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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Self-evaluation capacity of the Economic Commission
for Africa

Note by the Secretary-General

1. When reviewing section 23, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, 1/ the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) stressed the importance of evaluation as an effective tool for the monitoring of the programme performance and effectiveness of ECA. It recommended that the Secretary-General should make proposals to strengthen appropriately that function within ECA to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, in light of resolution 44/201 B and in accordance with the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation. 2/ In resolution 44/201 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to review the question of the resources for the evaluation function in the regional commissions, prior to the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993."

2. At its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly had considered the question of strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and systems, and reviewed a report of the Secretary-General that examined the status of 17 evaluation units and entities in 1983 and presented proposals for their strengthening in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985. 3/ The units and entities reviewed were part of the United Nations Secretariat under the regular budget and included the five regional commissions. The General Assembly also reviewed the related recommendations of CPC and a statement of financial and administrative implications, 4/ in which six additional posts were requested for evaluation, including three regional commissions (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and ECA). The

Assembly did not endorse the creation of those posts. It requested the Secretary-General to review all possibilities available to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units, including a timetable for the adequate establishment of such units in all departments, and measures for redeployment of resources prior to the thirty-ninth session of the Assembly.

3. The report presented to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session concluded that, given prior programme commitments, redeployments could only be of a temporary nature and that new posts were still required. The report also stated that the Secretary-General would propose permanent solutions for strengthening in the biennium 1986-1987 and that in order to ensure that evaluation functions in the units concerned proceeded at the required pace, every effort would be made to reallocate resources for those functions from savings in other sections of the 1984-1985 programme budget. 5/ The General Assembly, in its resolution 39/238 of 18 December 1984, concurred with these later proposals and the Secretary-General, in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987 included, with regard to regional commissions, requests for three temporary evaluation posts in sections 11, ESCAP (one P-5), 12, ECLAC (one P-4) and 13, ECA (one P-5). The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) recommended and the Assembly accepted two of these three temporary posts for the biennium 1986-1987: a P-4 post for ECLAC and a P-5 post for ECA.

4. These two temporary posts for evaluation were approved as of 1 January 1986. A freeze on recruitment and other austerity measures were imposed in March of the same year in response to the financial crisis. It was therefore not possible to fill these posts during the biennium 1986-1987. In 1988-1989, the programme budget was prepared and proposed in the context of the implementation of the post reduction exercise requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213. With regard to the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, the Secretary-General did not propose the creation of evaluation posts in ECA and ECLAC. The General Assembly, however, by its resolution 44/201 B decided to restore the post of Evaluation Officer at ECA on a non-recurrent basis, subject to renewal.

5. It might be useful to describe briefly the current arrangements for evaluation in the regional commissions. In four regional commissions, the activities for evaluation are presented in a subprogramme or programme element under Executive direction and management. The related resources are not specified in the programme budget document, as evaluation functions are undertaken together with other functions by staff attached to the offices of the heads of the the regional commissions. In the Economic Commission for Europe, activities on evaluation are not programmed.

6. As regards the Economic Commission for Africa, prior to 1984, the Commission had used resources on ad hoc or part-time basis for carrying out evaluation tasks. In response to the importance attached to self-evaluation, the ECA secretariat internally redeployed a P-4 post to carry out those functions during 1984-1985.

7. In the biennium 1986-1987, ECA allocated additional resources to self-evaluation. On a part-time basis, three staff members at the P-5 and P-4 levels were involved in this exercise. This arrangement, however, had to be discontinued during the biennium 1988-1989 for a variety of reasons, including the implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations. 6/ Subsequently, self-evaluation has gradually been undertaken by heads of substantive divisions with assistance from the Policy and Programme Coordination Office. This Office has two Professional posts (one D-1, one P-5) and 2 General Service posts, in addition to the "temporary non-recurrent" post established by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/201 B.

8. During the period 1989-1990, nine subprogrammes under eight programmes were subject to self-evaluation, including food and agricultural development; socio-economic analysis, planning and projections; policy development, planning and institution-building; demographic analysis; and statistical development. The results of such self-evaluations were provided to the ECA Conference of Ministers.

9. The P-5 post was established effective 1 January 1990. Its incumbent performed evaluation functions during the major part of 1990. In November 1990, however, the incumbent was transferred to another post within the ECA secretariat. The P-5 post has remained vacant since that time.

10. Given the need for an assessment of the performance of the evaluation function within the ECA secretariat and given the maximum restraint in proposals for the staffing table of the Organization requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/254, no proposals have been made by the Secretary-General for additional posts related to evaluation, either in ECA or in any other unit of the Secretariat.

11. It has been ascertained that a favourable climate does exist in ECA for a further strengthening of its self-evaluation capacity. It has also been ascertained that the level, scope and quality of such self-evaluation require further improvement, notably through better central coordination by the Programme Planning and Coordination Office. In the absence of a post earmarked for evaluation, the relevant functions would be performed by that Office through a temporary internal reallocation of resources.

12. The possible strengthening of the self-evaluation capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa is part of an overall issue that is currently under review by the Secretariat in the context of the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolution 36/228 on the strengthening of the United Nations evaluation system. The relevant report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session through CPC. It is therefore suggested that the General Assembly consider again this matter at its forty-seventh session in the context of the report requested in resolution 36/228.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/46/6/Rev.1).

2/ A/46/16, para. 311.

3/ A/38/133 and Corr.1.

4/ A/C.5/38/11.

5/ A/C.5/39/45 and Corr.1.

6/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).
