countries align with policy recommendations, thereby allowing for results and impact monitoring.

6. Gender equality and women's empowerment

51. In 2024, UNCTAD continued to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into technical cooperation work. In the area of e-commerce and the digital economy, for example, under e-trade for women, 20 policy dialogue events were held, ensuring that women's perspectives were considered in the formulation of digital economy policies. In addition, a new online platform was launched for community members, serving as a hub for networking and enrolling in the e-trade for women academy, which provides self-paced training and learning resources tailored to the needs of members.

52. The business facilitation programme fosters inclusive economic participation and a more enabling environment for entrepreneurship, by simplifying administrative processes. The digital solutions developed under the programme offer a path to women's participation in the formal economy and broader economic empowerment, since women, particularly in rural areas, are disproportionately affected by administrative barriers. In 2024, the programme launched 12 digital government platforms, bringing the global total to 102 across 60 economies. Approximately 100,000 new businesses were registered online, including about 40,000 established by women. In addition, 750 people were trained in the simplification and automation of government services; 398 women and 352 men, with nearly 10 per cent identifying as persons with disabilities.

53. To better track the contribution of technical cooperation projects to gender equality and women's empowerment in financial terms, UNCTAD took actions to enhance the application to technical cooperation projects of the Gender Equality Marker of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). In December 2024, UNCTAD decided to introduce an in-house quality assurance system for such application, by leveraging the expertise of divisional gender focal points. In January 2025, the UNCTAD approach in adapting the Marker to technical cooperation was discussed with UN-Women. Further efforts will be made in 2025 to ensure that UNCTAD meets the requirement for mandatory reporting on gender expenditures from 1 January 2026.

7. Update of UNCTAD Toolbox

54. As part of the Toolbox update, new programmes have been included and existing programmes with low levels of demand or expenditure have been merged, resulting in a reduced number of products, to strengthen the focus of UNCTAD technical cooperation. The products have been regrouped under four new thematic headers to make it easier for stakeholders and beneficiaries to identify programmes of interest. New sections with packages of Toolbox products and regional programmes are included, together with linkages to the four transformations under the Bridgetown Covenant. The updated version of the Toolbox is expected to be ready in the third quarter of 2025.

B. Contribution to United Nations system-wide coherence

55. This section highlights the main contributions of UNCTAD to enhancing the role of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity to "deliver as

one". The Inter-Agency Cluster proposes comprehensive solutions with optimized linkages in the formulation of common policy recommendations and their effective implementation at the national level. By acknowledging the pivotal role of trade as an engine for development, the Cluster enhances the development impact of trade and trade-related national policies and productive activities.

56. In 2024, the operations of the Cluster addressed 46 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks, with wide geographical coverage, as follows: Asia and the Pacific, 8; Latin America and the Caribbean, 6; Arab States and Middle East and North Africa, 3; Europe and Central Asia, 11; and Eastern, Southern, Western and Central Africa, 18. The joint operations were included within United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework outcomes on economic-growth and good governance, with participating agencies focusing on their core mandates. The operations represented a significant share of UNCTAD assistance delivered at the country level, including policy-oriented advisory services and action-oriented technical assistance, to best support the efforts of beneficiary countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

57. To emphasize the linkages between trade and development in the overall normative work of and assistance from the United Nations, in 2024, UNCTAD continued to develop partnerships with WTO on policy courses for delegates and the International Labour Organization on lectures related to the development pillar of the United Nations, delivered at the International Training Centre in Turin, Italy.

IV. Conclusions and way forward

58. In 2024, UNCTAD maintained high-level delivery, with a close-to-record high of \$56.48 million in technical cooperation expenditures. Extrabudgetary resources mobilized for technical cooperation continued to increase, reaching a historic high of \$56.62 million, due to the trust in UNCTAD of member States and development partners.

59. The adoption by the General Assembly of the Pact for the Future in 2024 served to reaffirm global commitment to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and to urgently accelerating progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNCTAD will provide unwavering technical support on trade and development to developing countries during this process. In particular, UNCTAD will prioritize vulnerable groups of countries in technical cooperation; deliver operational activities in an agile and innovative way, including by developing or upgrading digital instruments, to better meet country- and region-specific needs; and enhance engagement with the resident coordinator system to scale up its participation in cooperation frameworks and access to country-level funding through joint programming.

60. Sufficient and flexible funding is key in sustaining high levels of delivery. Despite a new record high of voluntary contributions to UNCTAD technical cooperation in 2024, prospects of voluntary funding remain uncertain due to geopolitical tensions and substantial reductions in foreign aid budgets among some major donors. UNCTAD will continue efforts to diversify the funding base and explore innovative funding mechanisms. At the same time, member States and development partners in a position to do so are requested to provide sustainable and predictable funding, such as less-earmarked multi-year contributions, to UNCTAD technical cooperation. More than ever, the dedicated trust fund for the least developed countries and the newly established trust fund for small island developing States need donor support, to help these vulnerable countries meet their development goals.