INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

GB.282/TC/3
282nd Session

Governing Body

Geneva, November 2001

Committee on Technical Cooperation

TC

THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Further developments regarding technical cooperation activities in the United Nations system

Contents

1. Introduction

1. This paper provides the Committee with highlights on developments concerning operational activities over the past year in the United Nations system that are of interest to the ILO.

2. One of the major developments of interest to the ILO was the decision of the Administrative Coordinating Committee (ACC)[1] to establish a High-level Programme Committee (HLPC) to replace the Consultative Committee on Operational and Programme Questions (CCPOQ) as the UN inter-agency consultative machinery. The HLPC has however decided to maintain the Working Group on the Resident Coordinator system, an inter-sessional meeting of the former CCPOQ, to continue addressing issues of common concern related to the UN Resident Coordinator system.

3. The Substantive Session of ECOSOC 2001 was held in Geneva, from 2 to 27 July 2001. Under the operational segment, the Secretary-General presented his report on the *Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development undertaken by the UN system*. On relations with other agencies, the Office has continued to pursue dialogue with the UNDP and the WFP in order to strengthen a strategic alliance with both agencies.

2. Relations with the UNDP

4. ILO/UNDP relations were briefly covered in the previous report on the ILO Technical Cooperation Programme 1999-2000.[2] Since then, consultations have continued between the Bureau for Development Policies (BDP) and the ILO's major sectors and technical units. In view of the UNDP's re-focusing of its priorities on six major themes based on the approved global dimensions, the consultations resulted in determining specific linkages and entry points for the ILO within the six themes namely: *Democratic Governance, Pro-Poor Policies, Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and HIV/AIDS*.

5. The InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction was to be the linkage and entry point for UNDP's crisis prevention and recovery theme. Other programmes would be employment-intensive investment activities, IFP/SKILLS, IFP/SEED and Gender Promotion. In the ICT area, there was potential for cooperation with UNDP in youth and employment programmes and follow-up to the *World Employment Report*. HIV/AIDS is another strong ILO entry point through its activities and programme on HIV/AIDS in the world of work.

6. A joint task force has been established to put these ideas and proposals into operational activities. One such programme would be a joint flagship global programme on employment and poverty for which the UNDP has earmarked some $100,000 to carry out the preparation and implementation of the programme. In addition meetings were organized between the MDTs in Beirut and Harare and the corresponding SURFs at the same location to review cooperation, complementarity and knowledge networking.

---

[1] ACC decision 2000/20.

[2] GB.279/TC/1.

7. Despite the ongoing decline in core-resources and funding thus making UNDP no longer a major source of funding for ILO technical cooperation activities, the ILO/UNDP partnership remains essential. The UNDP is country-based with a network of offices and the ILO relies on the UNDP for its services, including administrative and logistic support. In addition, the UNDP is the manager of the UN Resident Coordinator system and the lead agency in all UN operational activities for development at the country level. The ILO needs to collaborate with this organization in order to be actively involved in key UN programming processes such as the CCA and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) led by the UN Resident Coordinator. Close collaboration between the ILO and UNDP helps ensure greater policy coherence in development activities at the country level.

UNDP resource situation

8. The UNDP financial situation remains a concern not only of the organization itself, and its Executive Board, but also of the Secretary-General, as expressed in his Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review report to ECOSOC in 2001. Despite some projected increase in contribution for the year 2001, the Annual Session of the Executive Board (June 2001) was informed by the administrator that income (core resources) during the year 2000 was $634 million, some $47 million below the income figure recorded in 1999. Estimates at the time (June 2001) for contribution to the regular resources for 2001 were $660 million and projected to increase by two per cent over last year's figure.

9. According to the administrator, this small increase was due to a number of new donor commitments, an increased commitment to regular resources by 25 donor countries and 42 programme countries. He was therefore optimistic that if the projections materialized, the UNDP would see the first real increase in contributions in over eight years. This situation has affected its budget for UN Resident Coordinator activities thus hindering the organization's ability to move forward with the Secretary-General's reform programme, especially at the country level.

10. As the UNDP continues to face financial and funding constraints due to the decline of its core resources, funding for specialized agencies primarily through national execution of programmes will also be affected. The introduction of the *Thematic Trust Funds* based on its six themes which also have strategic linkages with ILO priorities, may open another window of opportunity for ILO/UNDP collaboration and funding.

New UNDP programming instruments

11. Following the review of its programming instruments in 1998, in conjunction with the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities, and the piloting of the CCA and UNDAF processes in the same year, the UNDP was required to report to the Board on possible implications of the results of the pilot exercises for its own programming arrangements. The Board was informed that the CCA and UNDAF were now to be part of the UNDP programming process and the former advisory note which preceded the *country cooperation framework (CCF)* will be substituted by the CCA and UNDAF. This is an area of interest for the ILO field offices which must ensure maximum involvement in the two processes.

3. Relations with the World Food Programme (WFP)

12. The ILO has continued its working relations with the WFP in humanitarian assistance, food for work and in crisis response and reconstruction. The Office continues to attend the WFP Executive Board sessions. In addition, in order to identify new ways of collaboration, a joint ILO/WFP consultative meeting was held in Geneva (December 2000).

13. The major areas identified were shared information on research, the WFP's *vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM)* and the development of a suitable strategy for sharing lessons learned and best practices. Another area was assessment of methodology, monitoring and evaluation of indicators to support resource mobilization. It was agreed to develop tools and guidelines jointly for common application, of *programme development manuals (PDMs)*, training guidelines and guidelines on food for assets which were developed with the ILO.

14. At the technical level, the meeting concluded that the key areas for further collaboration were in: employment and training by targeting urban and rural unemployed youth and women through employment-intensive investment programmes; boosting employment through small enterprise development; the linking of crisis response with capacity development; combined research; the sharing of evaluation tools and guidelines; identifying joint programmes at the country level in selected countries especially in post-conflict situations; and, finally, ILO involvement in WFP appraisal processes and the development of WFP *country strategy outlines (CSOs)* and *country programmes (CPs)*.

4. Substantive Session of ECOSOC 2001

15. The Substantive Session of ECOSOC 2001 was held in Geneva from 2 to 27 July 2001, beginning with the coordination and operational segments. Both are of interest to the Office especially at the operational level. The segment on coordination of policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other UN system agencies was on the theme: *The role of the United Nations system in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to, and transfer of, knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT), through partnerships with relevant stakeholders including the private sector*. The Council considered the report of the UN Secretary-General on the subject. [3]

16. The report emphasized the fact that knowledge and technology development were critical to economic growth and sustainable development as well as to the effective and beneficial integration of developing countries in the new technology-based global economy. The Secretary-General underlined the importance of accelerated transfer of knowledge and technology, especially ICT, from developed to developing countries for sustainable development on a global basis. He emphasized the need for stronger partnership between the public sector, civil society, including the private sector, as an essential approach in ensuring real, tangible and sustainable transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT), to developing countries.

17. The Secretary-General also underlined the principles that govern partnership between the UN and civil society, especially the private sector. In this connection, the goal should be to

[3] E/2001/59.

attain greater equality and social justice based on the UN system values and goals, solidarity, social responsibility, international cooperation, inclusion and participation by all as well as the empowerment of the poor.

18. The challenge for the United Nations system and its private sector partners was the development of business models that incorporate the universal values and goals of the United Nations and the need for the private sector to realize profit and shareholder value. The Secretary-General emphasized therefore, that the UN system has an important role to play in assisting the process of knowledge and technology transfer, especially ICT, to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

19. The Council welcomed the initiatives taken by the UN system organizations to strengthen the system's role in ICT and in building partnerships with other organizations in promoting development through access to, and transfer of, knowledge and technology. The role of the UN system was pivotal. The Council welcomed the establishment of the ICT task force as a major practical step in bridging the digital divide. It stressed the need to ensure coherence and complementarity between the task force and other ICT initiatives at regional and global levels and effective coordination of the efforts within the system. In this respect, the Council endorsed and encouraged the UN system to pursue their efforts as proposed by the Secretary-General in his report.

Operational activities segment

20. In paragraph 64 of resolution 53/192 of 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit through ECOSOC 2001 a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the resolution in the context of the triennial policy review and to make appropriate recommendations. Paragraph 63 of the same resolution called for an evaluation of the impact of the *United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)* in the field of operational activities as an integral part of the policy review and requested the Secretary-General to report through the Council at its Substantive Session 2001 on such evaluation, including lessons learned and recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly at its 56th Session.

21. The Secretary-General presented his report to the Council on the *Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development undertaken by the UN System* on the basis of its resolution 1000/19 and 2000/20. [4] The report underlined the difficulties and challenges facing UN development cooperation arising from the changing environment and the context in which it has to operate. He cited in particular the issue of globalization, which he said was being driven by forces of economic and financial integration, pervasive impact of information and communication technologies, all of which, he emphasized, was fundamentally changing the context and dynamic of development: "offering new opportunities and posing new challenges".

22. He noted with concern that whilst the fiscal health of most major industrial nations had improved, overall official development assistance (ODA) and multilateral development cooperation had been either stagnant or on decline. Furthermore, he noted that although the framework and content of the development agenda had been enlarged and deepened, uneven and inadequate economic growth in the poorest countries remained a major obstacle to the attainment of this broader agenda. As a variety of channels and instruments for development cooperation were being used more than in the past, the United Nations

---

[4] E/2001/66.

had now to operate in a more intensely competitive environment with reduced resources and partners to contribute to the achievement of time-bound targets.

23. The Secretary-General underscored the wide acceptance of human rights, the right to development and the rights-based approach to development being broadly pursued and encouraged by the UN system to provide support to national efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization, once viewed as strictly national endeavours. The *UN Millennium Declaration* (General Assembly resolution 55/2) recognized globalization as "the central challenge" facing the world and the UN today. A major task and opportunity for development cooperation would thus be to ensure that globalization facilitated development efforts and that its benefits were more equitably distributed. He further acknowledged that the United Nations system operational activities could, through its advisory and upstream work, support appropriate policies of the member States.

The Millennium Declaration

24. The Secretary-General pointed out that the *Millennium Declaration*, together with global conferences, has defined a new context, has set new milestones and time-bound targets. In this connection, the General Assembly has called upon the United Nations system organizations to strengthen and adopt their strategies and activities taking into account the follow-up to the Declaration and requested the Secretary-General to ensure system-wide coordination of its implementation.

Strengthening the UN Resident Coordinator system

25. The report addressed the issue of the UN Resident Coordinator system in the context of UN reforms based on General Assembly resolution 47/1999 and 50/120 of 1997. Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 53/192 called on the United Nations system to take further steps to strengthen the system to support governments, where requested, in coordinating external assistance in the pursuit of development goals. The Secretary-General's report stated that some progress was being made in a number of areas including: an improved Resident Coordinator selection process, a revised performance appraisal mechanism, better communication with, and support for, field offices and improved coordination of the country team at the field level.

26. Further steps were taken by the Inter-Agency Advisory Panel to widen the pool of prospective Resident Coordinators and to strengthen the ownership of the Resident Coordinator function by all United Nations system organizations. Competency assessment procedures were instituted with regard to candidates for the posts of Resident Coordinator, with established job descriptions. In order to encourage non-UNDP staff to take up the challenge of Resident Coordinator positions, the Panel took a number of steps to widen the search for candidates, especially women.

Strategic frameworks and programming
(CCA and UNDAF)

27. The report referred to the *United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)* and its impact on recipient countries, based on the evaluation carried out by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) at the request of the General Assembly. Data available indicated that 34 UNDAFs were already completed and 32 were in progress whereas 81 CCAs were completed and 34 in progress in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the CIS. The largest

number of completed UNDAFs (18) was in Africa while the lowest was in the Arab States, with only two. The Secretary-General pointed out that both processes required a commitment of considerable resources, and involved special skills. These same issues have already been identified by many specialized agencies as constraints in their participation in the UNDAF and CCA processes.

28. The report underlined the importance of giving serious attention to possible complementarity or risk of duplication between UNDAF and other frameworks such as the PRSPS, CDF and the sector wide approaches (SWAp) and stressed the need for rationalizing these processes to ensure better sequencing. The Secretary-General concluded that the challenge for the UN development system was to enhance its capacity to adopt and respond with agility and flexibility to a rapidly changing global environment. He also recognized that the United Nations could not be an agent of change without "itself changing" and it could not confront new challenges without challenging itself. He also concluded that whilst institutional identity promoted advocacy and issue-oriented focus, and thus contributed to multilateral development, excessive attachment to institutional identities and legitimacy could hamper an integrated and holistic approach. He emphasized that the notion of joint programming needed to be translated into action to include a whole range of players of the individual country concerned. UNDAF provided the launching pad for further progress in addressing these needs.

29. The Council welcomed the report and generally acknowledged the considerable progress made since UNDAF had been introduced as one of the Secretary-General's reform measures. It also (G77 and China) highlighted the concern of developing countries regarding declining ODA in general and funding for development activities of the UN system in particular. In its statement to the Council, the G77 declared that provision of financial resources for operational activities of the UN system was a precondition for ensuring the efficiency and impact of such activities; hence, funding should be sufficient, secure, stable and predictable.

5. Conclusions

30. The Secretary-General's reports on ICT and the triennial comprehensive policy review of United Nations system operational activities for development highlighted a number of pertinent issues of concern to the UN system as a whole and which have long-term implications for ILO technical cooperation activities and the ILO's role in UN reforms in general. The Office will continue to monitor and follow up developments on these issues and ensure that field offices, technical units/InFocus programmes at headquarters are kept informed.

Geneva, 28 September 2001.