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Delivery of advisory services

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 94 of General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, concerning section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider with respect to the delivery of advisory services to Member States, avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective use of resources, and to report thereon at the fifty-seventh session of the Assembly. This report covers the purpose and scope of advisory services, the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, the types of advisory services provided and their coordination and reporting arrangements at the intergovernmental and Secretariat levels.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 94 of General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider, in consultation with relevant intergovernmental bodies, with respect to the delivery of advisory services to Member States, avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective use of resources, and to report thereon to the relevant intergovernmental bodies at the fifty-seventh session of the Assembly.

2. Guided by the above considerations — avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective use of resources — this report reviews (a) the current purpose and scope of advisory services; (b) the coordination of and reporting on advisory services; (c) criteria for the selection of beneficiaries of advisory services and related training activities; (d) the types of advisory services being offered; and (e) the experience of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat with advisory services, as an illustration of current practices in this regard.

II. Purpose and scope of advisory services

3. Technical cooperation is defined as a coherent set of activities to achieve specific outcomes that contribute to capacity-building in developing countries and countries in transition, by providing technical support to strengthen human resources, managerial and information systems as well as institutions at the national level. Advisory services are a specific modality of technical cooperation that a United Nations entity extends to developing countries and countries in transition, drawing on its substantive field of normative and analytical expertise, in order to produce learning and knowledge that serve to support and advance their capacity-building efforts, by (a) responding to requests of Governments for urgent on-the-spot advice on policy-related issues; (b) providing Governments with specific advice on sectoral matters relevant to their country programmes; and (c) assisting Governments in the formulation of projects and in programme evaluations leading to the enhancement of national programmes.

4. United Nations entities that provide advisory services include: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Centre for International Crime Prevention, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the secretariats of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Initiation of advisory services

5. Requests for advisory services come to the United Nations in two forms: (a) requests addressed directly by countries to the concerned United Nations entity; and (b) requests addressed to the United Nations resident coordinator, who then refers the request to the concerned United Nations entity. In the former case, coordination with other service providing entities is ensured as indicated in section III below. In the latter case, it is, in the first instance, the United Nations resident coordinator who, by virtue of the oversight he/she maintains of all United Nations operations in the country concerned, is best placed to ensure that the proposed activity complements rather than duplicates other advisory services being provided to the country by the United Nations.

III. Coordination and reporting

6. At the intergovernmental level, advisory services provided by the United Nations are guided by the Economic and Social Council, particularly the resolutions and decisions emanating from the operational activities of the United Nations for the international development cooperation segment of its substantive sessions, and by the General Assembly, especially in the context of its triennial policy reviews of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. Through the relevant reports of the

Secretary-General, the Council and the Assembly are provided with an overview of all operational activities undertaken by the various parts of the United Nations, including advisory services. In acting on these reports, the Council and the Assembly provide the overall policy and managerial framework within which United Nations entities respond to countries' requests for advisory services and coordinate their responses. The policy guidance they provide in relation to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the resident coordinator system is especially relevant to the conduct of advisory services.

7. At the executive level, two inter-Secretariat management forums currently exist to ensure an ongoing dialogue among United Nations providers of advisory services: the United Nations Development Group, chaired by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. The work of both forums contributes, from different perspectives, to ensuring that advisory services are provided in an institutional environment focused on sharpening the division of labour among United Nations entities engaged in development support, as well as promoting synergies and collaboration among them. At the country level, the UNDAFs provide the main coordination framework within which to ensure complementarity, avoid duplication and achieve the most effective resource use. Where there is no UNDAF, other national coordination instruments, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), are drawn upon to avoid duplication and ensure complementation of efforts.

8. The first step in the response of a United Nations entity to a Government's request for advisory services is to examine its institutional capacity and competence to extend the service being requested, in the context of the processes referred to. The second, in consultation with the United Nations resident coordinator, is to examine the request and the most appropriate modalities of response in the framework of UNDAF, where it exists, and other relevant country-level coordination instruments. In addition to ensuring that duplication is avoided, an important concern at all stages is to consider which other advisory service providers can make a contribution in sectors relevant to

the request. This is particularly important in broad multidisciplinary areas such as poverty eradication.

IV. Criteria for selection of beneficiaries of advisory services and related training activities

9. The funds under section 21 of the United Nations programme budget (regular programme of technical cooperation) are the main funding source utilized by United Nations entities to respond to requests for advisory services sought by countries to help advance their development support needs and development priorities.¹ These resources are managed for the purposes indicated in section 21, and in line with the objectives and performance indicators of the relevant programmes and subprogrammes covering the work of the entity concerned in the United Nations programme budget.

10. The beneficiaries of advisory services are developing countries or countries with economies in transition. Particular attention is paid to the requirements of the least developed countries, as provided for in the guidelines for the overall orientation of the regular programme of technical cooperation endorsed by the Governing Council of UNDP (now the Executive Board of UNDP/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) in its decisions 79/22 of 28 June 1979² and 80/42 of 27 June 1980³ and approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 2514 (XXIV) of 21 November 1969, as recommended by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1434 (XLVII) of 25 July 1969.

11. The following broad criteria guide United Nations entities' responses to requests for advisory services and related training activities funded from the regular programme of technical cooperation:

(a) Advisory services:

(i) The entities responsible for implementation of the regular programme of technical cooperation endeavour to respond to all requests for advisory assistance that fall within their areas of competency, to the extent that resources are available;

(ii) In order to ensure an optimum use of resources, special attention is given, in responding to a request for advisory services, to

the conditions that can best facilitate an effective follow-up within the country, through a national institution or a UNDP-, UNFPA- or bilaterally funded programme, capable of providing a suitable framework for action by the Government on the recommendations resulting from the advisory mission;

(iii) Furthermore, to optimize the use of resources, missions of advisers are often grouped geographically, so that several requests can be addressed during one mission and the number of requests that can be handled may be maximized;

(b) Training activities: section 21 provides for funds to be used to organize training workshops for capacity- and institution-building. These are, in most cases, multi-country activities and are intended to have a multiplier effect. Participants are typically officials who have policy-making, planning and execution responsibilities. The orientation and methodologies developed at these workshops thus make a direct contribution to strengthening national capacities for policy development and the effective implementation of national policies, in line with respective national realities. Exchanges of best practices and South-South cooperation are fostered through such workshops. In the organization of these workshops, the following procedural criteria are generally adhered to:

(i) As in the case of advisory services, the theme of the workshop should be in line with the core substantive responsibility of the entity executing the activity; and the target beneficiaries are developing-country officials and officials from countries with economies in transition;

(ii) The training provided is generally geared to playing a catalytic role in the development process of the countries concerned. To the extent possible, a link is established between local needs and conditions and the follow-up to the outcomes of global conferences;

(iii) The selection of venues is guided by their centrality or reasonably easy access to participants, as well as the capacity of the host country to provide logistic support for the training;

(iv) The participation and/or joint organization with a regional commission are/is encouraged for regional training activities, so as to promote their

sustainability and continued regional support after the training.

V. Types of advisory services

12. The basic delivery mechanism for advisory services is an advisory mission, by which a United Nations staff member, adviser or consultant, or a team of such officials, travel to the country that has requested the service to provide advice on a set of policy issues selected by the country concerned, and coming within the purview of the concerned United Nations entity. This is followed by a report containing recommendations for action. Advisory missions often lead to the formulation of larger-scale technical assistance projects to be implemented in part or entirely by the United Nations or by other implementing partners, as decided by the Government. This serves to enhance the multiplier effect and longer-term impact of the missions.

13. Many advisory missions are undertaken in response to Government requests to provide technical advice in relation to Government-executed projects, in line with the General Assembly's policy of promoting national execution and national ownership of operational activities for development. By providing technical support to national execution, while ensuring that programme implementation is in line with United Nations standards, such missions serve a very important purpose for both the Government and the funding body.

VI. The experience of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

14. To illustrate current practices in the delivery of advisory services by the United Nations Secretariat, relevant activities undertaken by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are described below.

15. The technical cooperation and advisory services implemented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are funded from section 21 as well as extrabudgetary resources such as UNDP funds and donor trust funds.

16. Section 9 of the programme budget, Economic and social affairs, provides the overall results-based

management framework for the normative, analytical, technical cooperation and advisory services undertaken by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Thus, section 21, Regular programme of technical cooperation, under which a large part of advisory work is undertaken, is cross-referenced to the respective subprogrammes of section 9 and to the corresponding programme (7) of the medium-term plan.

17. In managing advisory services and technical cooperation, close coordination both with the normative and analytical activities and with the work of other technical cooperation and advisory services providers within the Organization is emphasized.

18. The advisory services of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are carried out in all regions, in close coordination with other United Nations system activities at the country and regional levels. The mechanisms utilized for this purpose and for avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective resource use, in all of which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is centrally involved, are outlined in section III above. Two basic guidelines orient the Department's approach to this work: first, there is the recognition that advisory services and technical cooperation, in line with their fundamental mandates, must remain demand-driven and occur at the request of the Governments of developing countries and economies in transition; second, on the supply side, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs considers it important that responses to requests should be backed up by a strong substantive capacity. This implies that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will respond to requests for advisory services that are clearly within its sphere of responsibility, as defined by its normative and analytical activities and set out in the relevant programme planning documents; and that it will advise Governments requesting advice of other sources of advisory services within the United Nations that may have more specific technical competence in the particular programme area in which the advice may be sought.

19. This link between advisory services and related technical cooperation work on the one hand and analytical and normative activities on the other serves to ensure that the quality of the support provided to the requesting country is maximized. In turn, exposure to countries' realities and needs through advisory services serves to enrich and deepen the Department's analytical outputs.

20. Often, requests are cross-sectoral in nature and are concerned with related areas of policy. Cross-sectoral advice in connection with the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive sustainable development policies is one relevant example. The terms of reference of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs make it uniquely well suited to extend advisory services of this type. Collaboration is especially close with UNDP. The review of collaborative arrangements between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP, concluded in March 2002, places special emphasis on modalities for maximizing the support that the two entities provide to developing countries in cross-sectoral areas related to the preparation and follow-up to global conferences.

21. There is also extensive collaboration with the regional commissions. For example, to assist countries in their preparations for major conferences such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs collaborated closely with the regional commissions, as well as with UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), through training seminars, advisory services, and related capacity-building activities.

22. Increasingly, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs complements advisory missions with electronic technical cooperation (e-TC), which involves the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to build a community of learning and knowledge, through which a dialogue is pursued with countries requesting advisory services that have capacity-building needs. e-TC permits a more effective use of limited resources for advisory services and a broader impact and greater geographical coverage than traditional advisory missions. For example, a single advisory mission can be undertaken for an intercountry learning event involving several countries that have requested advisory services, rather than in response to a single requesting country. Over the course of the implementation of the medium-term plan, from 2002 to 2005, further leveraging of advisory services through e-TC and learning networks is anticipated.

Coverage of advisory services of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

23. In advancing its programmatic objectives, under programme 7 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, and section 9 of the programme budget for the biennium, the Department provides, at government request, advisory services and technical cooperation to strengthen national capacities of developing countries and countries in transition, under the following subprogrammes:

<i>Subprogramme</i>	<i>Section 9^a</i>	<i>Section 21^b</i>
Gender issues and advancement of women	Subprogramme 2	21.19 (a)
Social policy and development	Subprogramme 3	21.19 (b)
Sustainable development	Subprogramme 4	21.19 (c)
Statistics	Subprogramme 5	21.19 (d)
Population	Subprogramme 6	21.19 (e)
Public administration, finance and development	Subprogramme 8	21.19 (f)

^a See A/56/6 (Sect. 9).

^b See A/56/6 (Sect. 21).

The focus of advisory services in each of these subprogrammes is described below.

Gender issues and advancement of women

24. Under this subprogramme, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs advises developing countries and countries in transition regarding: capacity-building for national machineries for the advancement of women, (including ICT applications, and support to network-building); capacity-building to support the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁴ and the Optional Protocol thereto;⁵ promotion of the human rights of women, including elimination of trafficking in, and violence against, women; capacity-building for gender

mainstreaming in different policy sectors; support for peace-building networks and other gender-related peace and security activities; and capacity-building and network promotion on women's participation in decision-making at all levels.

Social policy and development

25. This subprogramme provides advice to developing countries and countries in transition in the areas of: general social development; social policy assessments; operationalizing poverty alleviation and human development strategies; social integration; social dimensions of macroeconomic adjustment; social assessment; social expenditure; social impact; formulation and design of social development policies and strategies for incorporation into national plans and programmes; and social aspects of conflict and disaster management. In particular, the subprogramme seeks to help countries, through operational activities for development, to put into practice the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 and other relevant major United Nations social conferences and summits.

Sustainable development

26. Through this subprogramme, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs assists developing countries and countries in transition through advice and technical cooperation in: formulation of national sustainable development strategies, including awareness-raising for team leaders, government and civil society; capacity-building in information management and indicator use for policy formulation and implementation strategies for sustainable development; support for institutional arrangements for follow-up mechanisms and processes; water resources policy formulation and water governance; integrated water resources management and resource evaluation; rural water supply and sanitation; capacity-building in water resources planning and management; land management; sustainability of mineral development; energy policies and strategies for sustainable development; energy efficiency measures including standards and labelling; rural energy and applications of new and renewable energy sources including solar, wind, biomass and geothermal energy; promotion of cleaner fossil fuel technologies and systems; energy-related transport policies; and energy information systems.

Statistics

27. The subprogramme on statistics, in conjunction with its normative and analytical role in setting international standards for statistics, provides advisory services, in particular to national statistical offices in such areas as: organization and management of a national statistical system; population censuses as well as household and other surveys; vital statistics and civil registration; national and environmental accounting; trade statistics; environment, energy and industry statistics; and information management.

Population

28. The population subprogramme provides advisory services in the areas of national population policies and national population research capacity. In providing advisory services, the subprogramme makes extensive use of e-TC and manages three web-based learning communities devoted to national population research and policies.

29. These three Internet knowledge communities in population policy and research, established by subprogramme 6 (Population) of programme 7 of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, are: (a) "DemoNetAsia" (Network of Population Research Institutes in Asia) (located at <http://www.demonetasia.org/>), covering countries of Asia and the Pacific; (b) "DemoNeta" (Démographie et Internet en Afrique) (located at <http://www.demoneta.org/>), covering countries of Africa; and (c) "Redeluso" (Rede de Demografia dos Países Lusófonos) (located at <http://www.redeluso.org/>), covering Portuguese-speaking countries. These three networks permit subprogramme 6 to cover 3 geographical regions and some 60 countries annually with its limited budget. Under the traditional approach, perhaps only some six countries could receive advisory services per year with the same budget. e-TC does not replace or eliminate advisory missions, but gives them a greater multiplier effect.

30. The three networks mentioned above represent the state of the art in United Nations e-TC and are a model for networks in other fields.

Public administration, finance and development

31. This subprogramme of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs assists developing countries and countries in transition in the areas of

reforming and modernizing national public administration and implementing civil service reform; and improving national capacity in public policy development. It assists Member States in rebuilding institutions and public administration after conflict; capacity-building in mobilization and management of financial resources, with particular emphasis on tax administration; the application of information technology in government operations (e-government); and access to and services offered through the United Nations Online Network of Regional Institutions for Capacity-Building in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN). UNPAN is a virtual electronic network that promotes the exchange of expertise and sharing of experiences and lessons learned in public administration and finance at local, national, subregional, regional and global levels.

VII. Conclusions emerging from the discussion

32. Advisory services provided at the request of Member States represent an essential operational bridge between the knowledge and expertise available in the United Nations by virtue of its normative and analytical activities and the capacity-building needs of developing countries.

33. Advisory services help ensure a reality check for the normative and analytical work of the United Nations and enhance their quality in the service of Member States. Capacity-building for economic and social development has been stressed repeatedly in the intergovernmental bodies as a key priority of Member States, and an essential guiding principle for the operational work of the United Nations.

34. Advisory services also represent the means by which the United Nations can assist Member States in implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences dealing with economic and social development. Increasingly, the outcomes of the United Nations Millennium Summit, including the Millennium Declaration⁶ and the ensuing development goals will serve as a framework within which to guide future advisory services in the area of economic and social affairs.

35. For purposes of avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective resource use, advisory services provided by the United Nations

are guided, at the intergovernmental level, by the operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation segment of the substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council, and the General Assembly, particularly in the context of the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

36. The main coordination mechanisms at the Secretariat level for avoiding duplication and enhancing effective resource use are the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. At the country level, furthermore, the resident coordinator system and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework are the main mechanisms for avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective resource use.

37. Finally, advisory services are guided by the planning and coordination mechanisms and instruments of national Governments that request such services and that have the ultimate interest in avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective use of development resources, including advisory services.

VIII. Recommendation

38. The General Assembly may wish to take note of the above conclusions.

Notes

¹ Funding of advisory services and related technical assistance activities under the regular budget began with General Assembly resolution 58 (I) of 14 December 1946, by which the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to include in the budget of the United Nations for the year 1947 the funds necessary for the accomplishment of such a programme in the field of social welfare. Over the years, the activities have been developed further in their sectoral and regional dimensions. The sectoral advisory services were established by the Assembly in its resolution 200 (III) of 4 December 1948 and the regional advisory services by the Assembly in its resolution 2803 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971.

² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1979, Supplement No. 10* (E/1979/40 and Corr.1), chap. XXI, sect. P.

³ *Ibid.*, 1980, *Supplement No. 12* (E/1980/42/Rev.1), chap. XI.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

⁵ General Assembly resolution 54/4, annex.

⁶ See General Assembly resolution 55/2.