



**Administrative Committee
on Coordination**

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REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND
OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING

(New York, 30 May-1 June 1995)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) held an inter-sessional meeting at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 30 May to 1 June 1995. The agenda for the session is contained in annex I and the list of participants in annex II to the present report.

I. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

2. In view of the fact that the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) has now scheduled its second regular session of 1995 for 12 and 13 October, CCPOQ proposed to reschedule its second regular session, to be held in New York, from 21-25 August to 19-22 September 1995. The agenda will be based on the outline that was adopted at the fifth session of CCPOQ in February 1995.

II. WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Action taken and decisions adopted

3. CCPOQ approved, on behalf of ACC, the ACC comments on the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on national execution of projects (para. 28).

4. CCPOQ decided to reconvene in Geneva in informal session on 25 and 26 July 1995 in order to review the draft report of the Secretary-General on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (para. 8).

B. Summary of discussions

1. Operational activities for development

(a) Triennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system

5. In introducing the item, the representative of the United Nations confirmed that, following consultations with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council, it had been decided to make an interim report to the Council consisting of a factual analysis of the data acquired from the country missions and questionnaires, in view of the low response to date from recipient countries. A draft report to the General Assembly, including policy recommendations, would be prepared and circulated by 19 July after the Council's discussions.

6. Welcoming the extensive work accomplished, CCPOQ discussed the draft interim report and the draft statistical addendum on United Nations system resource flows and offered a number of detailed observations on various parts of the report.

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7. It was noted that CCPOQ would be pursuing the subject of the definitions and methodologies of the presentation of data on United Nations system resource flows at its next session.

8. CCPOQ also agreed to reconvene in Geneva in informal session on 25 and 26 July in order to discuss the draft report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly for the triennial comprehensive policy review.

(b) Division of labour within the United Nations system

9. The Secretary presented the report of the consultant on the subject, which will also be dealt with in the triennial comprehensive policy review, and recalled that the subject had been referred by ACC to CCPOQ for study.

10. It was recognized that the issue was very complex and required further assessment. There was a conceptual difference between the original ACC approach to the subject, which had focused on the division of labour between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions, and the thrust of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which focused on a division of labour based on the respect and enhancement of the mandates of the individual agencies. Whereas the former had raised the question of institutional collaboration, the latter had emphasized functional collaboration in operational activities.

11. It was agreed that CCPOQ should return to the general subject of the division of labour at its forthcoming regular session.

2. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries

Inter-agency Consultations for the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries

12. The Secretary recalled that the item had been added to the CCPOQ agenda in order to respond to the General Assembly request to include inter-agency consultations in the preparatory process for the mid-term review. The purpose of the discussion was to examine what the system could do collectively to address the problems of the least developed countries. The Secretary drew the attention of CCPOQ to the summary report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the principal issues, as derived from the Least Developed Countries 1995 Report, and to the outcome of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board review in March 1995 of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action (ACC/1995/POQ/CRP.18).

13. The representative of UNCTAD briefed CCPOQ on the preparatory activities under way for the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (New York, 26 September-6 October 1995). The main preparatory exercise was the Meeting of Governmental Experts of Donor Countries and Multilateral and Bilateral Financial and Technical Assistance Institutions with Representatives of Least Developed Countries (donor/recipient meeting), which began its one-week session on 29 May 1995 in Geneva and to which all agencies had been invited. A number of preparatory expert group meetings in the areas of fiscal policy

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reform, women in development, trade diversification, and external financing and debt of the least developed countries had previously been organized. The donor/recipient meeting was expected to focus on the experience of policy reforms in the least developed countries and on actions to be taken in the areas of external finance, debt and trade.

14. The representative of UNCTAD thanked all the organizations that had collaborated with UNCTAD in the follow-up of the Programme of Action. Organizations reported regularly on their activities relating to the least developed countries, and some provided specific inputs and support to the annual reviews of the Programme of Action conducted by the Trade and Development Board. At the regional level, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had organized regional follow-ups of the Programme of Action and their substantive inputs had been transmitted to the donor/recipient meeting. Only a few organizations, however, had so far responded to the UNCTAD request to provide substantive contributions to the Mid-term Global Review in the form of a report on the implementation of the Programme of Action in their respective fields of competence. It was important that the other organizations respond by 31 July 1995, at the latest.

15. Several organizations reported on particular action taken in their field of competence in favour of the least developed countries and undertook to contribute substantively to the preparatory process. It was nevertheless noted that the policies and priorities foreseen by the Programme of Action had been largely integrated throughout all the activities of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies; it was therefore difficult to separate them into a selective report. The importance of continued support by the United Nations development system for national capacity-building was underlined by all speakers.

16. A number of conceptual issues arose during the discussion concerning the implications for the United Nations system of paying priority attention to the least developed countries, including the possibility of diminished universality; emphasis on social development and emergency assistance; target groups (poorest people versus poorest countries); and the nature of investment for development. It was agreed that CCPOQ should add the item to its future sessions for general reflection and analysis.

17. Following a discussion of the issues before the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting, CCPOQ agreed that the representative of UNCTAD could communicate the following views expressed by participants to the donor/recipient meeting, which was currently in session in Geneva:

(a) CCPOQ member organizations viewed with concern the insufficient progress achieved by the least developed countries in economic and social development. They reiterated that the least developed countries remained a priority objective for supportive action by the United Nations development system, with a view to ensuring the participation of least developed countries as full, viable and competitive partners in the international community;

(b) There was a need to take constant account of the long-term development perspective in the formulation and funding of development cooperation programmes and in the provision of short-term or emergency assistance;

(c) Actions were needed to decisively reduce the external debt stock and debt-servicing burdens of least developed countries and to ensure that they were provided with adequate official development assistance in line with the commitments made in the Programme of Action;

(d) Ever greater importance must be given by the United Nations system to endogenous capacity-building, through assistance in policy formulation and the strengthening of national institutional expertise;

(e) National policies and strategies must be geared towards creating an enabling environment for increased participation by least developed countries in international trade and private-sector resource flows, notably in such areas as market frameworks, legal instruments, financial systems and the development of related norms and standards;

(f) Structural adjustment programmes in least developed countries must take account of long-term country-specific requirements, paying particular attention to adequate funding, the provision of safety nets and civil service reform;

(g) Innovative ways of involving all relevant domestic actors in the development process should be promoted, such as through public/private partnerships;

(h) More emphasis must be given to improved performance of the productive sector, inter alia, through greater linkages between the agricultural and industrial sectors, as well as in the area of food security;

(i) Agency sectoral analyses for the mid-term review should address programmatic issues above all and should extend beyond the Programme of Action into areas addressed by global conferences, such as environment, population, social development, women in development and human settlements;

(j) The United Nations system, in its programmes and operational activities, must maintain a strong international advocacy role in favour of least developed countries, including in resource mobilization, and must assist governments in the strengthening of national administration, management capacity and infrastructural development.

3. Other matters

(a) Report of Working Group on Poverty Alleviation

18. In submitting the report of the CCPOQ Working Group on the Work of the United Nations System in Poverty Alleviation, the Secretary drew attention to a number of proposals for follow-up action by the Committee (ACC/1995/POQ/CRP.19), ranging from the development of common action-oriented strategies and processes

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to seeking agreement within the system on common definitions and indicators of poverty.

19. It was pointed out that a task force of the Statistical Commission had recently concluded that a comparative statistical measurement of poverty would not be feasible until governments had agreed on standard criteria for measuring poverty. Given the wide range of interpretations and country-specific situations, it was unlikely that much progress could be achieved in that direction.

20. Several members underlined the importance of integrating any action by CCPOQ into the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. As various inter-agency task forces were being proposed by the Secretary-General for that purpose, CCPOQ should seek to provide highly-focused value-added and complementary inputs. Account should also be taken of initiatives undertaken in that field by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP).

21. The need to distinguish between the conceptual and operational aspects of poverty eradication was emphasized: the conceptual aspects involved defining appropriate programme approaches for operational eradication according to the level and nature of poverty, emphasizing the importance of preventing as well as eradicating poverty, and also emphasizing the importance of improved cooperation to render financial support more effective. Specific action could furthermore be determined by establishing particular targets, such as rural poverty, urban poverty, the feminization of poverty.

22. The representative of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat noted that the Secretary-General had been requested to report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on the eradication of poverty, pursuant to Assembly resolution 48/184, on the basis of a draft framework that would be circulated to organizations with a request for comments and contributions by the end of June 1995. The Department would also be using that framework to prepare a background note for discussion at the joint Committee for Programme and Coordination/ACC meeting in October 1995 on the theme "Coordination of the activities of the United Nations system for the eradication of poverty". It was suggested that the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development be used as a conceptual basis for the United Nations system's work on poverty alleviation, and that the report of the CCPOQ Working Group could serve as a useful instrument for presenting an overall view of United Nations system activities.

23. It was agreed that CCPOQ would review at its next session the implications for its work of developments in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

24. Expressing its appreciation to the Working Group for the work accomplished, CCPOQ also proposed that its report be distributed to all resident coordinators and agency field representatives, with a covering note on the potential for common action at the country level. The possibility of translating the report into a message to the general public on the action of the system would also be explored.

(b) Draft ACC comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on national execution of projects (JIU/REP/94/9)

25. CCPOQ reviewed the draft ACC comments prepared by the United Nations Secretariat on the basis of the comments received from individual organizations of the United Nations system (ACC/1995/POQ/CRP.20).

26. Noting that variations continued to exist within the United Nations system on the understanding and implementation of the concept of national execution, CCPOQ undertook to take up that issue at a future session.

27. CCPOQ also noted that the JIU report was largely focused on the situation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and emphasized, in that respect, the comparative advantages of involving the technical support services of the United Nations system in the formulation and implementation of programmes and projects. Insufficient attention had also been given to the overall support currently provided by the United Nations system to national capacity-building for programme and project management.

28. After making a number of modifications, CCPOQ approved, on behalf of ACC, the draft ACC comments on the JIU report.

(c) Report of the Secretary

29. ACC Organizational Committee (OC): the Secretary reported on the results of the OC review in February 1995 of the report of CCPOQ on its fifth session. The report on drug abuse control had been well received and a number of its recommendations subsequently referred to the Subcommittee on Drug Control for appropriate follow-up. OC had furthermore requested CCPOQ to pursue its consultations with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) on their respective roles regarding science and technology for development and to deal promptly with the review of the functioning of the Subcommittee on Nutrition.

30. The Secretary also drew the attention of the Committee to the letter of 27 March 1995 from the Secretary-General requesting the views of ACC on its future functioning.

31. ACC programme classification: in the context of its discussions on the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, ACC had noted that the ACC standard classification of population activities might need to be reviewed. OC had accordingly decided to seek the advice of CCPOQ and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)) on whether that should be extended to an overall review of the ACC programme classification.

32. The Secretary reported on the results of a survey that had been initiated for that purpose (ACC/1995/POQ/CRP.21). No organization had suggested modifying the 20 principal programme sectors, but there had been several requests for redefinition of the subsectors. IACSD would also be studying the issue at its July 1995 meeting, notably in regard to the environment sector.

33. There was general agreement that while an overall review of the classification was not necessary, further refinement was required for the subsectors of sectors other than population. It was considered important that the review of the subsectors be carried out as an integrated exercise, at one point in time, under the overview of CCPOQ. A revised classification should be applicable to the 1996-1997 biennium and should therefore be initiated later in 1995 after the publication of the 1994-1995 ACC biennial report on programmes and resources of the United Nations system.

34. The Secretary reported on the review at the eighty-second session of CCAQ(FB) of two questions that had been referred to it by CCPOQ. Regarding the proposed budget of CCPOQ for 1996-1997, CCAQ(FB) had considered that an increased provision for consultants did not appear fully justified and that consultations should be carried out by telecommunications rather than by secretariat travel. CCAQ(FB) had accordingly decided to maintain CCPOQ resources for consultants at the same level as 1994-1995 and to reduce the travel budget by 15 per cent.

35. While fully sharing CCAQ(FB) concerns for the strictest possible economy measures, CCPOQ expressed regret at the CCAQ(FB) response to its budget request, particularly in view of the fact that it had carefully observed prior CCAQ(FB) instructions for zero real growth. CCPOQ considered that CCAQ(FB) had the opportunity to refer the matter back to CCPOQ for review and that it was the prerogative of CCPOQ to determine the optimal functioning of its secretariat within available resources.

36. Regarding CCAQ(FB) reservations on the proposal to expand the CCPOQ Task Force on Support Costs into a joint CCPOQ/CCAQ(FB) standing body, CCPOQ members recalled the successful collaboration with CCAQ(FB) in the past and the thrust of the CCPOQ proposal to broaden the scope of the Task Force to issues of general concern to the system, such as relations with bilateral donors. It was agreed to return to the issue of the Task Force's status at the next regular session of CCPOQ on the basis of a report and proposals by the Task Force.

(d) Future programme of work

37. Referring to the calendar of activities of relevance to CCPOQ (ACC/1995/POQ/INF.7), the Secretary reported that the proposed programme approach workshop could not be scheduled in May 1995, as envisaged by the fifth session, but that considerable support had been expressed for holding such a workshop in Turin in late September. It was also proposed to hold a meeting of the Advisory Panel on Operational Activities Training in Geneva on 14 July 1995, during the substantive session of 1995 of the Economic and Social Council.

38. Noting that CCPOQ was due to reconvene informally on 25 and 26 July (see para. 8 above), the Committee proposed that the meeting of the Task Force on Support Costs also be scheduled close to that time.

39. Finally, in view of the postponement of the inter-sessional meeting from April to May, the July informal session and the ACC decision to schedule its second regular session of 1995 on 12 and 13 October, CCPOQ proposed that the dates of its second regular session of 1995 (seventh session, to be held in New York) be changed to 19-22 September 1995.

Annex I

AGENDA OF THE SIXTH SESSION

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Operational activities for development:
 - (a) Triennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system: report of the Secretary-General;
 - (b) Division of labour within the United Nations system.
3. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries:
 - (a) Inter-agency consultations for the Mid-Term Global Review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.
4. Other matters:
 - (a) Report of Working Group on Poverty Alleviation;
 - (b) JIU report on national execution of projects (JIU/REP/94/9);
 - (c) Report of the Secretary;
 - (d) Future programme of work.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairperson: N. Sadik (United Nations Population Fund)

Secretary: D. Deane

United Nations, its entities and programmes

United Nations

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| Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development | M. Stoby F. Haemmerli S. Khan C. Hackett I. Volkov |
| Department for Development Support and Management Services | D. Stillman |
| United Nations Centre for Human Settlements | M. Hildebrand |
| Economic Commission for Africa | S. Jack |
| Economic Commission for Europe | D. Pastizzi-Ferencic |
| Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean | C. Kassangana |
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| Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia | T. Akoglu |
| Regional Commissions New York Office | K. A. Rahman |
| United Nations Conference on Trade and Development | K. Kousari K. Rahman |
| United Nations Environment Programme | A. Z. Amin |
| United Nations Children's Fund | P. Altesman M. Kamau D. Jones |

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| United Nations Development Programme | J. J. Graisse N. Chandavarkar T. Lemaresquier A. Chuma E. Wilkens |
| United Nations Population Fund | S. L. N. Rao M. Simonen E. Ranneberg-Nilsen |
| United Nations International Drug Control Programme | A. Wurm |
| World Food Programme | J. Chapelier |
| <u>Specialized agencies and IAEA</u> | |
| International Labour Organization | J. Sorensen |
| Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | E. Hein |
| United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | G. Rouchet |
| International Civil Aviation Organization | B. O. Asante |
| World Health Organization | F. Z. Littaua |
| World Bank | N. Raphaeli J. Grayson |
| International Monetary Fund | J. B. Zulu H. Shugarman |
| International Telecommunication Union | J. Elotu |
| International Maritime Organization | D. J. Kerlin |
| World Intellectual Property Organization | V. Yossifov |
| International Fund for Agricultural Development | V. Gathright |
| United Nations Industrial Development Organization | W. Lutkenhorst |

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International Atomic Energy Agency

R. F. Kastens

* * *

United Nations Volunteers

R. Chahil-Graf

ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities

R. Johnston
