



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/36/660
9 November 1981

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-sixth session
Agenda item 69 (p)

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION: UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Secretariat services for the follow-up, monitoring and implementation of
the Substantial New Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations
Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Report of the Secretary-General

1. Paragraph 126 of the Substantial New Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/CONF./104/22) states that:

"The effective follow-up, monitoring and implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action will require a range of services at the Secretariat level. Taking into account the focal role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in the United Nations system on the least developed countries as referred to in resolution 122 (V) of that Conference and specified in this Substantial New Programme of Action, the Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to make recommendations to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session on the most effective and efficient arrangements for carrying out the services required."

Accordingly, the Secretary-General submits herewith a report on the requirements of those secretariat services for which he has responsibility, arising from the arrangements established by the Conference for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Substantial New Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels.

2. The following proposals are based upon the relevant provisions of chapter III of the Substantial New Programme of Action. They take into account the focal role of UNCTAD in the United Nations system on the least developed countries; the functions that devolve upon the regional commissions; the responsibilities that may be entrusted to United Nations Secretariat entities at the invitation of the Governments concerned in the preparation of the country review meetings; and the

requirements for over-all co-ordination arrangements with respect to the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Substantial New Programme of Action.

3. In formulating his recommendations, the Secretary-General kept in mind the need to consider both the secretariat services called for by the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action, and those arising from its monitoring and follow-up. Both aspects of the Substantial New Programme of Action require secretariat support. As indicated in chapters I and II of the Substantial New Programme of Action, the implementation aspect calls for substantive support by the United Nations organizational entities to national efforts by the least developed countries in several key economic areas in which the United Nations is already active, through, inter alia, technical co-operation, research, and the collection and dissemination of information. The implications for secretariat services of the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action in this sense will require to be examined by the Secretariat entities concerned in the light of the extent of ongoing programmes, the needs of individual countries, and the resources available. This report therefore confines itself to the identification of those Secretariat services as are called for at the various stages of the follow-up and monitoring mechanisms specified in chapter III of the Substantial New Programme of Action, including arrangements for interagency co-ordination. It should be stressed that this is an initial outline of the services which will have to be reviewed in the light of the working of the follow-up mechanisms themselves.

4. The Substantial New Programme of Action has emphasized the crucial importance of continuing interaction between specific implementation activities focused at the country and regional levels, and the global monitoring process. The Secretary-General believes that secretariat arrangements should generally be so organized as to facilitate this interaction.

5. Follow-up action involves secretariat support at the national, regional and global levels. In addition, appropriate over-all co-ordination arrangements at the secretariat level will be required in order to ensure the full mobilization and co-ordination of all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system for the purpose of implementation and follow-up of the Substantial New Programme of Action. The following paragraphs deal in turn with each of these areas of follow-up.

A. Follow-up at the national level

6. At the national level, the Substantial New Programme of Action recommends that Governments of least developed countries "may establish aid consultative groups or other arrangements where they do not already exist", as a mechanism for periodic review and implementation; consideration is also to be given to strengthening and broadening existing mechanisms, (such as World Bank Consultative Groups, United Nations Development Programme Round Tables and the Club of Sahel). Reviews are to take place at appropriate intervals "at the initiative of the interested least developed country, which may seek assistance from the lead agency for its aid group in organizing them". The meetings will, inter alia, assess progress in the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action in the light of a

detailed annual or mid-term plan and the requirements of external resources; secure assistance for the implementation of plans and programmes; review the terms and conditions of aid in the light of the guidelines of the Substantial New Programme of Action; and consider trade expansion measures. Each meeting will be based on a report to be prepared by the Government of the least developed country concerned, with the help, as necessary, of the relevant organizations of the United Nations system. The first round of country reviews is to take place "as soon as possible, and preferably by 1983".

7. Specific action needs to be taken by the appropriate United Nations organizational entities in response to these provisions of the Substantial New Programme of Action. Assistance may be sought by Governments concerned in certain cases in the organization of country-review meetings. However, the manner in which Governments of least developed countries choose to implement the recommendations pertaining to consultative arrangements at the country level will determine the responsibilities of these organizations, and particularly those of UNDP, in this context. More generally, however, assistance may be requested of United Nations Secretariat entities on substantive preparations, including preparation of basic documentation for the review meetings. Such assistance could involve, *inter alia*, both country assessment missions covering specific sectors and their technical support services by the Secretariat units concerned.

8. In view of the responsibility of UNCTAD in the global review, the Substantial New Programme of Action specifies that the "Secretary-General of UNCTAD should be invited, as necessary, to be represented at the review meetings at the country level for mutual information purposes". Such representation should facilitate the interaction between country level implementation and the global monitoring arrangements referred to above.

9. The Resident Co-ordinator, as the single official who, on behalf of the United Nations system, has over-all responsibility for operational activities for development at the country level and for their co-ordination, will be called upon to play an important role. The Resident Co-ordinator will continue to mobilize all parts of the United Nations system within the particular country in support of the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action over the decade. It will be necessary, as part of this official's ongoing responsibility, to ensure coherence of action, in accordance with the objectives and priorities of the Government concerned, of the various sectoral contributions of the United Nations system to the Substantial New Programme of Action.

B. Follow-up at the regional level

10. At the regional level, the regional commissions of the United Nations are called upon to contribute to the follow-up process and to offer opportunities for the least developed countries of their respective regions to exchange experience and seek solutions to common problems. "The regional commissions should be suitably restructured to discharge effectively their responsibilities in respect of the follow-up and monitoring of the Substantial New Programme of Action."

11. Accordingly, the regional commissions (particularly the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Western Asia) have the responsibility fully to contribute to the follow-up process within their areas of competence. The Substantial New Programme of Action calls upon the regional commissions, together with other organizations, to give attention to the problems of least developed countries in their economic analysis and monitoring; to provide relevant statistics; and to prepare periodic reports on their activities as inputs to the global review process. In addition, the regional commissions may be called upon to assist some least developed countries in organizing and synchronizing their country review meetings in time and venue. These activities will call for appropriate restructuring and strengthening of the institutional machinery of the commissions. 1/

C. Follow-up action at the global level

12. At the global level, the Conference recommends to the General Assembly that the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries should conduct a mid-term review in 1985, and consider the possibility of a further global review at the end of the decade "which might, inter alia, take the form of a United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries". The results of the mid-term review would be "made available to the General Assembly, so that they would be taken fully into account in the process of review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Development Strategy". These global monitoring arrangements "will review progress at the country level"; "review progress in international support measures, particularly in official development assistance"; and "consider measures, as necessary, for ensuring the full implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action over the decade".

13. The Substantial New Programme of Action has called upon UNCTAD to play the focal role in elaborating the detailed arrangements at the global level for implementation, co-ordination and monitoring of the New Programme. As a basis for the global monitoring arrangements (to be carried out by the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries), the UNCTAD secretariat, in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations system, will prepare information on the situation in the least developed countries as a whole and submit progress reports and policy analyses drawing upon the inputs from the United Nations system, and the results of the country review meetings. UNCTAD will maintain its Basic Data Series concerning all important socio-economic indicators on the least developed countries. It may also be called upon to prepare reports on specific trade, development and aid issues for global, regional and individual

1/ In this regard attention is invited to the decision of the ECA Conference of Ministers to establish a Conference of Ministers of Least Developed African Countries to be the main ECA organ for the follow-up and monitoring of the Substantial New Programme of Action, and whose terms of reference include the effective monitoring, review and evaluation of regional and international activities in favour of African least developed countries.

country-review meetings, and undertake statistical analyses and projections. In addition, UNCTAD will require to undertake the servicing of the mid-term global review meeting.

14. United Nations entities, together with other organizations, will be called upon to submit periodic reports on the activities falling within their competence as inputs to the global review process. In addition, as indicated above, these organizations will be required to undertake economic analyses, monitoring and statistical activities pertaining to the least developed countries.

D. Over-all arrangements in respect of co-ordination

15. The Substantial New Programme of Action states that

"The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, in close collaboration with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and the lead agencies for the aid groups, should ensure at the secretariat level the full mobilization and co-ordination of all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system for the purpose of implementation and follow-up of the Substantial New Programme of Action. The system of focal points in each United Nations agency, used in the preparations for the present Conference, should be kept active also for the implementation tasks over the decade".

16. It is the intention of the Director-General, in carrying out his responsibilities, fully to utilize the facilities available within the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). Accordingly, the Director-General intends to continue to utilize the modality of interagency consultations under his chairmanship, used in the preparation of the Conference. These interagency arrangements will be utilized to undertake, review and follow-up the logistical and substantive preparations for country review meetings; to ensure interagency collaboration in the activities of the United Nations system at the country and regional levels in support of the Substantial New Programme of Action; to ensure an effective and co-ordinated contribution by the United Nations system to the requirements of global monitoring; and to promote closer links between action at the country, regional and global levels. The aim would be not to create additional co-ordinating machinery, but to utilize existing ACC arrangements to set up an effective and flexible interagency secretariat support mechanism to meet the requirements of the follow-up process.

17. It will be necessary to continue to maintain the secretariat capacity in the Office of the Director-General - originally created in the context of preparations for the Conference - to assist him in the over-all discharge of his responsibilities for the co-ordination and mobilization of the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in respect of the implementation and follow-up of the Substantial New Programme of Action. Such secretariat support will also be required to service the interagency consultative machinery described above; to ensure continuing consultations and collaboration, as required under the Substantial New Programme of Action, with UNCTAD, the regional commission and the

lead agencies for the aid groups, in elaborating system-wide approaches to the follow-up of the Substantial New Programme of Action; to maintain contact with, and provide guidelines to, Resident Co-ordinators in the least developed countries regarding arrangements for system-wide collaboration at the country level; and to assist the Director-General in ensuring, within the United Nations, the coherence, co-ordination and efficient management of the activities of United Nations Secretariat entities in respect of the Substantial New Programme of Action.

E. Conclusion

18. In the light of the foregoing, the Secretary-General considers that effective arrangements are required, at the present time, for secretariat services for the follow-up and monitoring of the Substantial New Programme of Action to be provided by UNCTAD; the three regional commissions most directly concerned (ECA, ESCAP and ECWA); and the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation.

19. This report provides an overview of the nature of secretariat services required for the follow-up, monitoring and implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action adopted by the Conference. In the light of decisions that may be proposed for the General Assembly to take on the United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, a statement would be submitted in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure, on the administrative and financial implications of secretariat support services arising from the Substantial New Programme of Action.
