



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
30 June 2023

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination

Sixty-third session

30 May–30 June 2023

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Rouven **Klein** (Germany)

Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2024

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 10

Trade and development

1. At its 8th meeting, on 2 June 2023, the Committee considered programme 10, Trade and development, of the proposed programme plan for 2024 and programme performance information for 2022 ([A/78/6 \(Sect. 12\)](#) and [A/78/6 \(Sect. 13\)](#)). 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 Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC) introduced the programme and responded to questions raised by the Committee during its consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the presentation of the proposed programme plan for 2024 and programme performance information for 2022. Several delegations stressed the importance of the work of UNCTAD and ITC and expressed support for the proposed programme plan for 2024. Some delegations expressed appreciation for the quality of reports.
4. A delegation stressed the great importance it placed on development, which was a very important pillar of work of the United Nations and one that should not be neglected. The delegation commended the work of UNCTAD and ITC for using trade as an enabling means and tool, and expressed the view that that use of trade was also conducive to peace and security, and the full promotion of human rights in an interdependent manner.



5. A delegation pointed out that the current Secretary-General of UNCTAD was the first Latin American woman to hold the position. The delegation noted the importance of international cooperation for development in bolstering synergies between programmes, as well as with other entities, at the regional, national, local and global levels. The delegation stressed the importance of including a gender perspective in the operational activities, results and outcomes, noting that such a perspective was fundamental throughout the work of UNCTAD. The delegation expressed the view that seeking consensus on issues linked to resilient and sustainable development and providing support to developing countries to help them face the current global challenges were important.

6. A delegation indicated that the development policy of its country included among its priorities support for the fight against hunger, poverty and inequalities in developing countries, and a just transition towards sustainable ecosystems, where sustainable meant ecologically, socially and economically viable. In that connection, UNCTAD was an important partner, as it provided new information, advised countries on economic and trade-related strategies and policies, helped lower and ease trade barriers and, as such, was a driver for regional economic integration.

7. The delegation added that it advocated for a strong and efficient UNCTAD and valued the contributions of UNCTAD to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as its efforts to overcome climate change in the context of trade and development, and emphasized its interest in a strong and efficient UNCTAD and an agile, efficient and effective UNCTAD secretariat. The delegation stressed that it would continue to work with UNCTAD and was sure that UNCTAD was on a good path to deliver all of its important mandates.

8. A delegation noted that it looked forward to celebrating, in 2024, the sixtieth anniversary of the foundational conference of UNCTAD. Noting that UNCTAD was responsible for assisting developing countries in integrating beneficially into the global economy in support of inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth and development, the delegation expressed the view that this task was now more critical than ever in the light of the highly regressive impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In the context of the reinforcing and cascading crises of the pandemic, armed conflict, inflation, geopolitics and climate change, the delegation noted with concern that it was difficult to predict what the future held. A question was raised as to what strategies were in place to ensure that UNCTAD could still deliver on its mandate even with an unpredictable future.

9. A delegation noted that trade was an engine for development and that the role of UNCTAD was critical in promoting the development objectives of member States across all three of its pillars, namely, trade promotion, trade facilitation and trade investment. Another delegation expressed support for the ongoing work of UNCTAD for the implementation of the four transformations outlined in the Bridgetown Covenant in accordance with its three interrelated pillars of work. A delegation expressed the view that UNCTAD should continue to concentrate on its three pillars of work, namely research and analysis, technical cooperation, and consensus-building and dialogue between countries and groups of countries.

10. Regarding research and analysis, a delegation expressed appreciation for the reports of UNCTAD, such as its reports on the least developed countries, the digital economy, green industry and world investment. The delegation stated that its country had a very positive impression of UNCTAD as one of the hosts for the United Nations science, technology and innovation process and noted, as an example, the hosting by UNCTAD of the session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development held in Geneva in March 2023.

11. Regarding technical cooperation, the delegation highlighted that its country was a voluntary donor to three of the major technical cooperation programmes of UNCTAD, namely, those pertaining to e-commerce and the digital economy, the debt management and financial analysis system, and support for the African Continental Free Trade Area. The view was expressed that UNCTAD was doing a very good job in those areas, and also in supporting least developed countries. The delegation further said that UNCTAD was contributing significantly to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and solutions to overcome climate change in the context of trade and development. It was noted that the implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant was also an important task of UNCTAD.
12. Regarding consensus-building and dialogue between countries and groups of countries, the delegation expressed the view that UNCTAD had made much progress, especially in recent years. The delegation noted the Black Sea grain deal, facilitated by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, as a striking example and congratulated UNCTAD in that regard. The delegation further noted that this example and the very important negotiation and facilitation role of UNCTAD were described in the proposed programme plan.
13. The view was expressed that technical assistance and capacity-building support in areas such as investment promotion, investment regulations, readiness and project development, trade promotion, trade facilitation, e-commerce and digital infrastructure development were important.
14. Clarification was sought as to how UNCTAD avoided duplicating the efforts of other United Nations entities and remained focused on its comparative advantages.
15. It was noted that member States and regions had different levels of trade capacities and activities and that therefore one description for all countries could not be given and the programmes should be driven by member States and upon the request of the regions and countries with different levels of trade activities.
16. A delegation stated that, in view of the multiple crises currently being confronted, there was a clear need for enhanced global efforts and cooperation for inclusive, resilient and sustainable development, as well as for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
17. A delegation sought clarification as to the integration policy, especially with regard to a gender perspective in operational activities, that UNCTAD applied and the concrete steps that would be taken to analyse and address the gender impact of armed conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions were raised as to what specific measures and policy recommendations UNCTAD proposed to address the interrelated challenges of armed conflicts, rising costs of living and climate change, how the progress and impact of those activities would be monitored and evaluated, and how accountability for achieving the goals of the Bridgetown Covenant and the Sustainable Development Goals could be ensured.
18. Delegations emphasized their readiness to support the work of UNCTAD to support a balance of all three of its pillars, namely, intergovernmental dialogue, technical cooperation and analytical work. In that connection, the high quality of UNCTAD analytical products was noted as a valuable source of highly professional, frequently alternative, views on the most pressing international problems. Furthermore, the view was expressed that it was exceedingly important for measures to improve publication policies to not result in the imposition of political censorship or undermine the intellectual independence of the analytical component of the UNCTAD mandate.
19. It was noted with appreciation that the involvement of UNCTAD in the coordination of the task team of the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy

and Finance and its participation in negotiations and the promotion of food products and fertilizers to world markets, had shown that it could rise to the challenge. The delegation further noted that the process of building a more agile, impactful and engaged UNCTAD was under way and had momentum, although it was still not where it should be. In that connection, the delegation expressed the view that farm inputs were expensive and asked whether countries, especially those in Africa, could be empowered and financed to have industries that would produce fertilizer.

20. A delegation noted that it considered trade as one of the crucial factors in advancing peaceful and sustainable development for all member States. Given that one of the guiding principles of the United Nations was leaving no one behind, the delegation underlined the role played by UNCTAD in the achievement of inclusive development, and expressed the view that it was important for the Committee to achieve consensus on programme 10 in the current year, as it had done in the previous years.

21. In the context of implementation of goals and tasks included in programme 10, the view was expressed that UNCTAD should be guided by an approach that was both constructive and apolitical. It was noted that such an approach would be particularly necessary in 2024 when the outcomes of the implementation of the Bridgetown Covenant would be assessed, prior to the adoption of a new four-year UNCTAD road map for its sixteenth session. Delegations also noted with satisfaction that the priorities, as enshrined in the Bridgetown Covenant, had been duly reflected in the UNCTAD programme of work for 2024.

22. It was noted that due attention had been paid to the issue of regional integration, thanks to some member States and participating States members of integration associations, and that UNCTAD had managed to more effectively counter external shocks and to implement the goals under the 2030 Agenda. In that connection, UNCTAD was urged to more proactively cooperate with regional organizations and associations. The view was expressed that UNCTAD, as set out in the Bridgetown Covenant, should become a useful mechanism for dialogue between integration associations for the purposes of analysis and leverage of experience countering crises.

23. It was noted that the issues of environmental protection and climate were of great importance to all countries in the light of the risks that those issues posed to sustainable development. The view was expressed that it was important for those issues not to become central in the operations of UNCTAD, as was seen taking place in many other organizations, and that they should be considered from the standpoint of their impact on trade and development. It was emphasized that, in its efforts, UNCTAD should avoid duplication and encroachment upon the purview of other organizations, and that UNCTAD, given its specific benefits and advantages, should focus on the trade aspects of the green agenda, specifically on the risks posed by ecological protectionism to global trade.

24. In the context of the programme's assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the conflict in Ukraine on the global situation, it was noted that the programme had not included a similar assessment of the impact of the monetary policies of developed countries, the rejection of investments in traditional fuels and, most importantly, unilateral coercive measures. The view was expressed that the latter set of factors had made the greatest contribution to rising energy prices. It was noted that unilateral restrictions on the financial and logistical sectors continued to block their provision of food and fertilizer to global markets, specifically to developing countries that were in greatest need. In that connection, the view was expressed that UNCTAD possessed sufficient experience and professionalism to regularly conduct analysis of the impact of sanctions on trade and development, as

well as interlinked issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development.

25. Aligning with that view, a delegation stated that the promotion of trade could not be done without addressing trade impediments and barriers. The delegation expressed the view that imposing unilateral coercive measures on the trade of countries constituted a serious barrier to the trade activities of member States and limited trade cooperation. In that context, the delegation stated that UNCTAD urgently needed to address that issue by conducting studies on the negative impacts of such measures on member States, reporting on the issues identified and proposing recommendations.

26. In reference to paragraph 12.4 of programme 10, a delegation noted with appreciation that UNCTAD would support the implementation, monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda and the relevant targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. The delegation noted that UNCTAD was the custodian of eight Goal indicators, covering topics related to trade, tariffs, development finance, debt, investment, illicit finance and enterprise sustainability, at the global level. The delegation further noted that UNCTAD, through its work and results, would continue to support member States in making progress not only towards the achievement of Goals 8, 9, 10 and 17, but also towards Goals 2, 5, 12, 14, 15 and 16. In that connection, questions were raised as to what strategies or plans were in place to speed up the implementation of the Goals and whether a post-COVID-19 strategy had been developed to jump-start the programmes.

27. With regard to paragraph 12.5 of programme 10, a delegation suggested replacing the term “transforming multilateralism” with “revitalizing multilateralism” for the sake of clarity.

28. In reference to paragraph 12.7, a delegation highlighted the establishment of the Statistics Service as a welcome step that would support developing countries in building their capacity to collect and compile data and measure progress in sustainable, inclusive and equitable trade, growth and development.

29. With regard to paragraph 12.19, a delegation pointed out that its country was also a key partner in the Belt and Road Initiative.

30. A delegation noted that UNCTAD had a mandate to address many of the most important issues confronting the world and to advance a number of Goals. The view was expressed that UNCTAD had historically fallen short of its promise, since it had not taken necessary reform measures in more than a decade. In that connection, the delegation said that it was pleased to hear that the Secretary-General was making institutional reform a priority and recommended a stronger focus on institutional reform in the 2024 programme plan.

31. The delegation said that it and others had long called for increased transparency and recalled that the Joint Inspection Unit, in its 2012 report on the review of management and administration in UNCTAD (JIU/REP/2012/1), had also called for increased transparency. In that connection, it was noted that the 2024 proposed plan contained a call for increased trade transparency and support for transparent governance by member States but no acknowledgement or offer of a path to improved transparency at UNCTAD itself.

32. The delegation expressed support for the recent comments by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in favour of peer review of UNCTAD publications and stated that economic analysis was one of its most important functions. It also expressed the view that peer review processes had been a long-standing recommendation by the delegation and others. In that connection, it was noted that the only reference to peer reviews in the 2024 proposed programme plan was in paragraph 12.49, which did not

contain a reference to UNCTAD publications per se. Clarification was sought as to what steps UNCTAD was taking to institute peer review for its publications.

33. The delegation further said that, for over a decade, there had been calls for UNCTAD to institute results-based management, to improve efficiency and consistency, and recalled that the Joint Inspection Unit, in its 2012 report, had recommended that the Secretary-General should “define and elaborate, as a matter of priority, a clear results-based management integrated framework and implementing strategy”. In that connection, the calls of the Secretary-General for results-based management at UNCTAD were noted with appreciation. The delegation noted that there was one passing reference to results-based management in the programme plan in paragraph 12.20, and the view was expressed that this did not provide sufficient detail about when UNCTAD used results-based management or if it had a standing policy on such management. Further clarification was sought on the current status of results-based management and how and when UNCTAD would implement its widespread use.

34. Regarding subprogramme 1, Globalization, interdependence and development, a delegation expressed support for the objectives and strategy outlined under the subprogramme and said that the inclusive and integrated treatment of development economics should incorporate balanced treatment of issues, along with acknowledgement of common but differentiated responsibilities, especially with regard to sustainable development policies. The view was expressed that promotion of cooperation at all levels of the interplay between successful development finance strategies, debt sustainability and effective debt management, as also mentioned at paragraph 12.23 (c), would be vital. The delegation expressed support for the provision of technical assistance to support the Palestinian people. The delegation highlighted that, together with UNCTAD, its country was formulating strategies for economic diversification, renewable energy adoption and sustainable agricultural practices to promote inclusive and environmentally friendly growth.

35. With regard to subprogramme 2, Investment and enterprise, a delegation took positive note of the objectives and strategy and further noted that its country had taken up the review of its national investment policy and looked forward to the support of UNCTAD in that matter.

36. As regards subprogramme 3, International trade and commodities, a delegation expressed support for the objective, in particular in paragraph 12.49 (h), to seek policy recommendations on the post-pandemic recovery specific to national situations.

37. Regarding subprogramme 4, Technology and logistics, a delegation indicated that it seemed to be a very important part of the programme of UNCTAD and proposed that UNCTAD consider providing capacity-building projects, including the transfer of knowledge and new technologies to member States in the area of trade cooperation. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the work on bridging the digital divide and digital transformation of developing countries, called for a balanced digital governance framework and expressed support for the planned results under that subprogramme.

38. Regarding subprogramme 5, Africa, least developed countries and special programmes, a delegation expressed the view that UNCTAD had an important role to play in supporting developing countries in integrating into the global economy and taking full advantage of trading opportunities, and sought further information as to what was being done to support graduation from the least developed country category.

39. In reference to paragraph 12.95, a delegation noted with appreciation the coordination by the Office of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD of cross-cutting institutional processes, such as the systematic inclusion of gender equality aspects in

all areas of the work of UNCTAD. The delegation further noted that the Gender Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, was mandated to improve and better coordinate gender mainstreaming activities, including by appointing, for each UNCTAD subprogramme, a gender focal point whose responsibilities included reviewing trust fund project documents from a gender mainstreaming perspective. In that connection, a question was raised as to whether UNCTAD could work with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to use the same gender focal points to avoid duplication so that scarce resources of the United Nations could be used in the most cost-effective way.

40. With respect to the programme plan for subprogramme 6, Operational aspects of trade promotion and export development, on ITC, contained in document [A/78/6 \(Sect. 13\)](#), a delegation noted with appreciation that, in 2024, ITC would keep delivering transformative and sustainable trade to help put the Sustainable Development Goals back on track and to build inclusive and prosperous economies. In that connection, a question was raised as to what strategies or plans could be shared with the Committee.

41. A delegation noted that it followed the activities of ITC closely and knew that ITC had a unique mandate, the promotion of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries, mostly by enhancing capacities in relation to trade, and that ITC was in a unique position as a relatively small affiliate organization of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations. The view was expressed that the limited size of ITC and its clear-cut mandate made it possible that ITC could pursue flexible and innovative approaches to new items. In conclusion, the delegation described ITC as a very agile organization.

42. The delegation said that ITC was playing a crucial role in the creation of trade-related employment and income, and that it also provided market intelligence and useful digital tools. It was noted that, in recent years, the targets ITC set for itself had almost always been fulfilled, in spite of the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

43. The delegation welcomed the reference made in the programme plan to the ITC strategic plan for the period 2022–2025, and noted that member States had been involved in the preparation of the strategic plan and that it had been a very smooth and transparent procedure.

44. A delegation noted that at least 80 per cent of ITC country-level assistance would be provided to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, small and vulnerable economies, countries in armed conflict or at risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, and countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and expressed appreciation for the support provided to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa to ensure that they could create stable economies. In that connection, a delegation said that there should be more reference to the fact that ITC contributed to developing countries in general, in line with the links of its work with the structural challenges faced by those countries, in particular given the fact that they had been seriously affected by the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that post-pandemic recovery was uneven, with widened structural development gaps.

45. The delegation expressed the view that consideration must be given in the work of ITC to the fact that middle-income countries were in a different situation, with structural challenges such as inequalities, poverty, persistent regional disparities and deficiencies in terms of infrastructure development. In the same context, the delegation further expressed the view that it was also necessary for the cooperation mechanisms of ITC to take into account the particular needs of middle-income countries, which included the majority of Latin America and the Caribbean.

46. A delegation noted that ITC was responsible for the business aspects of trade development. The delegation further noted that its country, through the support of ITC, had adopted e-commerce platforms to bring entrepreneurs, especially women and retailers, new business opportunities, both in the country and across borders. The delegation noted that its country further partnered with the United Nations system and the private sector to promote women in trade and development, and that there had been a series of training sessions for women and girls to ensure that they vigorously participated in trade for socioeconomic development.

47. Support was expressed for the mention of sub-strategies of the Centre aimed at accelerating digital trade, environmentally sustainable trade, and trade by women and youth. A delegation noted that efforts should be made to ensure avoidance of the prioritization of one dimension, in particular the environmental dimension, over another, as could happen with the idea of “environmentally sustainable trade”. The delegation noted that there was no multilaterally agreed definition in the competent forums of “environmentally sustainable trade”. The delegation expressed the view that the scope and commercial implications of the term with regard to standards for trade were not clear and that it could result in the imposition of environmental standards on trade, which might not be in line with the conditions and priorities of developing countries.

48. It was noted with great appreciation that the interventions of ITC to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals would be further integrated and scaled up through the implementation of specific sub-strategies aimed at accelerating digital trade, environmentally sustainable trade, and trade for women and youth, and that increased attention would be placed on the needs of the most vulnerable. Furthermore, it was noted with appreciation that women were encouraged to engage in trade for socioeconomic development. The delegation extended further gratitude for the involvement of youth, as they were the future of countries.

49. Support was expressed for the general objectives and projects proposed by ITC, as they helped member States to promote more inclusive trade, with special support for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and with a gender perspective. The delegation noted that this was in line with the 2030 Agenda and with the vision promoted by its country in forums such as WTO, in which it had adhered to the joint declarations issued on the margins of the 11th Ministerial Conference of WTO, held in Buenos Aires, on micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and on the economic empowerment of women and trade and gender, while participating in joint initiatives on those issues within the framework of WTO.

50. A delegation welcomed the work of ITC related to the least developed countries and small island developing States, including in ensuring a gender-responsive approach in its operational activities, deliverables and results, as described in paragraph 13.10. Firm support was expressed for the objective of subprogramme 6, contained in paragraph 13.4, to increase the competitiveness of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. The delegation further said that it was confident that the specific activities related to providing advisory services, training and awareness-building to enterprises, business support institutions and government agencies would deliver impact in areas that were key to the competitiveness of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. In that connection and in reference to paragraph 13.5 (c), further clarification was sought as to how ITC would support business transactions and investments for refugees and how ITC would work with other relevant entities in that regard.

51. A delegation noted that the main objective of the subprogramme was the inclusive and sustainable development of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and expressed the view that this was positive for fostering economic growth and

development. The delegation commended the coordination work of ITC with other organs, entities and mechanisms of the United Nations, and made reference to paragraph 13.9. The delegation noted with appreciation the references to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development and General Assembly resolution [75/233](#), and expressed the view that the resolution was a very important document providing guidance and clarifications on the priorities of member States to ITC and UNCTAD.

52. A delegation welcomed the inclusion of the promotion of connectivity in digital trade under lessons learned and planned change for result 3. The delegation emphasized the issue of connectivity as an important factor in the process of building global resilience and promoting sustainable development.

53. A delegation welcomed the opportunity to partner with ITC to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through the initiatives described in the proposed programme plan for 2024. The delegation further welcomed the focus in the ITC strategic plan for the period 2022–2025 on the well-being of workers, inclusive trade, the environment and sustainable development and stated that the plan was consistent with its country's own trade agenda. Appreciation was expressed for ITC support for private sector-led growth and for the Centre's focus on countries in armed conflict and its dedication to the least developed countries, sub-Saharan Africa, landlocked developing countries, small and vulnerable economies and small island developing States.

54. The delegation highlighted that it shared the Centre's interest in supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area during its formational years and that the ITC flagship One Trade Africa programme complemented the Prosper Africa initiative, led by the United States Agency for International Development. The delegation added that it was working collaboratively with ITC on issues related to e-commerce and digital trade and on further developing tools that addressed sustainable growth and climate change and provided market access information for the private sector.

55. A delegation noted that its country, like other countries and organizations, had contributed and was still contributing to a number of ITC programmes and initiatives such as the Trade for Sustainable Development Forum and the SheTrades initiative, which were mentioned in the programme plan. The delegation highlighted that both programmes were successful, as they fulfilled their targets or even exceeded them, and said that it would be appreciated if more of the core resources of ITC could be dedicated to those programmes.

56. Several delegations indicated that they would submit specific language proposals to improve the programme plan.

Conclusions and recommendations

57. **The Committee recommended that the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly, in line with Assembly resolution [77/254](#), consider the programme plan for programme 10, Trade and development, of the proposed programme budget for 2024 under the agenda item entitled "Programme planning" at the seventy-eighth session of the Assembly.**