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ISSUES CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

Note by the Executive Secretary *

Addendum

UNECE TECHNICAL COOPERATION STRATEGY

Summary

Technical Cooperation activities form an integral part of UNECE's activities as emphasized by member States in the Work Plan on ECE Reform. The note discusses the rationale, principles and main goals of technical cooperation activities. It also enumerates the cooperation with other organizations involved in such activities in the UNECE region. Finally, in the light of the UNECE Reform, the note describes in detail the responsibilities and functions of various intergovernmental bodies and the secretariat.

* Late submission because of the decision by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 7 March 2007 that the Strategy be submitted to the Commission as a formal document.

Introduction

1. Technical cooperation activities form an integral part of UNECE's activities as emphasized by member States in the Work Plan on ECE Reform (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1).
2. The Work Plan on Reform also stated that the impact of the Strategy on Technical Cooperation, endorsed by the Commission at its fifty-ninth session in 2004 (E/ECE/1411/Add.1), shall be assessed by the Executive Committee and that the Strategy shall be reviewed if necessary.
3. This Strategy results from the above-mentioned review.

A. Rationale for technical cooperation in the UNECE

4. UNECE is selective in the type of technical cooperation activities it undertakes: it limits its involvement to well-circumscribed areas of work where it has recognized expertise. In addition the activities are, for the most part, directly linked to its normative work. UNECE must also be selective because it traditionally disposes of less extrabudgetary resources than the other regional commissions and its share of the United Nations's Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation is also less than that of the other regional commissions.

5. The rationale for UNECE technical cooperation is based upon a clear set of advantages, which the Commission offers to its member States and partner organizations, in particular:

(a) Ability to carry out normative, analytical, and technical cooperation functions allows UNECE to ensure a direct link between intergovernmentally agreed norms and standards and technical cooperation aimed at assisting member States in their implementation;

(b) The UNECE has proved to be effective in establishing and maintaining national and subregional networks of policymakers and technical experts. This is essential for ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of technical cooperation support to recipient countries, as well as for building partnerships with other key international players in the area of technical assistance in the UNECE region;

(c) Availability of in-house technical expertise combined with the access to the aforementioned networks of policymakers and experts allows the UNECE to ensure optimal use of the resources allocated for technical cooperation. This technical expertise is also of great value for UNECE policy development and norm setting work;

(d) The UNECE adds extra value to technical assistance and policy advisory services offered by other providers, usually operating at a country level, since its technical cooperation activities are targeting cross-border and subregional issues. This allows UNECE to cover a wider range of beneficiaries, and involve policymakers from several countries;

(e) UNECE international legal instruments and conventions are increasingly applied by countries outside the UNECE region. The use of UNECE's recognized expertise in promoting the implementation of these documents contributes to strengthening the efficiency of international technical cooperation and improving synergies between organizations and institutions operating at an interregional level. Furthermore, implementation of UNECE

international legal instruments by countries outside the UNECE region helps to ensure greater regulatory compatibility thus promoting more effective economic cooperation at a global level.

B. Principles

6. UNECE technical cooperation activities are guided by the following principles:

(a) Linkage to UNECE's normative work. Most of UNECE's technical cooperation activities aim to improve the capacity of governments to implement UNECE legal instruments, norms, standards and regulations. This approach is in line with the emphasis placed by the General Assembly on the implementation of the United Nations normative work, reiterated by the Commission at its sixty-first session. This link also helps to ensure that the activities do not duplicate those of other organizations;

(b) Selectivity. This is necessary in view of the substantive focus on the implementation of norms and standards where UNECE has recognized expertise, and of the need to ensure optimal use of limited resources;

(c) Focus on countries with economies in transition in the UNECE region. As specified in the UNECE Reform document, UNECE technical cooperation activities are focused on the countries with economies in transition in the UNECE region. Furthermore, efforts are made to ensure geographical balance in responding to the requests for technical assistance from these countries;

(d) Results oriented. UNECE technical cooperation activities are planned and implemented taking into account the need to maximize their impact on the national capacity of UNECE member States with economies in transition as well as to foster the principle of creating national ownership of such activities;

(e) Demand driven. To the extent possible, activities are based on demands from Governments, either individually or as a group of countries when subregional concerns are addressed;

(f) Cooperation and partnership with others. Cooperation and partnership with other organizations and stakeholders, including the private sector and the academic community, is essential to take advantage of their contribution, minimize potential duplication and ensure optimal impact. Particular attention is given to strengthening relationships with the private sector with a view to broadening funding opportunities and promoting the involvement of external expertise.

7. The above principles serve as a general framework within which UNECE's technical cooperation activities are planned and implemented. In addition, technical cooperation activities should take into account the following:

(a) Economic efficiency and effectiveness;

(b) Sustainability of the activity/project particularly after the UNECE exits;

(c) Accountability and transparency;

(d) UNECE engages only in those activities in which it has recognized in-house expertise and competence;

(e) Multiplying effect by involving experts, advisers and policymakers from several countries in activities organized at the subregional/regional level.

C. Main goals of UNECE technical cooperation

8. The main goals of UNECE technical cooperation will be:

(a) To improve national capacities of economies in transition to implement UNECE international legal instruments, norms, standards and regulations in the areas of transport, environment, trade, statistics, sustainable energy, timber, housing and land management, and economic cooperation and integration;

(b) To assist with the formation of institutional frameworks in support of subregional and regional integration in areas relevant to its programme of work;

(c) To assist economies in transition in elaborating and implementing technical assistance programmes/projects, focusing on those related to resolving transboundary problems, in the areas relevant to UNECE's programme of work;

(d) To support economies in transition in their capacity-building efforts towards the achievement of internationally agreed development goals in the UNECE region.

D. Types of technical cooperation activities

9. In order to achieve its goals in the area of technical cooperation, the UNECE employs the following main types of technical cooperation services:

(a) Advisory services aimed at assisting its member States with economies in transition to implement UNECE legal instruments, regulations and norms, and to formulate specific technical cooperation projects/programmes. (These advisory services are mainly carried out by Regional Advisers; more information can be found in the Annex);

(b) Capacity-building workshops, seminars, study tours and training courses aimed at assisting recipient countries to implement global and UNECE legal instruments, regulations and norms;

(c) Technical cooperation projects, including those with multisectoral and/or subregional focus, in areas where the UNECE has a mandate and expertise.

E. Cooperation with other organizations

10. UNECE's cooperation with other organizations, both within and external to the United Nations system, has progressed since 2004. This has helped to maximize synergies, ensure coordination and proper division of labour. The UNECE shall continue to maintain and develop partnerships with other organizations and institutions, including the business and academic communities and non-governmental organizations. In particular, special attention would be given

to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the contribution of the UNECE, in its areas of expertise, to the EU neighbourhood policy of the European Commission. This cooperation would be carried out taking into account the following principles: (i) to build on the results of the work carried out by other relevant actors operating in the UNECE region; (ii) to minimize potential overlap between activities and ineffective allocation of resources; (iii) whenever appropriate, to promote a more rational division of responsibilities; and (iv) to promote the involvement of those actors who would like to bring their expertise or complementary approach in support of the UNECE's activities in the area of technical assistance.

11. A crucial partner is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNECE has strengthened its cooperation with UNDP by bringing UNECE's experience to some United Nations country teams (UNCT), improving communication, coordination and institutional interaction with the UNDP Resident Coordinator Offices and UNCTs. As a specific step, while travelling to a country on a Mission, the UNECE staff contact local UNDP offices in order to coordinate the visit as well as share information.

12. In the future, the UNECE will increase its involvement in national level planning mechanisms, such as the Common Country Assessment (CCA), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in order to encourage the incorporation of transboundary policy issues into these mechanisms.

F. Funding of UNECE technical cooperation

13. The main sources of funding of UNECE technical cooperation are the resources made available from the United Nations Regular Budget and extrabudgetary resources. UNECE efforts to raise extrabudgetary resources mainly consist of fund-raising activities, undertaken by its sectoral Divisions and Regional Advisers who have knowledge of and access to prospective donors interested in supporting sector-based technical assistance. The UNECE Divisions and Regional Advisers will continue to undertake such fund-raising activities with a view to expanding and diversifying extrabudgetary sources in support of technical cooperation programmes financed from the United Nations Regular Budget. The Executive Secretary has the responsibility to make high-level contacts to solicit additional resources as appropriate.

G. Roles of intergovernmental bodies and the secretariat

14. The responsibilities and functions of the different entities for the coordination, planning, reporting and evaluation of technical cooperation activities can be summarized as follows:

(a) At the intergovernmental level

(i) *Sectoral Committees*: Annual review of technical cooperation activities will take place at their annual sessions. Furthermore, in response to the 2004 Strategy, and in line with the UNECE Reform, evaluation of these activities will be undertaken once every two years within the framework of the biennial evaluation of all activities by the Sectoral Committees as decided by the Commission. Particular attention will be given to promoting a results-based approach to monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation activities and reporting on its outcomes to member States.

In addition, the secretariat will provide to each annual session of the Sectoral Committees an assessment of funding gaps resulting from a mismatch between demands from countries and available resources. The Sectoral Committees will discuss possible sources of financing to meet these gaps.

(ii) *Executive Committee*: The overall intergovernmental governance for technical cooperation activities is assured by the UNECE Executive Committee. The annual report that was regularly submitted to the annual session of the Commission shall now be submitted to the Executive Committee. In addition, as required by the UNECE reform, technical assistance extrabudgetary projects not already included in the programme budget are now reviewed by the Executive Committee.

(iii) *Commission*: The overall strategic issues relating to technical cooperation activities will be taken up by the Commission as appropriate.

(b) At the secretariat level

(i) *Divisions*: Divisions identify country needs for technical cooperation, implement technical cooperation activities and raise extrabudgetary funds as necessary. Divisions also prepare all necessary documentation in order to facilitate the discussion on technical cooperation at the annual sessions of the Sectoral Committees.

(ii) *Regional Advisers*: The services of the Regional Advisers provide an effective mechanism for linking the UNECE's operational activities with its normative work. The Regional Advisers are placed in respective Divisions to ensure a more direct link with normative and analytical activities carried out within the core programme of work. Their functions and areas of work are delineated in the Annex.

(iii) *Technical Cooperation Unit (TCU)*: The functions of the Unit could be enumerated as follows:

- a. Reporting on technical cooperation issues and activities for the biennial sessions of the Commission and meetings of the Executive Committee;
- b. Supporting and coordinating the monitoring and evaluation of the UNECE technical assistance activities, in cooperation with the Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, ensuring that these activities are in line with the UNECE Technical Cooperation Strategy;
- c. Promoting the undertaking of evaluations of technical cooperation activities and the application of their findings;
- d. Leading and providing secretariat support to the work of the UNECE Working Group on Technical Cooperation and ensuring follow-up to this work;
- e. Promoting and facilitating fund-raising in cooperation with UNECE Divisions and Regional Advisers, in particular the preparation of proposals for possible funding from United Nations Development Account (UNDA);

- f. Supporting and coordinating multisectoral/intersectoral technical assistance activities relating to UNECE areas of expertise including those developed within a subregional framework;
- g. Facilitating the linking of UNECE activities with the work of the relevant United Nations country teams, when appropriate;
- h. Preparation of relevant inputs to the Secretary-General's reports to ECOSOC, the General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies, as may be required by UNHQ.

To support the Technical Cooperation Unit in its work, and to increase overall coherence in UNECE's technical cooperation activities, a secretariat Working Group on Technical Cooperation was established in 2004, comprising the Director of the Technical Cooperation Unit, Regional Advisers, a representative of the Executive Office and the Office of the Executive Secretary. The Group has the following functions:

- a. To exchange information on technical cooperation activities underway, state of implementation, lessons learned and good practices, in particular practices which could be replicated;
- b. To improve reporting, monitoring and evaluation of UNECE technical cooperation activities;
- c. To identify opportunities for interdivisional, cross-sectoral cooperation and possible synergies;
- d. To strengthen collaboration with other parts of the United Nations system along with other international organizations undertaking technical cooperation activities in the UNECE region.

(iv) *The Office of the Executive Secretary* may occasionally be engaged in fund-raising but the project proposals would be designed by the subprogramme(s) concerned and reviewed by the Executive Committee as stipulated in the Work Plan on ECE Reform.

ANNEX
UNECE REGIONAL ADVISERS

1. The functions of the UNECE Regional Advisers are as follows:
 - (a) To provide advice and expertise to assist countries with economies in transition and emerging market economies in their implementation of UNECE legal instruments, norms and standards as well as the achievement of internationally agreed development goals;
 - (b) To participate in the organization of national capacity-building activities and the implementation of other specific technical cooperation projects;
 - (c) To assist countries in formulating development projects/proposals;
 - (d) To undertake fund-raising activities;
 - (e) To identify cross-sectoral synergies and engage in technical cooperation activities of a cross-sectoral nature;
 - (f) To facilitate the sharing of experience and good practices among the UNECE membership;
 - (g) To provide regularly information on their ongoing and planned activities to the Technical Cooperation Unit to facilitate the latter in the implementation of its functions;
 - (h) To provide insights on the activities of the UNECE, including in the other UNECE areas of work, during their missions to member States and UNDP offices.
2. The UNECE currently has six Regional Advisers – one in each of the following subprogrammes:
 - (a) Economic Cooperation and Integration
 - (b) Environment
 - (c) Statistics
 - (d) Sustainable Energy
 - (e) Trade
 - (f) Transport.
