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UNCTAD's communications strategy and publications policy

UNCTAD communications strategy¹

UNCTAD: a “communicating” organization

Executive summary

The UNCTAD secretariat is developing a more effective communications strategy, pursuant to paragraph 187 of the Accra Accord. The impact of our knowledge-based institution hinges on the timely availability of relevant information to policymakers and other change agents that act globally, regionally and nationally. Reaching this wider audience requires targeting core constituencies more directly, engaging in partnerships, and maximizing all appropriate channels of communication: these include the traditional means – enhanced through the website – and other e-tools, including social media. The challenge is to shift from a one-way process of delivery and dissemination to a two-way interaction that facilitates greater dialogue and better use of UNCTAD's data, research, policy analysis and best practices.

This requires rethinking how we conceptualize research activities, support intergovernmental discussion, and provide technical assistance. It further requires that UNCTAD differentiate itself and position itself strategically, and be a credible, trusted and sought-after source of analytical information and policy advice in the interrelated areas of trade, investment, finance, technology and sustainable development. The new communications strategy therefore focuses on enhancing the visibility, credibility and impact of UNCTAD's work, through well-targeted, issues-oriented communications, and a sensible mix of traditional and innovative methods of engagement and dissemination.

This report highlights key issues of the new communications strategy, in particular the shift from events-dominated communications to issues-based communications, and the delineation of the target groups that have the greatest capacity to act as multiplier and change agents. It proposes new and improved tools to meet stakeholder needs and to fill the gaps identified during extensive consultations and analysis. It also offers ideas for mainstreaming good communications practices throughout the organization. The report should be considered in conjunction with the updated UNCTAD publications policy, which forms an integral part of UNCTAD's communications strategy. Both reports should be treated as living documents requiring regular revisions, updates and improvements to keep UNCTAD's communications effective.

¹ As approved by the Trade and Development Board at its fifty-sixth session on 12 October 2009.

I. Introduction

1. UNCTAD is the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of trade and development and the interrelated issues of finance, investment, technology and sustainable development. UNCTAD was established as a permanent intergovernmental body with the mandate to maximize the trade, investment and development opportunities of developing countries and to assist them in their efforts to integrate beneficially into the world economy.

A. Main objectives of UNCTAD's communications strategy

2. The main objectives of the communications strategy are to:

- (a) Contribute to the implementation of UNCTAD's mandate, as set out in the Accra Accord;
- (b) Enhance the visibility, credibility and impact of UNCTAD's work, through well-targeted communications and outreach, including modern engagement and dissemination methods;
- (c) Ensure effective dissemination to and feedback from main target groups;
- (d) Mainstream good communications practices throughout the organization.

B. Mandate for UNCTAD's communications strategy

3. At the twelfth ministerial conference of UNCTAD in Accra, Ghana, in April 2008, member States requested the organization to produce a more effective communications strategy (Accra Accord, para. 187), reinforced by an updated publications policy (Accra Accord, paras. 186 and 188).

Box 1. Extracts from the Accra Accord

187. The secretariat should also develop a more effective communication strategy. The strategy should target a wider audience, including high-level policymakers, the media, academic and research institutions, and civil society entities in developed and, in particular, in developing countries. There should be greater use of electronic tools, including the UNCTAD website, and an emphasis on producing timely translations in all the official languages of the United Nations. Publications should also be disseminated in partnership with national, regional and other international organizations.

188. The communication strategy, including the updated publication policy, should be approved by the Trade and Development Board no later than its fifty-sixth session.

4. In addition, over the past four years, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD has emphasized the three "C"s – Concentration, Coordination and Communications – as the driving forces in implementing UNCTAD's mandate, and a number of internal measures have been introduced to support these. The present document outlines proposals to further strengthen the communications aspect, including through enhanced concentration and coordination.

5. In formulating this strategy, UNCTAD has also aligned itself with United Nations policy – particularly the policy of the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG), the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) guidelines,² and the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).³ The communications strategy outlined in this report will be implemented in conjunction with the publications policy (TD/B/56/10/Rev.1) and the internal web strategy (section IV of this report).

C. Main themes

6. In responding to paragraph 187, this document identifies priority issues (in section II) that need to be addressed. It analyzes the information and communications needs of target constituencies and proposes appropriate messaging and tools to reach a wider audience (in section III). It pays special attention to enhancing the use of electronic tools, including the website (in section IV), exploring how to use e-tools more strategically and how to transform the website into a central communications and outreach tool. As UNCTAD's knowledge is to a large extent shared through its publications, maximizing the reach and dissemination of publications (see section V) is an integral part of communications and outreach efforts. This section looks at the improved publications policy and suggests strategies for cost-effective, targeted dissemination. Facilitating multilingual messaging (in section VI) offers some initial suggestions for reaching UNCTAD's target audiences in the official United Nations languages. The proposed strategy will deliver a number of benefits and efficiencies (see section VII). At the same time, its success will be contingent on developing an effective communications culture within the organization. Commitment to implementation and regular monitoring will play an important role in ensuring the strategy's success.

D. Approach

7. The proposed strategy reflects an in-house effort drawing on extensive consultations and surveys of policymakers, delegates, the media, civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians, academia, partner agencies, internal staff and management. A review was made of the communications programmes of other United Nations bodies and international organizations, with a view to identifying good practices, areas for improvement, and opportunities for closer cooperation. The issues, needs and gaps identified in the course of these analyses and consultations provide the basis for the proposed actions.

8. A number of the proposed communications initiatives have already been piloted, with positive feedback (e.g. policy briefs). The first public symposium, held on 18 and 19 May 2009, was an initial effort to showcase UNCTAD's enhanced communications and outreach potential. The symposium also provided the opportunity to elicit views and feedback on proposed actions. In addition, a motto contest has been launched internally to support the development of a core global message.

9. In parallel to the communications strategy, a comprehensive action plan is being developed, comprising practical steps to implement the recommendations.

² Strategic Communications for Development and Change Management. UNDG. New York.

³ Communication for Development Programmes in the United Nations System. JIU/REP/94/4. Mezzalama F. JIU. Geneva.

E. Current situation and point of departure

10. UNCTAD strives to adapt to rapidly evolving international issues, stakeholder priorities and communications techniques. The global context is changing and UNCTAD must change with it, positioning itself competitively in order to meet the needs of increasingly demanding constituencies. It must adopt new technologies, cooperate more closely with related organizations to build synergies and avoid overlap, and embrace a “communicating” culture.

11. An increasing number of international organizations are shifting towards well-targeted, issues-based messaging while maximizing innovative channels of communication. To date, UNCTAD’s communications efforts have largely focused on reporting meetings, events and research findings to a broad and diverse audience. These efforts have relied predominantly on conventional communications tools to disseminate information (e.g. flagship reports, other publications, brochures, annual reports and intergovernmental documentation). The media – engaged through press releases, information notes, press conferences and interviews – has been the primary outreach tool to share UNCTAD’s findings and views. Flagship launches have high priority, and “bunching” has been recognized as an issue. UNCTAD has been complementing its dissemination efforts, *inter alia*, through regional seminars and by working with partner institutions worldwide.

12. Electronic dissemination of UNCTAD’s work through the website, and to a limited extent through other electronic tools (i.e. e-mail) has intensified, but the full potential has yet to be realized. In the absence of a state-of-the-art website, both in terms of technology and content, UNCTAD constituencies have indicated that the UNCTAD website is a secondary source of information and communication. As regards other electronic tools, UNCTAD has expertise in using virtual learning and electronic messaging to diffuse knowledge, in particular to the developing world. This expertise could more widely support in-house enhancement of UNCTAD’s communication efforts.

13. UNCTAD has a well-developed meeting machinery and a full calendar of events, including high-level conferences, symposia, lectures, workshops, fairs, and participation in other events. Some of these attract participation at the highest levels. Their communications potential is not fully developed and utilized to maximize outreach and image-building on an organization-wide basis.

14. UNCTAD’s third pillar, technical assistance, also has untapped communications potential. A number of UNCTAD’s programmes – such as the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS), the Investment Policy Reviews, the Virtual Institute and Empretec – have well-developed specialized constituencies and user networks. These can be deployed more broadly as transmission channels for UNCTAD’s other work at the national level, thereby compensating for the lack of field presence. At the same time, these and other technical assistance programmes can also spotlight concrete examples of UNCTAD’s impact in the field.

15. Surveys have confirmed that stakeholders recognize UNCTAD’s role in the area of trade and development. Surveys and other analyses have also highlighted an unfulfilled demand for issues-oriented dialogue, forward-looking analysis, and practical policy advice and technical assistance. In particular, the interrelation of the three pillars should be elaborated more prominently. At present, UNCTAD is not always the first port of call for information and advice on trade and development issues, as it should be.

16. UNCTAD has pockets of excellence (in terms of brands, outreach and stakeholder engagement) that could be used more effectively to strengthen its image and reach. This would require the entire institution to work together in a strategic and cooperative fashion,

using each other's strengths and expertise to achieve the desired outcomes. This communications strategy should support the shift to a "communicating" culture, and should facilitate the mainstreaming of good practices in communicating.

II. Priority issues

17. Internal and external consultations, a SWOT analysis (an analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), and feedback have highlighted a number of priority issues that need to be addressed in the communications strategy (see issues analysis in table 1).

Table 1
Issues analysis

Issue	Perception	Desired result	Proposed action
A. Positioning	Many stakeholders do not have a clear idea of what UNCTAD is, what it stands for, or what it does.	Enhanced recognition, coherence and credibility.	- Differentiate UNCTAD by substance, brand, role and mission, core global message. - Develop a mission statement/motto. - Determine 3–5 key messages, and review them regularly. - Conduct an image-building campaign promoting UNCTAD's achievements and contributions. - Promote a “One UNCTAD” concept. - Appoint “development ambassadors” from each region. - Expand the Raúl Prebisch Lecture into a more high-profile event involving leading academics and think tanks.
B. Strategic messaging	UNCTAD's messages need to be clear, cohesive and consistent, and need to reinforce the global image.	The core global message is reflected in all work. Each message is tailored to specific target groups, focusing on impact and reinforcing the desired image.	- Adopt a core global message and mainstream it into all work and communications (events, publications, reports, speeches etc.). - Tailor-make communications messages with the intended impact in mind. - Use innovative, appropriate, cost-effective approaches and products to deliver these messages (web, e-tools, media, partnerships, networks, new media, social networking etc.).
C. Relevance and newsworthiness	UNCTAD needs to shape the debate in its areas of competence, communicating its findings and advice “ahead of the curve” and “just in time”.	UNCTAD is seen as an opinion-shaper on trade and development issues, is quoted in international media and is consulted in high-level debates. Its analyses and advice are sought by policymakers and are used by advocacy groups, business leaders and parliamentarians.	- Identify new and emerging issues where UNCTAD can add value to the debate and can offer different viewpoints. - Focus on key messages and implications for target groups and regions. - Ensure newsworthiness and timeliness.

Issue	Perception	Desired result	Proposed action
D. Targeting key audiences	UNCTAD's work is not reaching stakeholders as effectively as it should; its impact is not being maximized.	Target audiences consider UNCTAD an opinion leader and partner	- Consider the target audience in the early stage of planning initiatives and events. Focus on the potential for impact. - For every product and activity, design specific strategies to target each key stakeholder. - Periodically revisit communications target group analyses, to update and refine approaches.
E. Delivering and disseminating	UNCTAD needs to provide user-friendly access to its products and services and undertake more proactive dissemination.	UNCTAD's messages reach the right people at the right time and shape their decision-making and policy formulation.	- Consider each target group's information and language needs and its preferred mode of accessing information; adapt traditional and new communications tools accordingly. - Enhance the role of the spokesperson. - Ensure timely translations and interpretation at important non-intergovernmental meetings. - Offer timely, multilingual media and web content, including through regional/local partnerships.
F. Engaging stakeholders	UNCTAD needs to proactively expand its outreach, seeking views, input, participation and collaboration on a broader scale. To enhance its impact, it needs to offer more multilingual products and build partnerships for outreach and dissemination.	UNCTAD's work is more relevant and better known. A broad group of change agents recognizes, applies and disseminates UNCTAD analysis and advice.	- Make outreach an integral part of staff missions. - Create multilingual products and e-tools, and work with partner agencies to facilitate targeted engagement and dissemination of knowledge. - Make civil society involvement an organizational objective. - Strengthen partnerships with regional civil society and academic/research networks. - Create a strategic framework for engaging with the private sector. - Develop strategic and systematic cooperation with parliamentarians. - Proactively engage editors and journalists from key international and local media. - Enlist local entities (e.g. the media, the private sector) in outreach efforts on UNCTAD field activities.

Issue	Perception	Desired result	Proposed action
G. Creating an effective communications culture in UNCTAD	UNCTAD needs a cohesive and committed approach to communications.	Effective strategic communications practices become an integral and rewarding part of work.	- Adopt and apply a core global message. - Apply United Nations good practices in communications, as per UNCG, UNDG, JIU. - Empower a well-positioned and well-funded communications and outreach entity to lead implementation of the communications strategy. - Align and structure media, outreach, web, publications, and all other communications activities to ensure coherence. - Develop training, tools and mentoring services to support the divisions in defining key messages and designing communications approaches for each product and activity. - Develop an UNCTAD Strategic Plan, to underpin a “One UNCTAD” way forward.

III. Reaching a wider audience⁴

18. In addressing the above issues, UNCTAD should give attention to the specific needs of different target audiences. Ten target groups have been identified as the main beneficiaries, multipliers and change agents in relation to UNCTAD's work. This section recommends strategies and tools to better serve and engage them, bearing in mind the differences in geographical distribution, languages, technological capabilities etc.

Table 2

Target audiences

A. (High-level) policymakers and senior advisers	F. Academia, research institutions
B. Media	G. Parliamentarians
C. Delegates	H. Donors and beneficiaries
D. Civil society	I. International organizations
E. Private sector	J. Wider public

A. Policymakers⁵

19. Policymakers – particularly those in developing countries and countries with economies in transition – are UNCTAD's principal target group. They range from senior government officials to technical experts who participate in policy formulation, implementation and enforcement. High-level officials are particularly effective in championing and advocating policy change at the national and the international level.

20. UNCTAD's high-level events and advisory missions offer a platform for engaging senior policymakers. In order to lock in engagement, initial contacts need to be followed up through regular, highly targeted communications. Senior policymakers require concise briefs providing comparative benchmarks and straightforward conclusions on issues of direct concern.

21. Recommendations:

(a) Target policymakers directly (e.g. UNCTAD's Secretary-General and senior staff meet high-level officials on missions and at other events);

(b) Engage their advisers, peers, Geneva and New York-based ambassadors, media, selected advocacy groups;

(c) Provide concise and timely messages in United Nations languages and in other languages that have a wide impact, focusing on practical implications and options, for example:

(i) A "Secretary-General's Message for Policymakers", reporting on the key findings, outcomes, and action agendas of major meetings and publications – by direct e-mail or fax/letter;

(ii) A "Secretary-General's Leaders' Alert" on emerging and hot issues, by direct e-mail or fax/letter.

⁴ This section takes into account the main findings of detailed target group analyses and surveys undertaken in May and June 2009.

⁵ Consultations and surveys have indicated that different approaches are required for high-level and for mid-level policymakers.

(d) At UNCTAD high-level sessions, provide a more interactive platform for policymakers to contribute to intergovernmental consensus.

(e) Ensure that the contributions of senior policymakers in UNCTAD's activities are communicated and recognized as relevant in the national context.

B. Media

22. The media can serve as a powerful channel for communicating UNCTAD's findings and views to its stakeholders, and it is an influential opinion-maker in its own right. The media's responsiveness to UNCTAD's messages is an important "feedback" mechanism regarding the importance and relevance of those messages and the issues they raise.

23. Coverage in international media (agency services, global journals etc.) attracts the attention of policymakers at all levels and contributes to enhancing the organization's credibility. Cultivating a relationship with renowned print media, radio stations and television channels requires direct contact, continuous engagement, and a targeted approach, with timely, high-quality content, interviews and opinion pieces.

24. Local media are an important conduit to national policymakers and can help focus attention on UNCTAD's work. Individual UNCTAD programmes are successfully tapping into local media networks to diffuse their messages. However, a more concerted effort is necessary to raise awareness of UNCTAD's broader range of activities – for example, developing local content to highlight UNCTAD activities and products. This would encourage the media – and ultimately policymakers – to consult UNCTAD as a constant source of information. To this end, audiovisual media can be an effective way of reaching broad audiences in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition. Radio is the most cost-effective way to do so, and a strategy should be developed to optimize its use.

25. Television coverage – particularly by global producers – is cost-intensive and only lends itself to disseminating brief messages of global interest. However, it can be useful in image- and credibility-building. A tightly focused television strategy should be considered for key issues (e.g. flagship findings) and certain high-profile events. For local and regional television programmes, the "human face" aspects of field projects are of main interest. UNTV Geneva can help UNCTAD to produce content to diffuse through appropriate channels, such as the United Nations programmes *21st Century* and *UN in Action*. The footage can be re-versioned for other uses such as websites, viral emails, and presentations, as well as being adaptable to local languages. UNCTAD should also intensify strategic partnerships with regional and local stations and producers to generate footage.

26. Bloggers and "citizen journalists" are relatively new channels for encouraging debate on current issues, developing new ideas and disseminating UNCTAD views. These tools need to be examined more closely to assess their relevance for UNCTAD and to optimize their use.

27. Limited media attention exists for the work of the United Nations as a whole. Tangible "human face" issues such as human rights, health, labour, migration and refugees attract a broad audience. UNCTAD's messages, however, tend to be more specialized. Feedback has suggested that helping the media demonstrate UNCTAD's concrete impact on the ground could provide better exposure.

28. Recommendations:

- (a) Develop an approach to cultivate the international media and provide them with high-quality content and opinion pieces;
- (b) Intensify cooperation with local media and assist in developing local content;
- (c) Organize video press conferences to facilitate the participation of grassroots and other journalists outside Geneva;
- (d) Develop a database of local media with a special interest in UNCTAD's work. Provide human interest "impact stories" from the field, using local journalists and project staff;
- (e) Cooperate more closely with United Nations agencies and United Nations Information Centres under the One United Nations communications framework;
- (f) Explore partnerships with national institutions with good media relations to transmit UNCTAD's messages in the field;
- (g) Enhance the involvement of the UNCTAD's New York office and of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in reaching United States and United Nations constituencies;
- (h) Seek partnerships with global media networks and donors to train journalists on UNCTAD-related issues (seminars, visit programmes, technical assistance study tours);
- (i) Consider an UNCTAD "Media Award" for reporting on development issues;
- (j) Reinforce in-house criteria to ensure messages to the media are newsworthy and timely;
- (k) Enhance the profile and role of the spokesperson.

C. Delegates

29. Permanent representatives of member States accredited to UNCTAD are the most immediate target audience. They determine the organization's work programme, participate in consensus-building, and provide a direct link to national policymakers. Consultation and feedback have highlighted the specific information needs of Geneva-based delegates and their counterparts in capitals. These included: (a) timely and easily accessible documentation and reports in all United Nations languages to prepare for and report on intergovernmental meetings; (b) country-based reporting on UNCTAD's activities and impact; and (c) a thorough understanding of the organization and its work.

30. At present, delegates receive documentation by hard copy or via e-mail. Feedback has confirmed that a state-of-the-art website and additional e-tools are required in order to meet delegates' information and interaction needs (e.g. a documents archive, a meetings calendar, an up-to-date telephone directory).

31. Recommendations:

- (a) Develop a password-protected Delegates' Portal on the homepage (UNCTAD *DeleGATE*) for official documentation, meeting and publication alerts, draft reports, negotiating text, a networking facility, UNCTAD staff missions abroad, directories etc.;
- (b) Enhance web features to include search facilities on thematic subsites, country-based information, cross-references to other organizations' work and events, and easy links to New York-based processes;

- (c) Webcast and podcast high-level meetings for the benefit of capital-based officials;
- (d) Provide a facility to sign up for reports (specify hard copy or electronic version);
- (e) Employ direct e-mail and SMS alert facilities selectively to communicate timely information and messages;
- (f) Provide information services (“Ask an Expert”);
- (g) Engage the New York UNCTAD office to reinforce messages to New York-based delegates;
- (h) Conduct an annual induction course for delegates;
- (i) Periodically survey delegates for feedback, in order to continuously improve services and products.

D. Civil society

32. UNCTAD recognizes the important role that civil society organizations can play in all aspects of its work. They represent the views of diverse sectors of society and offer unique expertise and experience at global and grassroots levels. They are particularly effective in raising awareness and sharing information among their extensive networks. Their potential role as advocates and multipliers of UNCTAD’s messages should be fully harnessed. A growing number of civil society organizations have extensive experience in relevant fields of research, and in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects and policies. UNCTAD’s civil society target audience is using UNCTAD’s research and analysis extensively, accessing it mainly through electronic means.

33. Civil society primarily engages with UNCTAD as observers and discussants at conferences and intergovernmental meetings. Since the eleventh ministerial conference of UNCTAD in São Paulo (UNCTAD XI), hearings have been institutionalized to encourage the further engagement of civil society organizations in substantive debates at the Trade and Development Board (“hearings with civil society”). Feedback suggests that the current format of the hearings does not encourage interactive thought-provoking debate and outcomes. The limited involvement of civil society representatives in UNCTAD meetings (particularly those from the South) has been recognized as an issue to be addressed. UNCTAD’s fundraising efforts aimed at ensuring a geographically balanced representation at meetings are merely one way of engaging civil society organizations from the South.

34. UNCTAD needs to ensure that its findings, services and current debates effectively reach a maximum number of civil society organizations in the field and allow them to benefit and contribute in a meaningful way. Partnering with regional and national organizations to organize regular UNCTAD-relevant debates would be one cost-effective approach. Online debates could provide an additional component. The outcomes would be shared through civil society networks and platforms, and also with delegations and staff. A more detailed analysis should be undertaken on the utilization of new media, especially social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, and video-sharing websites such as YouTube. Consultations with other organizations – including international financial institutions – have showed that in their experience, social media are a powerful and resource-friendly way to reach out to civil society, particularly in the South.

35. Recommendations:

- (a) Partner with civil society organizations to organize annual debates with a wide spectrum of UNCTAD stakeholders. The public symposium format could be considered as a periodic event;
- (b) Organize civil society dialogue in the regions, with the participation of senior UNCTAD staff;
- (c) Consider a regular meeting schedule with Geneva-based civil society organizations and special interest groups;
- (d) Explore the viability of online debates, social networking, and other new media tools;
- (e) Disseminate UNCTAD's work with messages specific to civil society;
- (f) Review Trade and Development Board rules of procedure on engaging civil society to reflect Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31, to further facilitate the involvement of national and grassroots organizations in UNCTAD's work;
- (g) Explore with the divisions the possibility of considering civil society representatives from the South as resource persons for expert meetings and commissions;
- (h) Encourage donors to provide assistance in a sustainable manner for civil society and grassroots organizations to participate in UNCTAD meetings and activities;
- (i) Explore cooperation agreements with civil society networks for regular internet posting of UNCTAD's work; create links for greater visibility;
- (j) Create greater synergies with other international organizations (e.g. United Nations-wide civil society focal points) to maximize outreach;
- (k) Identify options for providing multilingual communication (e.g. content translation, meeting interpretation for non-intergovernmental events).

E. Private sector

36. UNCTAD engages with the private sector in all aspects of its work. Companies and business associations contribute to surveys for data collection and policy analysis, business representatives participate in UNCTAD meetings and advisory bodies, and in some cases the private sector contributes expert advice and funding for technical assistance projects. Business associations in developing countries and countries with economies in transition can be important multipliers and advocates of key UNCTAD messages. And yet, on the whole, engagement is sporadic.

37. To reach the private sector, and in particular, senior executives, UNCTAD's products and messages need to be communicated in clear and concise layman's language. They need to offer practical options, and clear recommendations and ways forward. Results-oriented meetings with disciplined agendas and active follow-through are imperative. The private sector is attracted by the opportunity of exchanging views with high-level government officials and participating in stimulating debate on important business issues, and also by exposure for corporate responsibility initiatives.

38. Recommendations:

- (a) Create a coherent approach for engaging with the private sector, identifying areas of work where the involvement of the private sector will enhance relevance and impact;

- (b) Identify good in-house practices in private sector relations and utilize them throughout the organization;
- (c) Develop an UNCTAD database on corporate contacts, and encourage coordinated engagement;
- (d) Develop brief outreach material aimed at private sector target groups;
- (e) Consider convening a corporate advisory panel to advise on private sector interests and needs in UNCTAD's work;
- (f) Enhance partnerships with global entities that have extensive business networks (e.g. World Economic Forum, United Nations Global Compact, International Chamber of Commerce).

F. Academia and research institutions

39. In a number of niche areas, UNCTAD's data and analysis is highly recognized by academia and research institutions. A strategy for capitalizing on that recognition and attaining organization-wide academic relevance and impact may be needed in order to address longer-term issues.

40. This may involve – among other things – regular participation by UNCTAD in international economic conferences. Participation requires recognized research excellence. To this end, staff should be enabled to publish in refereed journals and present findings at conferences and seminars. This should apply equally to UNCTAD work in other spheres.

41. Currently, UNCTAD engages with a select number of universities and research institutions. Efforts should be made to reach out to a wider circle of universities and think tanks, including mainstream economic institutions, in the preparation of flagship reports. Moreover, strategic partnerships with universities and research institutes may facilitate access to national and regional perspectives and possibly produce translations in local languages.

42. To strategically engage researchers and academics in debate and advocacy, virtual discussions via video links and blogs can be influential tools, technology permitting. It is in UNCTAD's interest to provide easy access to its work to research entities around the world. Universities in the South still rely on hard copies, particularly for students. While access to the Web itself seems less of an issue today, feedback indicates that access to the electronic versions of UNCTAD documents – and the actual documents themselves – are not as user-friendly as they could be.

43. Recommendations:

- (a) Develop a longer-term, organization-wide approach to building credible links with academic institutions;
- (b) Insert UNCTAD's positions in well-established moderated blogs; consider reviving the Secretary-General's blog;
- (c) Provide easy access for academics and researchers to information, analysis, data and dialogues (see the references to the web strategy in section IV);
- (d) Consolidate an in-house database of reputable academic and research entities by country and by region, to facilitate interaction and engagement (Global Network of Think Tanks);
- (e) Co-produce publications, analysis, and views on current issues, and place these on influential portals;

(f) Encourage UNCTAD's Virtual Institute and Global Think Tank partners to facilitate the dissemination of flagship reports;

(g) Extend the annual Raúl Prebisch Lecture into a high-level debate of academics and think tanks;

(h) Encourage national academic and research institutes to provide local content, and also to translate and disseminate UNCTAD publications.

G. Parliamentarians

44. Parliamentarians directly influence policy and rule-making, and are thus an important constituency for UNCTAD. They require concise information on the impact of proposed policies. UNCTAD's outreach to parliamentarians has been ad hoc – in the context of national policy advisory projects, or through the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which enjoys official United Nations permanent observer status. UNCTAD and IPU participate in each other's meetings at senior level. At the local level, UNCTAD has been intensifying efforts to include briefings for parliamentarians during missions. Occasionally, UNCTAD provides training and information sessions for visiting parliamentarians from developing countries.

45. UNCTAD should consider expanding its interaction with IPU to facilitate the transmission of key messages and to enhance its outreach to national constituencies. Such interaction could involve systematic participation in each other's events, regular consultations on important policy issues, the co-production of publications, and coordination on the timing of events to maximize synergies. UNCTAD could also consider holding UNCTAD parliamentary consultations, or a symposium on emerging issues during IPU's yearly assembly in Geneva. In addition, UNCTAD should develop closer ties with regional parliamentary organizations and intensify its outreach to the European Parliament. A number of cost-effective tools are available to reach regional and national parliaments; these are summarized below.

46. Recommendations:

(a) Consider a memorandum of understanding with IPU to establish a framework for cooperation, including joint activities during IPU's annual assemblies;

(b) Assess appropriate e-tools to reach parliamentary audiences (alert e-mails for parliamentarians, UNCTAD policy briefs on parliamentary websites, newsletters);

(c) Establish regular consultations between UNCTAD and parliamentarians;

(d) Intensify briefings to parliaments by the Secretary-General and senior UNCTAD staff during missions;

(e) Develop a database of national and regional parliamentarians active in broader UNCTAD issues;

(f) Include parliamentarians in flagship launches abroad.

H. Donors and beneficiaries

47. UNCTAD's technical assistance and advisory services apply the findings and good practices from in-house analysis and expert meetings. These activities are largely donor-funded. The extent to which UNCTAD is able to mobilize support depends upon the successful implementation of projects and the impact achieved. Therefore, UNCTAD,

donors and beneficiaries alike have a keen interest in seeing project accomplishments documented, showcased and disseminated widely.

48. Based on feedback from donors and beneficiary countries, current reporting is not structured to present detailed information, including on accomplishments. For this reason, UNCTAD is upgrading its technical cooperation portal to provide centralized, consolidated online information about all technical assistance activities.

49. Recommendations:

(a) Complement the technical cooperation portal with an easy country-reference website, including impact stories;

(b) Consider an electronic newsletter and other multimedia tools (e.g. “UNCTAD at Work”) to portray individual technical assistance programmes and country experiences;

(c) Explore ways of proactively raising UNCTAD’s profile among the donor community, by showcasing technical cooperation programmes with considerable replication potential;

(d) Facilitate visits by delegates and the media to field projects.

I. International organizations and “One United Nations”

50. As UNCTAD has no field offices, it must take advantage of the international presence of other organizations for more efficient and effective dissemination of information and advice to policymakers. Other organizations both within and outside the United Nations, including UNDP, the regional development banks, standard-making bodies are valuable partners in data collection, analysis, building networks, reaching key stakeholders, developing good practices and delivering development assistance.

51. In particular, UNCG (the United Nations global communications body)⁶ and the country-based United Nations Information Centres offer good platforms for joint public information and communications activities at all levels.

52. In addition, UNCTAD is exploring ways to tap more effectively into the services and expertise of DPI. This includes raising UNCTAD’s profile with New York- and Washington-based constituencies, in particular encouraging leading think tanks to debate flagship publications. UNCTAD’s New York office also has an important role in raising UNCTAD’s visibility at the United Nations Secretariat and with its membership and in engaging strategic constituencies in the United States.

53. The United Nations CEB Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity – where 13 United Nations agencies coordinated by UNCTAD cooperate on capacity-building activities in the field – offers UNCTAD a further opportunity to enhance its outreach and to develop new channels of dissemination. Joint approaches under the Enhanced Integrated Framework and the Aid for Trade initiative can expand these opportunities further.

⁶ UNCG’s objectives include fostering inter-agency cooperation, identifying new and creative ways to show how United Nations programmes are delivering results, and promoting a coherent United Nations image.

54. Recommendations:

- (a) Use DPI and UNCTAD's New York office more strategically for image-building, dissemination and outreach;
- (b) Intensify partnerships with international institutions to disseminate and promote UNCTAD work through their regional and national infrastructure, networks and contacts;
- (c) Use the "One United Nations" CEB Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity to strengthen UNCTAD's reach and impact;
- (d) Seek strategic partnerships with highly regarded international institutions for joint analysis and co-publication in influential media;
- (e) Engage other international institutions in peer reviews for UNCTAD analysis and project proposals;
- (f) Work collaboratively with other institutions to maintain a central calendar of the meetings of all relevant organizations (in addition to the United Nations central calendar).

J. Wider public

55. UNCTAD's information and public outreach activities cater to three distinct groups: government (diplomats in training, parliamentarians, national delegations); groups of graduate students; and the general public. Government officials are interested in issue- or region-specific briefings and/or access to experts. Students need information on topics related to their studies (e.g. trade law) and guidance on how to access materials. The general public is interested in the broader United Nations context. Public outreach activities are geared to enhancing UNCTAD's name recognition on key issues and positioning the organization as a reputable source of expertise. A number of proposals emerged during consultations.

56. Recommendations:

- (a) Optimize search engines such as Google so that UNCTAD work appears in a prime position;
- (b) Strategically portray UNCTAD at carefully selected international events;
- (c) Optimize the use of new technologies in designing promotional tools (e.g. electronic calling cards, memory sticks);
- (d) Give United Nations Information Centre representatives around the world a one-page description of UNCTAD's role in the United Nations and how UNCTAD makes a difference;
- (e) Create a series of briefs entitled: "Everything you have always wanted to know about.....", covering UNCTAD's key issues and products.

IV. Enhancing the use of electronic tools, including the website

A. The central role of the Web⁷

57. The website is a central feature of the communications strategy. Not only is it the public face of UNCTAD, but it is also one of the most efficient and cost-effective means to target and engage audiences the world over. However, many developing countries and countries with economies in transition have technical and other constraints that keep them from enjoying full access to electronic media. UNCTAD's communications strategy bears this in mind, and will develop appropriate dissemination channels for those clients.

58. To meet the Accra Accord objectives, it will be necessary to:

- (a) Modernize the current web platform and keep it up to date;
- (b) Directly match online services to offline processes and audience requirements;
- (c) Streamline information-management processes and create new governance mechanisms to increase the coherence, quality and timeliness of online products and services;
- (d) Enhance web skills and resources to manage and maintain the platform.

59. UNCTAD's new web strategy is not about technology, but rather about content – planning and managing information flows in support of the broader communications strategy. It incorporates a systematic approach to raising UNCTAD's profile and targeting and engaging key audiences. Proposals contained in the web strategy have been designed following extensive consultations with stakeholders and validated based on good practices from other comparable organizations. New or improved products and service include:

- (a) A new version of unctad.org with updated branding, navigation, search and database;
- (b) A password-protected Delegate's Portal (*deleGATE*) with advance/draft meeting materials, cross-sector search functionality to locate and download UNCTAD and other reference documentation, and a robust calendar application that is up-to-date, fully printable and contains participation lists and meeting updates;
- (c) A Media Portal with advanced search and zipped "media kits" and multimedia applications;
- (d) A web-based service that will present selected technical cooperation project information on a multifunctional map (like Google maps). This will allow delegates and civil society to see if UNCTAD has activities in their countries, donors to see how projects are progressing, and international partners to coordinate development efforts;
- (e) An internal statistical protocol that will allow users to layer information on geospatial maps to compare and present statistical data directly in pie charts in addition to tables and rows.

60. The web strategy will be implemented in two stages:

- (a) Repositioning the unctad.org website. At present, this is a brochure-type tool structured along organizational lines with no effective links, navigation or search functions.

⁷ This section highlights relevant parts of the web strategy, which is currently under development and is reflected in an internal working document.

At the end of phase 1, it will be a strategic communications “shop window” and central repository offering high-quality real-time information focused on meeting user requirements (i.e. issues- and theme-based, rather than division-based). Resources permitting, phase 1 can be completed in approximately six months and is contingent on the organization’s commitment and collaboration, web governance norms, modern web skills and IT support;

(b) Rolling out by transferring existing content to the new repositories, and developing and fine-tuning dissemination channels, web-based products, targeting tools and monitoring tools.

61. Centralized web specialists will be responsible for functionality, while each division will be responsible for its own initiatives and content. The Web Unit will provide dedicated facilitation, consultation and project management support for all web-related products and services.

B. New media

62. The communications strategy proposes new e-tools, e-channels and e-services to capitalize on the opportunities provided by the “new media” and to meet specific documented needs. These include blogs, social networks, direct e-mail services, SMS alerts, and links to relevant websites and networks.

63. The collaborative aspects of social media are a new and energizing way for UNCTAD to organize groups of people around issues. The barriers to innovation are lowered and there are signs that online social networks could evolve into social action networks.

64. Clearly, social media tools are not appropriate for all audience segments, but UNCTAD can use them to engage and influence certain key groups. For example, images on Facebook and Flickr can show the impact of food price hikes in Africa; videos on YouTube can present the “human face” of UNCTAD technical cooperation projects.

65. The web strategy outlines possible uses of social media tools for specific target groups. These include video (webcasts, YouTube), audio (podcasts), social and professional networking (Facebook, LinkedIn), information alerts (newsfeeds, SMS alerts, SmartPhone applications) and collaboration media (wikis, blogs).

V. Maximizing the reach and dissemination of publications⁸

66. The principles and objectives underlying the communications strategy apply equally to publications (e.g. quality, relevance, core messages, targeting to key audiences, timely dissemination). UNCTAD’s publications are the principal vehicle for communicating the organization’s knowledge. The communications strategy aims to ensure that the key messages contained in UNCTAD publications reach the intended audiences in a timely fashion through the most appropriate channels.

67. Effective dissemination is crucial, reaching all target audiences via the most appropriate methods and technologies, with due consideration for financial and technical constraints in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. UNCTAD needs to intensify cooperation and partnerships with institutions that can disseminate the information beyond the organization’s reach, tailor messages to local audiences, and

⁸ UNCTAD’s updated publications policy is included in an associated document (TD/B/56/10/Rev.1).

facilitate translation. To this end, the proposals contained in UNCTAD's updated publications policy are considered an integral part of the communications strategy and its subsequent implementation.

Box 2. UNCTAD publications policy TD/B/56/10/Rev.1

Modes of dissemination^a

26. Traditional paper-based dissemination has its limitations, both in terms of efficacy and of cost. Dissemination based on information and communications technologies (ICTs) has demonstrated both its efficacy and its cost-effectiveness, and such dissemination should be developed to the greatest possible extent. At the same time, there remains considerable demand for paper-based publications, particularly in developing countries where Internet access is limited, and this demand should continue to be satisfied.

27. UNCTAD's online channels should be seen as one of the important vehicles for the dissemination of publications, where feasible. The production process for publications should take full account of the technical and skill requirements of efficient publishing online. To facilitate dissemination, each publication should contain an executive summary (abstract) and a listing of key words (metadata). Greater use should also be made of CD-ROM and flash memory technology, where feasible.

28. Greater use should be made of UNCTAD's networks and in-country presence, such as the Virtual Institute Network, the Science and Technology for Development Network, the Global Network of Think Tanks, major training events organized by UNCTAD, and in-country ASYCUDA presence.

^a Paragraphs 26–28 of the publications policy (TD/B/56/10/Rev.1) are presented in this box.

VI. Facilitating multilingual messaging

68. Multilingual messages help maximize outreach to key constituencies. Interpretation and translation services for intergovernmental meetings and publications are provided through the United Nations Office at Geneva. To disseminate multilingual information (non-official documents) either in print or electronic format, translations could be facilitated through overseas arrangements and new translation technology. For example, for non-intergovernmental publications and events, cost-effective arrangements involving partnerships with language schools, publishers, and regional and local institutions could be considered.

69. Online translation tools can also be used where appropriate. While they are not suitable for most United Nations documents, they could be used for some of the new services proposed.

VII. Maximizing the benefits

70. Upgrading the website and targeting specific rather than broad-based audiences will offer a number of efficiencies. Printing and mailing costs could be reduced by sending only “soft” copies of written materials to those who specifically request that delivery medium. Further savings could be generated by translating, printing and distributing publications overseas through partnerships and other arrangements (for UNCTAD events, specific audiences etc.).

A. Monitoring and evaluation

71. Regular monitoring and evaluation will allow UNCTAD to measure effectiveness and refine communications approaches at regular intervals. Baseline statistics will be needed in order to set realistic targets, develop appropriate indicators and facilitate monitoring. These could include, amongst other things:

- (a) Web statistics (for monitoring divisional subsites);
- (b) Surveys of users – internal and external;
- (c) Media coverage statistics;
- (d) Name recognition;
- (e) Propagation analysis (tracking);
- (f) Downloads, “hits” of particular publications and other materials;
- (g) Carbon footprint of printing and mailing.

B. Success factors

72. The communications strategy will be contingent on the following success factors:

(a) Political will and commitment: Senior-level commitment to embracing the communications strategy as a strategic framework for action, mobilizing house-wide support including financial and human resources, and making good communications practices and culture a management priority;

(b) The “One UNCTAD” approach: The communications strategy promotes a “One UNCTAD” approach. Its success will depend upon the initiative and commitment of UNCTAD staff at all levels to pursue greater coherence, transparency and quality. Enhancing internal communication is important in this regard;

(c) Tailored and targeted output: A central communications team can ensure that UNCTAD’s work reaches the right audiences in a timely fashion, but that is only “half the challenge”. To achieve the desired impact, the whole organization must be empowered to produce analyses, products and activities that are targeted and tailored to the needs and expectations of specific constituencies. This will require a new approach to planning, formulation, preparation and delivery. It will involve the divisions and the communications team working in close cooperation at all stages of product development, delivery and follow-through, to ensure appropriate targeting, clear messages and suitable dissemination strategies;

(d) UNCTAD will need to take full advantage of the infrastructure and capabilities of the United Nations – including UNCG, undg, United Nations Information Centres, DPI, UNDP resident coordinators, UNCTAD’s New York office, and partner

agencies' regional and local communications networks (e.g. the CEB Cluster, regional commissions, regional development banks);

- (e) A fully operational website to provide the proposed services.

73. As a result of consultations, surveys and analysis, a number of tools and services have been proposed to support the implementation of the strategy. Some of the proposals can be implemented within existing UNCTAD budgets. This will require deploying the appropriate skills, reorganizing and aligning the core communications functions, and enhancing coordination and collaboration across the house. Additional resources and a dedicated operational budget are required to ensure the web-related improvements, the enhanced media and civil society outreach, and to allow for the Communications, Information and Outreach office to respond adequately to the competitive communications environment.

74. In summary, communication is not a stand-alone product, but rather a continuous process that strives to respond to the needs and capacities of its intended audiences through core messages aimed at enhancing the development gains in UNCTAD's area of competence. The communications strategy is a flexible framework that also provides guidance on how to transform UNCTAD into a communicating organization.
