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Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

Summary

In 2025, despite overall adverse funding conditions, UNCTAD continued to deliver technical cooperation activities, with yearly technical cooperation expenditures increasing to a new record high of $58.89 million. In 2025, 40 per cent of technical cooperation expenditures benefited the least developed countries. The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) remained the leading technical cooperation product of UNCTAD, accounting for 48 per cent of yearly expenditures.

Voluntary funding to UNCTAD technical cooperation totalled $54.02 million, a decrease of 5 per cent compared with the historic high in 2024. With funding of $4 million, China became the largest contributor in 2025; contributions from developed economies decreased significantly.

The year was marked by continuous improvement in the functioning of UNCTAD technical cooperation. Efforts continued in strengthening results-based management through the creation of an advisory group and the introduction of a recording tool to map activities with the UNCTAD results framework and the Bridgetown Covenant. The adapted gender equality marker has been applied to all new technical cooperation projects since July 2025 and an in-house quality assurance system has been established. UNCTAD continued to explore new funding sources and seek less-earmarked multi-year contributions, to better address technical cooperation requests, particularly those from the least developed countries and other vulnerable groups of countries. In the context of the reform of the United Nations development system, UNCTAD further deepened engagement with the resident coordinator system, as reflected in its involvement in 49 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks worldwide and enhanced access to “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 25 August 2026.

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 2008–2025, 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 2025. 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.

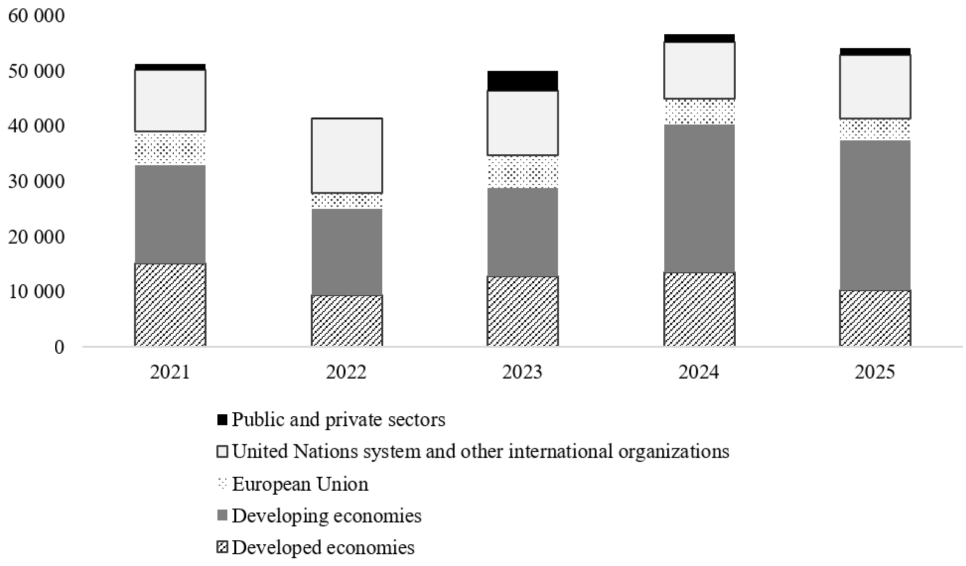
5. Contributions received under the "Delivering as one" initiative to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity are included in the aggregate funding for trust funds. In view of the importance of the Inter-Agency Cluster in repositioning the 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. Extrabudgetary resources for UNCTAD technical cooperation fluctuate from year to year. After reaching a record high in 2024, voluntary funding for technical cooperation trust funds totalled $54.02 million in 2025, a decrease of 5 per cent. Despite the resilience of contributions from developing economies and the United Nations system and other

international organizations, overall trust fund resources declined due to reduced contributions from three other funding sources, particularly developed economies (figure 1).[1]

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



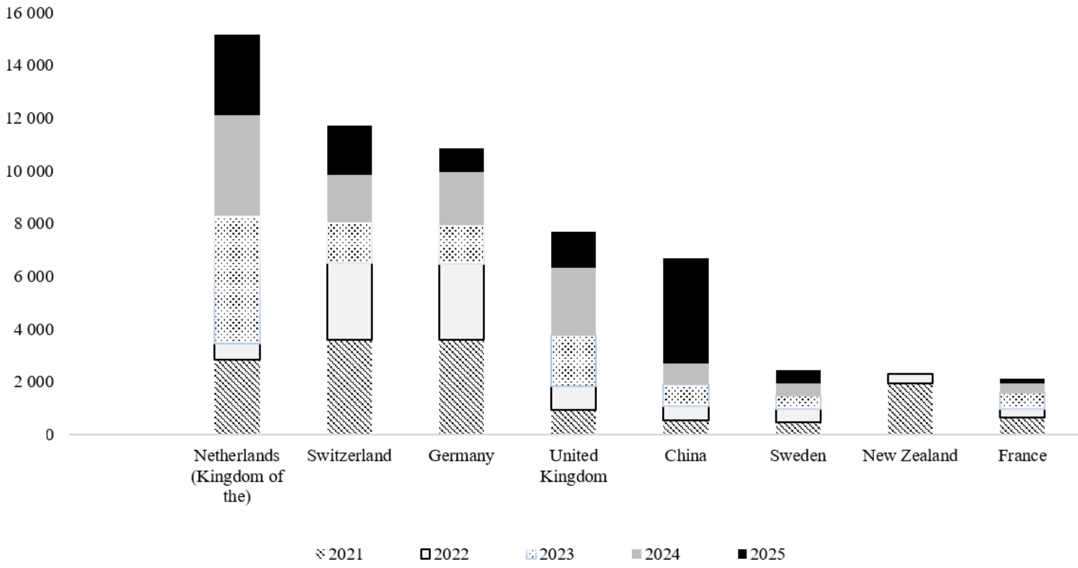
Source: UNCTAD.
Notes: Total excludes contributions to the United Nations Junior Professional Officer Programme. A major part of funding from developing economies is self-financing, and may be derived, for example, from proceeds of loans or grants from international financial institutions for activities in the countries that provided funding (see TD/B/WP/343/Add.2, table 15).

7. Following two years of consecutive growth, contributions from developed economies to UNCTAD technical cooperation trust funds decreased to $10.33 million, 24 per cent less than in 2024 and 19 per cent below the five-year average in 2020–2024. Consequently, the share in total trust fund resources decreased from 24 to 19 per cent. With contributions of $3.04 million, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remained the largest developed economy contributor, followed by Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Combined, the contributions from these three donors represented 61 per cent of the total contributions of developed economies. About 6 per cent of developed economy contributions were self-financed, such as the contribution of Albania for the maintenance of the ASYCUDA World system of the Customs Administration.

8. With regard to total contributions accumulated over the last five years, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany were the largest developed economy donors, with cumulative contributions exceeding $10 million each in this period (figure 2). In 2025, contributions were mainly directed towards programmes such as electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the digital economy; ASYCUDA; business facilitation; trade facilitation; breaking the chains of commodity dependence; Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS); non-tariff measures; and Train for Trade.

[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.

Figure 2
Accumulated contributions by major developed and developing economy contributors
(Thousands of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD.

9. Contributions from developing economies remained elevated, totalling $27.08 million in 2025, increasing by 2 per cent over the high in 2024. The share of developing economies in total trust fund resources increased from 47 per cent in 2024 to 50 per cent in 2025. Of funding from developing economies, $22.58 million, or 83 per cent, was directed to the financing of projects or activities in their respective economies, mainly to implement ASYCUDA (70 per cent) and DMFAS (7 per cent). Self-financing remained a predominant feature of developing economy funding to UNCTAD technical cooperation. Notably, contributions from developing economies in support of technical cooperation to benefit other developing economies also reached a high level, at $4.50 million, representing 17 per cent of developing economy funding. In this regard, China, with an annual contribution of $4 million, was the largest contributor in 2025, and the remaining $0.50 million was contributed by Saudi Arabia, to support the Global Supply Chain Forum.

10. Contributions from the European Union totalled $3.84 million in 2025, 18 per cent less than in 2024. The share in total trust fund resources further declined, from 12 per cent in 2023 to 8 per cent in 2024 and 7 per cent in 2025. Contributions were directed at funding five technical cooperation projects, including two ASYCUDA projects in the Republic of Moldova and in the Pacific region; and one DMFAS project. Together, the European Union and its member States contributed $8.76 million to UNCTAD technical cooperation in 2025, representing 16 per cent of total trust fund resources, down from 22 per cent in 2024.

11. Contributions from the United Nations system and other international organizations increased by 12 per cent in 2025, to $11.46 million. Within the United Nations system, the United Nations Development Programme was the largest contributor, with yearly contributions reaching $2.95 million, accounting for 40 per cent of United Nations system contributions. Among other international organizations, the African Development Bank and Trade Mark Africa were the leading contributors, each contributing about $1.4 million.

12. Contributions from the public and private sectors decreased by 15 per cent in 2025, to $1.31 million. This included $67,800 from Minderoo Foundation, to support the sustainable stock exchanges initiative, and contributions from port authorities in many developing countries to Train for Trade.

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

13. 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 2025, expenditures under the regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account reached $4.48 million, a slight increase of 3 per cent compared with 2024.

14. The regular programme of technical cooperation registered expenditures of $2.02 million in 2025, equivalent to the level in 2024. Activities were aimed at building countries' economic resilience and productive capacities and developing countries' capacity to formulate and implement policies to support sustainable development, by providing technical assistance tailored to the needs of developing countries, with particular attention paid to the needs of the least developed countries and vulnerable countries.

15. In 2025, funding for the regular programme of technical cooperation contributed to the roll-out of the UNCTAD e-trade reform tracker, a digital project management and monitoring tool aimed at facilitating the implementation of national and regional e-commerce strategies, policies and action plans. Following a request from member States of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States, training workshops were held in Nigeria that enhanced the skills of 12 Commission officials in using the tracker and supported the implementation and coordination of the regional e-commerce strategy (2023–2027). In addition under the regular programme of technical cooperation, vulnerability profile inception missions were conducted in countries pre-eligible for graduation from the least developed country category (Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), to ensure endorsement and preparedness for the process; and support was provided to the group of the least developed countries at the World Trade Organization in preparation for the fourteenth Ministerial Conference, through the provision of targeted technical assistance to representatives of the least developed countries, to strengthen their capacity to participate effectively in negotiations within the Committee on Rules of Origin and prepare coordinated submissions ahead of negotiations. Finally, in 2025, funding for the regular programme of technical cooperation contributed to targeted support for the Presidency of Brazil of BRICS [Brazil, China, India, Russian Federation and South Africa], on the topic of enhancing climate finance, by providing targeted analysis with policy recommendations, which informed dialogue and enhanced understanding on the topic.

16. Expenditures under the Development Account reached $2.46 million in 2025, mainly with regard to the delivery of activities under 16 active projects, including joint projects that UNCTAD led or participated in. Compared with in 2024, expenditures increased by 5 per cent. The new nineteenth tranche of the Development Account, with the theme "Supporting Member States to accelerate Sustainable Development Goals implementation through further developing resilient, future-ready and integrated policy frameworks that sustain the 2030 Agenda in a changing global context", will be implemented in 2027–2030. Under this tranche, three UNCTAD projects with a budget of $2.75 million were endorsed for funding by the Development Account Steering Committee, including two joint projects led by UNCTAD. The projects cover the topics of investment in climate-strategic sectors, data-driven policies on illicit financial flows and indicator-based policy costing and strategic financing. In addition, UNCTAD will participate in a joint project led by the United Nations Environment Programme on sustainable mining and extractives governance.

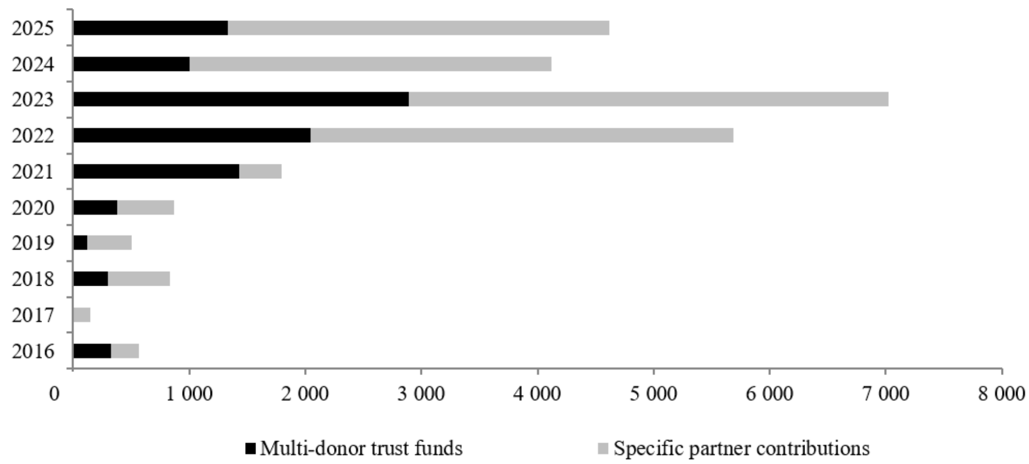
C. "Delivering as one" funding mechanisms to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity

17. 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 financing mechanisms developed in support of the reform of the United Nations development system, such as “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms.

18. In 2025, UNCTAD consolidated its access to “Delivering as one” funding mechanisms, consisting of specific partner contributions and multi-donor trust funds, with a total amount of $4.62 million, 12 per cent above the level in 2024 (figure 3). The funds supported integrated operations developed with Cluster partner agencies based on their respective expertise and mandate in line with cooperation frameworks.

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



Source: UNCTAD.

1. Specific partner contributions

19. Specific partner contributions are direct contributions to one or more agencies given by one or more donors to support inter-agency operations. In 2025, UNCTAD received contributions totalling $3.29 million. This included increased inter-agency collaboration through United Nations-to-United Nations transfer agreements developed within the Cluster and beyond, such as an agreement signed between the International Organization for Migration and UNCTAD in 2025, to promote cross-border trade between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

2. Multi-donor trust funds

20. 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 2025, UNCTAD received allocations of $1.34 million through participation in the Pacific Digital Economy Programme and access to the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

D. Financing of junior professional officers

21. 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.

22. In 2025, UNCTAD expanded the Programme, with new donors and more junior professional officers. UNCTAD hosted 11 junior professional officers, an increase of two officers compared with in 2024, in four substantive divisions and in the Office of the

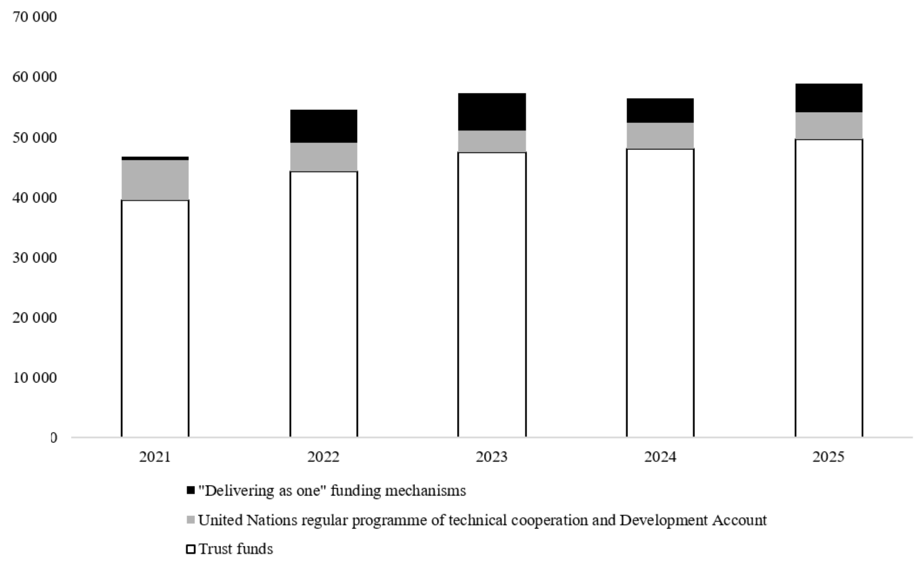
Secretary-General.[2] Six countries contributed to the UNCTAD junior professional officer programme in 2025. Germany sponsored four officers; China and France sponsored two officers each; and Finland, Itaty and Qatar sponsored one officer each. This was the first time since 2017 that Finland and Qatar sponsored junior professional officers at UNCTAD.

23. 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

24. In 2025, total technical cooperation expenditures reached a new record high of $58.89 million, an increase of 4 per cent from the high in 2024.[3] Expenditures under trust funds continued to trend upwards, totalling $49.65 million, accounting for 84 per cent of total expenditures in 2025. Expenditures under "Delivering as one" funding mechanisms rose slightly from $4.08 million in 2024 to $4.76 million in 2025, representing 8 per cent of yearly technical cooperation expenditures. Expenditures under the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account increased by 3 per cent, to $4.48 million, and the share in total expenditures stabilized at 8 per cent (figure 4).

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



Source: UNCTAD.

A. Expenditures by type of project

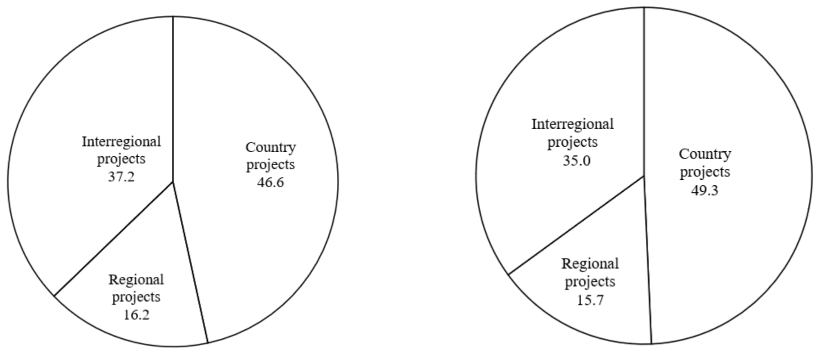
25. UNCTAD technical cooperation projects are delivered at the interregional, regional and country levels. In 2025, expenditures under country projects increased by 10 per cent, to $29.02 million, and expenditures under regional and interregional projects recorded minimal changes from 2024 to 2025. In terms of share of total technical cooperation expenditures, the

2 TD/B/WP/343/Add.2, table 9.
3 TD/B/WP/343/Add.2, table 2.

share of country projects increased from 46.6 per cent in 2024 to 49.3 per cent in 2025 and the share of regional and interregional projects decreased (figure 5).

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

(a) **2024** (b) **2025**



Source: UNCTAD.

26. Of $29.02 million for country project expenditures, 48 per cent supported the delivery of projects in the least developed countries, compared with 38 per cent in 2024; 43 per cent supported projects in Africa. Country projects mostly focused on customs modernization and reform (87 per cent), as well as on business facilitation, debt management and e-commerce and the digital economy. In 2025, country project expenditures in Africa increased by 42 per cent, to $12.48 million, and decreased in the other two developing regions.

27. Driven by the significant increase in regional project expenditures in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, total expenditures under regional projects increased from $9.14 million in 2024 to $9.26 million in 2025; regional project expenditures decreased in Asia and Oceania. The share of regional projects in total technical cooperation expenditures decreased slightly, from 16.2 per cent in 2024 to 15.7 per cent in 2025.

28. Interregional projects are thematic projects that benefit more than one geographic region. In 2025, expenditures under this category totalled $20.62 million, a relatively stable level, compared with $21.03 million in 2024. The share of interregional projects decreased from 37.2 per cent in 2024 to 35.0 per cent in 2025.

B. Expenditures by product

29. In 2025, expenditures under the 28 technical cooperation products of UNCTAD reached $52.08 million, representing 88 per cent of total annual technical cooperation delivery (see table). ASYCUDA remained the leading technical cooperation product of UNCTAD, accounting for 48 per cent of yearly expenditures. In 2025, a new generation technology and software suite was launched for ASYCUDA, including the fifth generation of the customs management software and the successor to the flagship software ASYCUDA World. The programme was followed by DMFAS, e-commerce and the digital economy and business facilitation, representing, respectively, 9, 8 and 7 per cent of delivery. Six products each accounted for 1–5 per cent of total delivery, and combined, represented 13 per cent of delivery. The remaining 18 products accounted for less than 1 per cent each of delivery, including four products without expenditures in 2025. The product “investment guides” has been discontinued and related work has been subsumed under “business facilitation”. An e-learning course and online training was delivered in 2025 under science, technology and innovation (STI) policy reviews, without budget implications.

Technical cooperation expenditures in 2025, by theme and product

Theme/Product	*Sustainable Development Goals*	*Expenditures, 2025 (Thousands of dollars)*	*Share of total (Percentage)*
Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development			
Investment policy reviews	8, 17	58	0.10
Services policy reviews	8, 9, 17	10	0.02
Trade policy framework reviews	17	–	0.00
Science, technology and innovation policy reviews	9	–	0.00
E-commerce and the digital economy	8, 9, 17	4 830	8.20
Investment guides	9, 17	–	0.00
Non-tariff measures	3, 8, 17	989	1.68
Trade negotiations and the international trading system	10, 17	209	0.35
Sustainable trade and the environment	12, 13, 14, 15	953	1.62
Investment promotion and facilitation	9, 17	160	0.27
Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience			
Support to graduation from least developed country status	8	239	0.41
DMFAS – Debt Management and Financial Analysis System	17	5 446	9.25
UNCTAD contribution 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	36	0.06
Breaking the chains of commodity dependence	8, 9	526	0.89
Sustainable and resilient transport and logistic services	8, 9, 13, 14	675	1.15
Fostering economic efficiency, improving governance			
Voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection law and policy	8, 10	13	0.02
Business facilitation	8, 16	3 948	6.70
Trade facilitation	10, 16	2 422	4.11
ASYCUDA – Automated System for Customs Data	9, 15, 17	28 036	47.60
Statistics	17	1 000	1.70
Enabling accounting and reporting on the private’s sector contribution to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals	12, 17	118	0.20
Investment and public health	3, 9	6	0.01
International investment agreements	17	154	0.26
Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks	8, 9, 10, 12, 17	258	0.44
Empowering people, investing in their future			
Trade, gender and development	5, 8	11	0.02
Entrepreneurship for sustainable development	4, 8	544	0.92
Train for Trade	8, 9, 14, 17	1 439	2.44
All products		**52 079**	**88.43**

Source: UNCTAD.

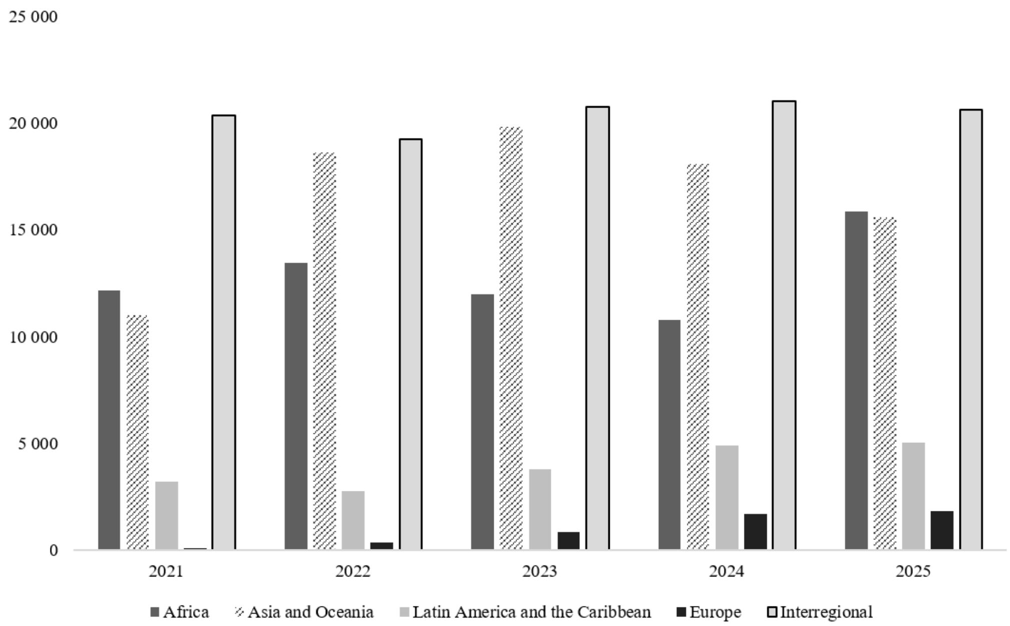
30. Measured by expenditures, UNCTAD technical cooperation is particularly relevant in achieving four Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goal 8 on promoting economic growth and productive employment and decent work; Goal 9 on building infrastructure,

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 2025, an estimated $19.73 million or 33 per cent of total expenditures directly contributed towards achieving Goal 17; $12.51 million or 21 per cent of total expenditures contributed towards achieving Goal 9; 16 per cent contributed towards achieving Goal 15; and 11 per cent contributed towards achieving Goal 8.[4]

C. Expenditures by region

31. In 2025, expenditures under country and regional projects totalled $38.28 million, or 65 per cent of total delivery. Of these expenditures, $15.86 million was spent in Africa, an increase of 47 per cent compared with in 2024, registering the highest level over the past decade (figure 6). The share of African country and regional projects in total technical cooperation delivery also reversed the downward trend, rising sharply, to 27 per cent in 2025 (figure 7). This was due to enhanced delivery under many products, particularly ASYCUDA, the expenditures of which, for African country and regional projects, increased by 53 per cent, from $6.79 million in 2024 to $10.40 million in 2025; and trade facilitation, the expenditures of which more than tripled, to reach $1.08 million.

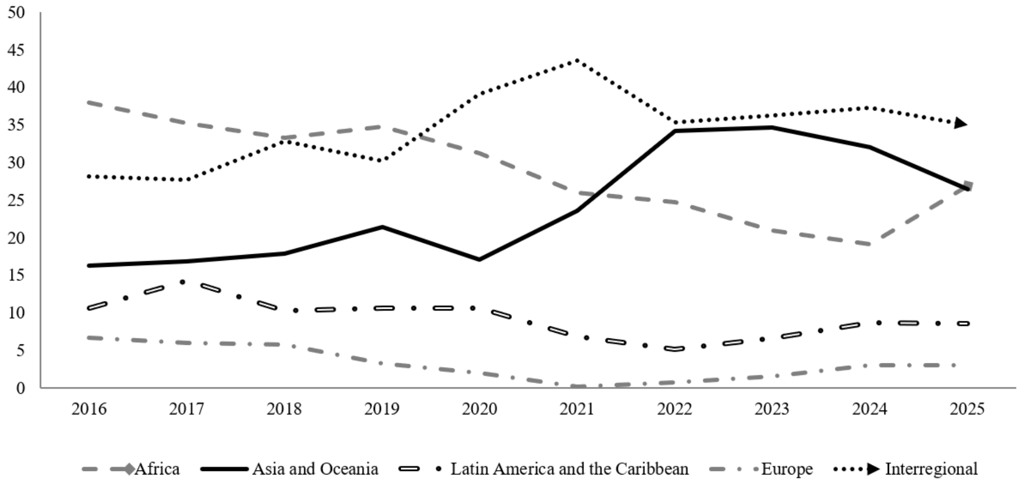
Figure 6
Technical cooperation expenditures, by region, for country and regional projects
(Thousands of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD.
Note: In North America, expenditures totalled $31,579 in 2025, in Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

[4] TD/B/WP/343/Add.2, table 5.

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



Source: UNCTAD.
Notes: Only expenditures under country and regional projects are considered in calculating the share of a particular region. The share of North America is not reflected since expenditures in the region in 2025 totalled $31,579, in Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

32. Expenditures under country and regional projects in Asia and Oceania totalled $15.58 million in 2025, a decrease of 14 per cent compared with in 2024. Consequently, the share of total expenditures decreased from 32 per cent in 2024 to 27 per cent in 2025, the lowest level since 2022 but still above the levels in the 2010s. The reduction was mainly due to the decrease of ASYCUDA expenditures, by $2.10 million, more than offsetting the increased expenditures of other products, such as e-commerce and the digital economy.

33. After a recovery in 2023, expenditures under country and regional projects in Latin America and the Caribbean increased marginally, to $5.01 million in 2025, representing 9 per cent of total technical cooperation expenditures. ASYCUDA accounted for 79 per cent of country and regional project expenditures in Latin America and the Caribbean. Other programmes or projects delivered in the region in 2025 included business facilitation, statistics, a regional integration and industrial policy project in Latin America, a project on productive capacities for small island developing States in the Caribbean and a project on sustainable export diversification strategies in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

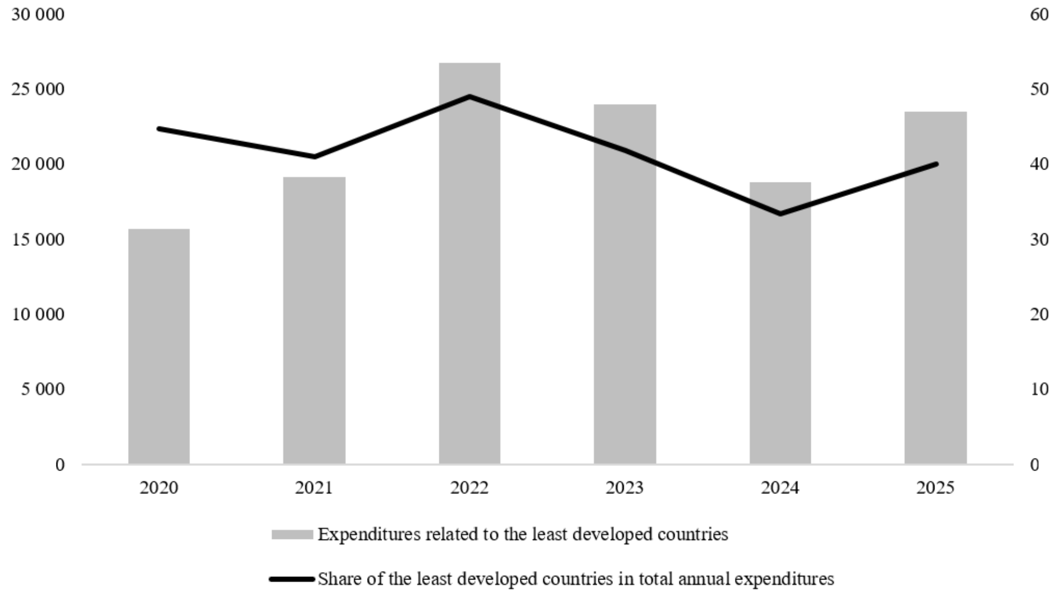
34. Expenditures under country and regional projects in Europe reached $1.80 million, a year-on-year increase of 6 per cent, accounting for 3 per cent of total expenditures. Of the expenditures under country and regional projects in Europe, 76 per cent was to support the delivery of ASYCUDA projects, including those in Albania and the Republic of Moldova.

35. In North America, $31,579 in expenditures were recorded in 2025, related to the implementation of an ASYCUDA project in Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

D. Expenditures in support of the least developed countries

36. Technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries recovered from the low in 2024, to reach $23.48 million in 2025, an increase of 25 per cent compared with in 2024 and 13 per cent above the average level in the period 2020–2024. Of the technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries, 60 per cent, or $14.04 million, was related to the implementation of country projects. Accordingly, the share of the least developed countries in total delivery increased from 33 per cent in 2024 to 40 per cent in 2025 (figure 8).

Figure 8
Technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries
(Thousands of dollars and percentage)



Source: UNCTAD.

37. UNCTAD technical assistance continued to address the particular needs of the least developed countries and other vulnerable groups of countries. For example, in 2025, ASYCUDA was implemented in 39 countries in Africa and, by grouping, in 22 landlocked developing countries, 37 of the least developed countries and 41 small island developing States, contributing to the increase in customs revenue and improved trade efficiency. Out of 63 countries using DMFAS for the daily management of public debt in 2025, 20 were landlocked developing countries, 24 were among the least developed countries and two were small island developing States. Of all capacity-building and other activities implemented by DMFAS in 2025, 85 per cent were delivered in landlocked developing countries, the least developed countries or small island developing States and more than half were delivered in sub-Saharan Africa, including in Rwanda, South Sudan and Zambia, which were the first countries to adopt DMFAS 7, the latest version of the software, launched in 2025.

38. UNCTAD continued to collaborate with the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, to operationalize transparency commitments and ensure that the least developed countries can fully benefit from improved access to regulatory information. By end-2025, data collection on non-tariff measures had been completed in 35 countries in Africa, including 19 of the least developed countries, representing the most comprehensive mapping of non-tariff measures undertaken on the continent and providing a foundation for reducing information asymmetries and enhancing predictability in intra-African trade. In the area of investment for development, in 2025, UNCTAD provided technical assistance to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, which comprises 21 member States, including 13 of the least developed countries, for the preparation of an inaugural investment report, which provided an evidence-based diagnostic of investment trends in the region and supported regional policy coordination efforts. At the request of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat, the report will be institutionalized as an annual publication, to deepen regional integration and enhance investment-facilitating policies across member States.

III. Structure and functioning

A. Follow-up to intergovernmental decisions

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

39. In 2025, UNCTAD extended its engagement with the resident coordinator system. UNCTAD was involved in a record high of 49 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks. UNCTAD provided expertise on trade and development in the joint work delivered by United Nations entities at the country and regional levels, particularly through the catalytical role of the Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity. With regard to country-level resource mobilization, in 2025, UNCTAD accessed Multi-Partner Trust Funds at both the country and regional levels through participation in two joint programmes, namely, the Pacific Digital Economy Programme and a joint programme in Afghanistan, with funds allocated to UNCTAD reaching $1.34 million.

40. UNCTAD strengthened two-way communications and collaboration with the resident coordinator system in technical cooperation. In one direction, resident coordinator offices provided support in the design and delivery of UNCTAD operational activities. Typically, the support included aligning project activities with cooperation frameworks; stakeholder mapping and outreach; facilitating inter-agency collaboration and enhancing coherence across United Nations interventions at the country level; contributing to embedding project outputs into national development planning and policy dialogue processes; and disseminating project results. In the other direction, UNCTAD contributed to analytical work led by resident coordinators by providing thematic expertise and policy advice. For example, the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (ALDC) supported efforts coordinated by the Resident Coordinator Office in Angola to assist with the mid-term review process of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031 and contributed to the update of the common country analysis of Angola. The Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC) contributed to the development of the common country analysis of Georgia and the narrative part of the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework that began in 2026. The Division on Investment and Enterprise contributed to a country analysis update for Cabo Verde. Finally, UNCTAD participated in the reporting of the results of the 49 cooperation frameworks in which UNCTAD was involved in 2025, including through the “UN-Info” platform.

41. With a view to better aligning the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD with the objectives of the reform of the United Nations development system, UNCTAD organized a training session in 2025, gathering economists from the Resident Coordinator Offices in Egypt, Haiti and Mozambique and UNCTAD project managers, which enhanced understanding among project managers of the implications of UNCTAD work on the resident coordinator system and the various configurations of United Nations country teams; and offered an opportunity to explore how UNCTAD could effectively contribute to the work delivered by United Nations country teams in the framework of United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks, for increased UNCTAD impact and visibility.

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

42. The three pillars of consensus-building, research and analysis and technical cooperation are mutually reinforcing. In the Geneva Consensus, member States acknowledged the significant value of the UNCTAD technical cooperation pillar and stated that the three pillars of UNCTAD should work together to realize the aims and aspirations of the membership.[5]

43. With regard to the synergies among the three pillars of the work of UNCTAD, an example is in the area of STI. Drawing on research and analysis, particularly a study conducted in 2015 on STI parks in developing countries and *Technology and Innovation Report 2018: Harnessing Frontiers Technologies for Sustainable Development* and based on

[5] TD/561/Add.2, paragraphs 70 and 72.

country demand, UNCTAD developed the project titled "STI parks for sustainable development: Building expertise in policy and practice in selected Asian and African countries", which is the first United Nations-wide project promoting innovation through STI park development. Findings were shared at annual sessions of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and contributed to the substantive deliberations. According to the report of the four beneficiary countries, the capacity-building and technical support provided by UNCTAD brought about tangible changes, such as the following: in Ghana, the incorporation of STI parks into the national STI policy implementation plan; in Mongolia, the first law on STI park preparation and an updated STI policy; in Mozambique, improvements in the management of Maluana Park, which had been stagnant following establishment in 2013; and in Uzbekistan, the initiation of a normative legal act on STI parks. Experiences gained from the project were included in three technical notes and one policy toolkit, providing options with which to address common challenges faced in developing countries in efforts to promote innovation through STI parks. The success of the project generated requests from 11 additional countries for technical assistance in STI park development.

3. Interdivisional and inter-agency cooperation

44. Interdivisional and inter-agency cooperation is important in pooling technical expertise, increasing synergies, accessing new resources and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of technical cooperation. There is an overall trend of strengthened internal and external partnerships, which is reinforced through the reform of the United Nations development system. Among 18 projects led by UNCTAD and financed by the latest five tranches of the Development Account, 10 projects feature in-depth interdivisional and/or inter-agency collaboration.

45. For example, ALDC and the Statistics, Data and Digital Service work together in the field of illicit financial flows, jointly with other United Nations entities. Building on respective strengths in policies and statistics, ALDC helps strengthen country capacity in using data to assess potential leakage areas of illicit financial flows and design actionable and targeted policies to curb such flows; and the Service supports beneficiary countries in measuring illicit financial flows and reporting on progress under Goals indicator 16.4. This partnership has broadened the pool of beneficiary stakeholders, facilitated dialogue between national statistical experts and policymakers and includes cooperation in the delivery of two complementary projects to support five countries in Africa in measuring tax-related and commercial illicit financial flows and in developing evidence-based policies to curb illicit financial flows. Collaboration will continue under a new Development Account project on data-driven policies on illicit financial flows, to be coordinated by ALDC.

46. The project titled "Quantifying South–South cooperation for the Sustainable Development Goals" is led by UNCTAD and jointly implemented with OECD and other United Nations entities; 2025 was the third year of delivery. The project design and implementation considered the comparative advantages of implementing partners. For example, UNCTAD is responsible for statistical methodology development and statistical capacity-building; the Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides guidance on global reporting under Goals indicator 17.3.1; and regional commissions oversee national and regional workshops by leveraging regional presence, knowledge and networks. In 2025, UNCTAD issued a manual for the framework to measure South–South cooperation and its application in pilot countries led to the first reporting of data on such cooperation to the Goals indicator database in 2026.[6] Over 60 countries have requested UNCTAD support in reporting South–South cooperation data and a community of practice has been launched, to facilitate peer learning and methodological exchange.

4. Requests from developing countries

47. According to data retrieved from the (internal) UNCTAD request database on 29 May 2026, in 2025, UNCTAD received 79 formal requests for technical cooperation from 55 countries or areas and one regional organization. The three products that received the highest

[6] See https://unctad.org/publication/manual-framework-measure-south-south-cooperation.

number of requests were e-commerce and the digital economy (11), business facilitation (6) and Train for Trade (6). In 2021–2025, there was a total of 218 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.

48. To address pending requests, UNCTAD continued to engage with potential donors and explore new funding sources, for example through access to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Sub-Fund of the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund. From the establishment of the Fund in 2016 to end-2025, UNCTAD participated in 10 rounds of calls for project proposals organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Seven projects were selected for funding, with the total project budget reaching $7.93 million. In 2025, a joint project on “Beyond gross domestic product (GDP)” was selected for funding, aimed at developing a set of beyond GDP metrics and strengthening national capacities in designing, implementing and integrating such metrics into decision-making processes. UNCTAD, as the initial designer, jointly participates in project implementation and leads pilot testing in target countries. The report of the High-level Expert Group on Beyond GDP was issued in 2026 and the recommended indicator dashboard will be tested with countries.[7]

49. UNCTAD continued to seek less-earmarked multi-year contributions, to reduce uncertainty and ensure the continuity of operational activities. For example, in 2025, in the area of e-commerce and the digital economy, UNCTAD signed a renewed contribution agreement with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland and the contribution of SwF4,000,000 until 2029 will bolster UNCTAD capacity to support developing countries in advancing digital trade readiness through its three pillars of work; and, with regard to DMFAS, a new three-year financing agreement was signed with the European Union, one of the core donors of the Programme, with total contributions of €2,000,000, extending European Union support to 2028.

5. Strengthening of results-based management

50. In 2025, UNCTAD continued efforts to mainstream results-based management, with the creation of an advisory group with one representative each from each division and service. The introduction of a recording tool mapping activities with the UNCTAD results framework and with the Bridgetown Covenant contributed to improving mainstreaming. In 2025, implementation of the first UNCTAD results framework at the overarching level was completed. Lessons learned from this period were applied in the design of the new results framework under the Geneva Consensus for the period 2026–2029.

51. To better support beneficiary countries in implementing and monitoring policy reforms, UNCTAD has developed innovative digital tools. For example, the trade facilitation reform tracker, a web-based monitoring tool developed by the Division on Technology and Logistics, helps translate recommendations into concrete and time-bound actions and to track progress over time. In 2025, over 122,000 visits to the reform tracker were recorded, almost double the results in 2024. A total of 30 countries monitor the progress of trade facilitation initiatives using the reform tracker; 348 reforms were marked as completed by national trade facilitation committees, an increase of 52 per cent compared with in 2024. This results-oriented tool has strengthened transparency and accountability and effectively equipped national trade facilitation committees to drive reforms in trade facilitation. Similar tools are also used in other areas of UNCTAD technical cooperation, such as the e-trade reform tracker, to support the coordination and monitoring of e-commerce and the digital economy reforms, and the live implementation matrix, to support the tracking of progress in investment policy reforms.

6. Gender equality and women’s empowerment

52. In 2025, significant progress was made in the application of the gender equality marker to UNCTAD technical cooperation projects. Since July 2025, UNCTAD has applied

[7] See https://unctad.org/publication/counting-what-counts-compass-progress-people-and-planet.

the adapted marker to all new technical cooperation projects. To ensure the gender equality marker tagged to each project best reflects gender mainstreaming efforts, in 2025, UNCTAD also established an in-house quality assurance system. The divisional gender focal points are responsible for reviewing the gender equality marker in the integrated planning, management and reporting solution, to ensure that the gender tag is correctly applied to each project. To support their work, a guidance note, including an example, was developed and online training was delivered. Guidance materials and training were also provided for project managers, allowing them to better understand the adapted gender equality marker criteria, the steps involved in tagging the marker in the integrated planning, management and reporting solution and the role of gender focal points in reviewing the marker.

53. The application of the gender equality marker was accompanied by better integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into technical cooperation. For example, DITC has identified critical minerals and gender as a new strategic area in which to advance gender equality. In 2025, DITC implemented a project on the rapid assessment of value addition and diversification capacity in Madagascar, Namibia and Zambia, with a focus on critical energy transition minerals, integrating gender equality and women's empowerment as an important cross-cutting issue in the analytical framework and policy recommendations. In identifying priority products and sectors, particular attention was given to employment intensity and the potential to generate inclusive job opportunities, including for women, both within extractive value chains and beyond. This approach aligns with the UNCTAD commitment to inclusive structural transformation. In addition, DITC published an analytical report on the implications of critical energy transition minerals for women's participation in the mining sector, identifying gender-responsive measures with which to expand women's access to higher-value segments of critical mineral supply chains. The topic was discussed at a side event during the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2025, and the launch of an online course on critical minerals and gender is planned for 2026.

B. Contribution to United Nations system-wide coherence

54. 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". In challenging times characterized by a series of multiple crises in the political and socioeconomic spheres, significantly affecting developing countries, the Cluster proved to be an efficient mechanism with which to promote multilateralism.

55. In 2025, the operations of the Cluster addressed 49 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks worldwide.[8] Building on an independent analysis of the state of the multilateral trading system, in 2025, the Cluster proposed integrated policy advice to address the challenges identified in the cooperation frameworks, in response to requests from Governments and resident coordinators for a more agile United Nations system, enabling them to better understand macroeconomic issues and impacts at the national level. The Cluster also streamlined assistance, along with the core mandate and expertise of constituent agencies, thereby contributing to the objectives of the UN80 Initiative.

56. To emphasize the linkages between trade and development in the overall normative work of and assistance from the United Nations, in 2025, UNCTAD further developed its partnerships with the World Trade Organization, to train government officials in the context of long-term assistance programmes; and with 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

57. In 2025, total UNCTAD technical cooperation expenditures reached a new record high of $58.89 million, reaffirming the commitment of UNCTAD to enhancing support to

[8] See the document titled "Operation of the Cluster at country level", available at https://unctad.org/projects/UN-Inter-agency-Cluster.

developing countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Voluntary funding to UNCTAD technical cooperation trust funds decreased from the historic high in 2024, to $54.02 million, amid an overall challenging environment for development assistance. Despite the significant annual contraction of contributions from traditional donors, the decrease in overall extrabudgetary resources was less than expected due to strengthened support from emerging donors and the United Nations system and other international organizations.

58. In 2025, UNCTAD member States adopted the Geneva Consensus, providing the basis for the work of UNCTAD over the next four years. Technical cooperation, as one of the three pillars of work, will play an important role in fulfilling the renewed mandate. UNCTAD will continue to provide technical assistance in its areas of expertise, to support developing countries in accelerating progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, UNCTAD will further strengthen the focus of technical assistance on the needs of the most vulnerable groups of countries; deliver operational activities in an agile and innovative way, strengthening the results, impact and sustainability of technical cooperation projects; and actively engage with the resident coordinator system, for enhanced synergies, increased participation in cooperation frameworks and better access to country-level funding.

59. High levels of delivery require sufficient and sustainable funding support. UNCTAD will intensify efforts to mobilize funds from traditional and non-traditional donors. In particular, UNCTAD will further broaden the funding base by engaging with new and emerging donors, enhancing partnerships and exploring innovative funding mechanisms. UNCTAD encourages donors in a position to do so to enhance the flexibility and predictability of funds by providing less-earmarked multi-year contributions to technical cooperation. In addition, in line with the agreed conclusions adopted by the Trade and Development Board at its seventy-seventh executive session,[9] UNCTAD invites donor countries, and other countries in a position to do so, to replenish the UNCTAD trust fund for the least developed countries.

[9] TD/B/EX(77)/2.