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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
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Agenda Item 6

REVIEW OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES OF UNCTAD**Chairman's Summary and Draft Agreed Conclusions****A. Chairman's summary**

1. Delegations had a wide-ranging and useful discussion on UNCTAD's technical cooperation. The constructive exchange of views among beneficiary and donor countries, which looked at past trends and future prospects in light of the outcome of UNCTAD IX on technical cooperation, took place on the basis of the documentation (TD/B/43/7 and statistical annex) prepared by the secretariat.

2. There was a widelyshared view of the need to implement expeditiously the provisions set out at Midrand on technical cooperation. The secretariat was requested to prepare as quickly as possible the draft strategy for coherence between regular and extrabudgetary programmes and the rolling three-year plan for technical cooperation for consideration and adoption by the Board early in 1997 on the basis of the comments of delegations and the proposals of the Secretary-General. The plan for 1997 should be available before the end of the current year.

3. It was also felt that UNCTAD needs a more focused technical cooperation programme based on its work programme priorities and the areas set out in paragraph 97 of the final outcome of UNCTAD IX. It was pointed out that this would need to be based on requests of beneficiary countries. There was also agreement that the strategy and plan should reflect a focusing of technical cooperation on action-orientated activities that make a practical contribution to development at the country or regional level.

4. The Committee also took note of trends in the mobilisation and utilisation of resources. It welcomed the increase in contributions to UNCTAD's technical cooperation trust funds from bilateral and other sources, which should continue to be mobilised in a manner consistent with UNCTAD priorities.

5. Concern was expressed at the absolute and proportionate decline in technical assistance activities in least developed countries, in contrast to the priorities agreed at Midrand. In recalling the outcome of Midrand, there was agreement that countries in greatest need - particularly those in Africa and least developed countries - should receive priority in the assistance provided by UNCTAD and that this priority should be fully reflected in the strategy and triennial plan for technical cooperation.

6. The establishment of an UNCTAD trust fund for the least developed countries - which is seen as a positive instrument in giving effect to UNCTAD IX's policy of giving priority to LDCs - should also be included in the strategy and plan. Some countries indicated their willingness to consider favourably contributions to the fund. The establishment of such a fund should not affect the secretariat's efforts to focus priority on LDCs in other UNCTAD technical cooperation activities undertaken outside the fund. Delegations looked forward to the planned consultations with the Secretary-General on the matter.

7. All developing countries stressed their concern that the recent increase in UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities in Central and Eastern Europe may have been to the detriment of UNCTAD programmes in developing countries, and might have hindered the orientation and capacity of the secretariat in backstopping such programmes. All delegations underlined the importance of planning and implementing UNCTAD's technical cooperation programme according to the provisions of paragraph 95 of the "Partnership for Growth and Development".

8. There was strong emphasis on monitoring and evaluation as an important element in improving the effectiveness of technical cooperation and in focusing activities on results and impact. The view was held that a culture of evaluation is needed so that the lessons of experience can be incorporated at the design stage.

9. Several technical cooperation programmes identified in the final document of UNCTAD IX were mentioned as providing high-quality advice and support to beneficiary countries. The need for assistance in the post-Uruguay-Round environment was mentioned in particular, including new and emerging issues, competition law and investment. Some delegations insisted on the need for technical cooperation in the area of trade with those countries not members of WTO, including assistance to countries in the process of accession to WTO.

Other programmes commended by delegations included: debt management, EMPRETEC-21, subregional and regional cooperation, TRAINFORTRADE and trade efficiency, including ASYCUDA and the Global Trade Point Network. Some delegations requested more technical cooperation for the commodity sector, in light of the significance of the sector for a number of developing countries, particularly least developed countries.

10. There was support from several countries for the proposal to invite countries using UNCTAD's software - namely ACIS, ASYCUDA and DMFAS - to contribute to the costs incurred in providing a regular maintenance and back-up service, on the understanding that the level of such "user charges" would need to reflect capacity to pay. Other countries, however, felt that the proposal needed further study before it could be introduced. The request was made to exempt least developed countries from such user charges. Some donor countries suggested the further development of the concept of cost-sharing in the financing of UNCTAD's technical cooperation programme.

11. The Committee welcomed the growing collaboration with other organisations in the preparation and implementation of joint technical cooperation programmes. Particular mention was made of the integrated ITC/UNCTAD/WTO programme of technical cooperation for the development of Africa's trade in the post-Uruguay-Round environment as an example of the benefits of inter-agency collaboration. The need for an evaluation of the implementation of this programme was emphasised. The importance of cooperation with UNIDO in the areas of investment and enterprise development was also mentioned.

12. Concern was expressed regarding the steep decline in the availability of UNDP resources for trade and development technical cooperation projects executed by UNCTAD. Delegations expressed the view that technical cooperation for trade and investment can advance the objectives of sustainable human development. To this effect, closer cooperation between UNCTAD and UNDP would be beneficial in enabling UNCTAD to advance the objectives set out at Midrand. Delegations welcomed the resumption of a more active dialogue between UNDP and UNCTAD on this matter. It was also pointed out that beneficiary countries could include requests for technical cooperation in the area of trade and investment in their national programmes financed by external donors, including UNDP.

**B. Draft agreed conclusions for adoption
by the Trade and Development Board**

"The Trade and Development Board agreed:

- (i) To request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to finalise the strategy and plan for technical cooperation before the end of the current year, in consultation with member States, on the basis of the relevant Midrand decisions and the proposals in his report (TD/B/43/7) and comments thereon, taking into account also the views of member States on trends in and the content of UNCTAD's 1995 technical cooperation programme provided through the above-mentioned consultative process;
- (ii) To set out the strategy and to consider the plan for 1997 and the subsequent two years at the executive session of the Board early in 1997;
- (iii) To invite contributions to the proposed UNCTAD trust fund for least developed countries;
- (iv) To welcome the consultations between the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Administrator of UNDP on issues relating to trade and investment, particularly in the light of the objectives of sustainable human development in UNDP-financed programmes, and to request the Secretary-General to inform the Trade and Development Board periodically of progress in these consultations; and
- (v) To request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in implementation of paragraph 99 of the "Partnership for Growth and Development", to review existing cooperation arrangements and to conclude, whenever appropriate, formal arrangements such as memoranda of understanding with other relevant international organisations; these arrangements should be transparent, discussed with member States and address the possible establishment of inter-agency task forces; and to welcome the integrated programme for Africa launched by UNCTAD, WTO and ITC and to propose that an evaluation of the implementation of that programme should be undertaken."

