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Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2024

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 7 Economic and social affairs

1. At its 5th meeting, on 31 May 2023, the Committee considered programme 7, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme plan for 2024 and programme performance information for 2022 ([A/78/6 \(Sect. 9\)](#)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan by sectoral, functional and regional bodies ([E/AC.51/2023/9](#)).

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development introduced the programme and responded to questions raised by the Committee during its consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the report, which was referred to as “comprehensive”, as well as support for the work carried out by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, noting progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Several delegations encouraged the Department to continue efforts towards implementing the Goals, as well as coordinating efforts so that progress could be made.

4. The importance of the work of the Department being informed by mandates of the Member States was emphasized by a delegation, as was the need for entities in the development pillar to work together in the current post-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic environment, especially with regard to overcoming the



multiple challenges faced by Member States. Another delegation highlighted the need to put the Sustainable Development Goals back on track and noted that climate change had added pressure to the mix, especially for developing countries that might be most affected and need increased support. The necessity of enhanced cooperation was emphasized, and the Secretariat was requested to share how cooperation might be strengthened going forward.

5. A delegation noted that the Department dealt with a high level of cross-cutting issues and emphasized the importance of reducing duplication and overlap with other United Nations system entities so that its work could be focused on where it added the most value. Another delegation was of the view that more streamlined interaction between the Department and the resident coordinators was needed to support increased assistance to Member States for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. It was commented that the programmes of the Department formed the backbone of the support given by the Secretariat to intergovernmental bodies in the area of development, and that the Department's responsibilities included:

(a) Substantively supporting development issues, as well as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its related functional commissions and expert bodies;

(b) Monitoring and analysing development trends and global policy issues;

(c) Assisting in translating policy frameworks developed at United Nations conferences and summits into policies and programmes at the country level and supporting Member States to develop national capacities for implementation, with a specific focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through technical cooperation and United Nations Development Account projects.

7. Appreciation was also expressed for the work of the Department on emerging trends and policies for eradicating poverty, addressing inequalities and promoting opportunities while progressing towards sustainable development.

8. A delegation emphasized the importance of prioritizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and described it as a reconfigured development paradigm with the added component of "sustainability", taking into account the multiple dimensions of development. The delegation described three elements of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental, which had to be integrated. It was also stressed that the Sustainable Development Goals had to take into account the different realities, capacities and levels of development of individual countries, particularly developing countries, in order to respond to national policies and priorities.

9. Concerns were expressed regarding the slow progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and pledges that were made at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in New York in September 2019, as referenced in paragraph 9.3. Moreover, a question was asked about what programmes were in place to speed up the implementation of the Goals and whether they could still be attained with only seven years left, and what, specifically, the Department could do to speed up implementation.

10. A delegation, referring to the strategy and external factors for 2024 (para. 9.5), which mentioned the report of the Secretary-General on Our Common Agenda as one of the sources and guidelines for action, considered that reference to be premature, as the report of the Secretary-General was still being discussed by Member States and no decisions by Member States on the report had been made.

11. A delegation noted with appreciation the Department's work in translating policy frameworks referenced in paragraph 9.6, which were not "one size fits all" and needed customization and benchmarking so that countries could learn from each other when policies had been implemented successfully.

12. A delegation referenced paragraph 9.7 and noted with appreciation the Department's attention to the least developed and landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries in Africa. The upcoming fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States and the Summit of the Future were referenced, as was the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Doha from 5 to 9 March 2023, as important platforms for discussion on those issues, with a nod to the role of the Department in supporting international conferences. Several delegations emphasized the importance of international cooperation in that regard and noted that while challenges still remained, they had to be overcome.

13. Security was raised as a concern; it was noted that the report assumed that the security and political situation in targeted countries and the surrounding regions would allow for implementation of the programmes, but the reality was that challenges might arise in unstable or conflict-affected areas. Questions arose concerning what strategies would be employed to address those challenges faced by the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

14. With regard to programme performance in 2022, a delegation highlighted the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, held in Lisbon from 27 June to 1 July 2022, stating that priority should be given to funding the development of the oceans, considering the chronic underinvestment in this area.

15. A delegation recognized the work of the Department as key to ensuring common approaches and inter-agency links in order to best support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Collective involvement was credited with resolving pressing socioeconomic issues towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. A delegation raised the issue of reform and recalled that the Secretary-General had identified six mutually reinforcing areas that would constitute the final phase of that reform in response to General Assembly resolution [70/299](#), adopted in 2016. A statement was made that achievement of the reform process required more effort, as there had been no consensus yet in those areas. The Secretary-General was called upon by a delegation to do more, in line with Assembly resolution [75/233](#), to ensure the efficient delivery of United Nations system support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular to middle-income countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

17. An update on the measures to include middle-income countries in the Sustainable Development Goals was requested by a delegation, which made the point that the 2021 report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Goals ([E/2021/58](#)) highlighted that 8 out of 10 "new poor" were in middle-income countries and in that regard called upon the Secretary-General to increase support to those countries. The same delegation recalled the agreement made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination to support the full implementation of all relevant resolutions pertaining to the needs of middle-income countries and called for a similar agreement during the current session.

18. Another delegation, citing General Assembly resolution 76/215, in which the Assembly called for a coordinated system-wide response plan for support to middle-income countries, referenced the mandate under subprogramme 6, Economic analysis and policy. It was stated that the need for coordination was emphasized by panellists during the high-level meeting of the General Assembly held on 11 May 2023. The same delegation indicated that the requested system-wide response plan could result in a shift in focus from direct financial support to the provision of high-quality policy advice, capacity-building and effective partnerships for middle-income countries.

19. The issue of ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all was raised, as referenced in result 1: accelerated progress towards ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030 of subprogramme 3, Sustainable development, and table 9.11, which mentioned the Water Action Agenda. The United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 was considered very important, as stated by a delegation. Concerns were raised regarding what concrete actions the Water Action Agenda might include; how monitoring might take place; what a dedicated platform meant in that regard; and how to know whether there might be parallel structures.

20. A delegation expressed particular appreciation for result 3: strengthened commitment and action to address the unique needs of small island developing States of subprogramme 3, Sustainable development, particularly as small island developing States continued to face combined challenges, including geographical remoteness, small-scale economies, high costs, and adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters.

21. The element of statistical and geospatial information, as itemized under subprogramme 4, Statistics, was discussed, as it related to the Sustainable Development Goals. More specifically, it was highlighted that the Department aimed to ensure enhanced coherence and more effective functioning and transformation of the global statistical and geospatial system. The Department was asked to elaborate on how “enhanced coherence” was linked to the United Nations process; how it would be handled in the Summit of the Future; what the most important issues or hurdles were in achieving it; and how it might be achieved. A delegation remarked that making statistical data available at the national level was very much supported.

22. The need for additional support for statistical data was emphasized, as countries depended on data to develop responsive policies, especially as they pertained to sustainable development. The topics of knowledge transfer and technical advice were also identified as important issues by a delegation because they related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and were important elements of the Department’s work.

23. It was noted that the economic landscape was not good in the current year and that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was lagging. While recognizing and supporting the Department’s efforts, a delegation raised a question as to what more could be done and what might be needed to maintain momentum. It was noted that in September 2023, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit would energize countries to accelerate the implementation of the Goals. A delegation noted that the implementation of the Goals was one of the Secretary-General’s most important tasks and enquired about the type of support that could be expected.

24. A delegation stated that the Department also needed to address the challenges presented by external factors, perhaps in 2024, and elaborated that the Department might have a greater role with regard to the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the capability of Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,

including by preparing some reports on their impacts. The response to the food crisis was cited as one to potentially replicate in other areas.

25. Some delegations expressed continued commitment to gender equality, women's empowerment, the rights of persons with disabilities and engagement with non-governmental organizations. The impact of emerging and ongoing trends, policies and programmes on the poorest and most vulnerable and on women and girls was highlighted. Financing for social care and older persons was also emphasized as an area of priority by a delegation.

26. Several delegations drew attention to the discrimination against Paralympians, calling for non-discriminatory approaches to persons with disabilities, including in sports, and the commitment to "leave no one behind"; the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda were also mentioned as containing commitments requiring more action from the Department. It was suggested that those issues should be included in the agenda of the next session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

27. The importance of accessibility was noted to be a requirement for inclusive societies, as established in Sustainable Development Goal 16, Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. An enquiry was made as to the type of platform the Department might implement to ensure inclusion, particularly concerning persons with disabilities.

28. Subprogramme 5, Population, was discussed, with interest in the ongoing work in the Secretariat and the Statistical Commission concerning the indicators on migration. It was expressed that the indicators should be focused not only on the countries of destination of migrants, but also on their countries of origin, for which the problem of measuring emigration was very relevant.

29. A delegation raised the theme of effective coordination between the Department, regional commissions and other United Nations development entities, with emphasis on reducing duplication.

30. Attention was drawn to the objectivity of the *World Economic Situation and Prospects* report, which, according to a delegation, linked the impact of the situation in Ukraine on the global economy with the sanctions actions of certain countries. A delegation enquired about how subprogramme 6, Economic analysis and policy, intended to fulfil the mandate on the lifting of sanctions of General Assembly resolution 76/191, and whether there were plans to create a special mechanism for monitoring their humanitarian consequences with the involvement of a network of economic advisers, resident coordinators, development organizations and civil society.

31. The legal aspect of the resident coordinators' in-country presence was also raised as an issue, with a call to improve the situation, as the legal side of the resident coordinators' stay in the country of accreditation had not yet been regularized everywhere. That provision affected the legal status, privileges and immunities of both the resident coordinators and their office, according to a delegation.

32. A delegation voiced the necessity to redouble the efforts of the international community with respect to the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals related to financing for development, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and attending, in turn, to the national capacities of States.

33. The Department was reminded to address countries from different geographical regions that had different models of economic and social development in the field of

financing for development, and to pay more attention to the potential of developing countries to participate in regional economic agreements.

34. With regard to climate issues, some delegations expressed concern about the impact on the most vulnerable countries. Reference was made to numerous proposals that had been made, including, for example, the Bridgetown Covenant, which linked development with access to climate finance. That was highlighted as an area which also required coordination among the various actors to avoid duplication and overlap. The Secretariat was invited to offer details in that area as it was a topic of particular concern.

35. A delegation stressed the need for United Nations system entities to work on developing matrices that complemented gross domestic product to measure the development progress of a country; the delegation requested a summary of the work being done, including the work on the multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States.

Conclusions and recommendations

36. **The Committee commended the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for its work supporting the development pillar of the United Nations and welcomed its efforts in coordinating actions for eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities within and among countries and promoting opportunities and progress towards sustainable development for all, leaving no one behind.**

37. **The Committee expressed concern with the slow progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing that many Sustainable Development Goals were off track, while some had even regressed below the 2015 baseline, and stressed the need to further strengthen the efforts of the United Nations, in cooperation with Member States, for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in time, leaving no one behind. The Committee also noted with appreciation the crucial role of the Department in supporting Member States in their ongoing efforts to achieve the Goals.**

38. **The Committee emphasized the importance of ensuring that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls continued to be an integral part of the sustainable development agenda and commended the Department for its work in this regard.**

39. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 7, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for 2024, subject to the following modifications:**

Overall orientation

Paragraph 9.8

Add new subparagraph (f), reading:

Continue to support the development cooperation with middle-income countries, in accordance with its mandate.

Paragraph 9.15

Replace the existing text with the following:

In addition, in order to support Member States on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, within the overall scope of the objectives, the Department responded to requests from Member States for in-depth analysis of the impact of the pandemic on development prospects and the

achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and sought to address multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality and shape solid recommendations that drive transformative action for inclusive social, environmental and economic policy, dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, youth employment and women's economic empowerment, and decent work for all.

Subprogramme 1

Intergovernmental support and coordination for sustainable development

Paragraph 9.23 (f)

After “vulnerable situations”, add “so that no one is left behind”.

Subprogramme 8

Sustainable forest management

Paragraph 9.114 (f)

Replace the existing text with the following:

Support common country analyses, which inform the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, in order to provide resident coordinators with the tools to tailor their responses to countries' specific needs and priorities and to effectively support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including through national implementation of sustainable forest management, at the national level.
