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PROGRAMME OF WORK AND ITS EVALUATION

2010-2011: Draft strategic framework and evaluation plans for the 2008-2009 biennium

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document gives an overview of the planned performance assessments and self-evaluations for the Trade subprogramme. In line with the decision of the Commission at its annual session in 2004 (document E/2004/37-E/ECE/1416, para. 28) requesting each Sectoral Committee to conduct biennial evaluations, it sets the framework for an evaluation of the 2008-2009 biennium. The Committee is invited to review and agree on the expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievement proposed for each cluster of activities in this framework.

In addition, the Committee is presented with a proposal for the subprogramme's 2010-2011 strategic framework, drawn up in the context of the United Nations programme budget preparations. The Committee is also invited to review this proposal before its submission to the Executive Committee.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Like any large organisation, the United Nations, including the UNECE, is expected to plan its activities in advance and with the participation of stakeholders, enabling the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly to make the necessary funding decisions. Likewise after a defined period – in the case of the United Nations two years – those responsible for a programme should report on their achievements and be answerable for the results.
2. In recent years, the United Nations has moved to a results-based management system, where programmes are assessed in terms of results achieved and not just the outputs produced. This necessitates putting in place mechanisms to monitor and report on achievements and lessons learned which should lead to improved performance.
3. In the case of the Trade subprogramme, there are two formal frameworks for programme planning, performance assessment and reporting:
 - (a) United Nations-wide mandatory assessment system, in compliance with the instructions provided by the General Assembly and Headquarters; and
 - (b) UNECE biennial performance evaluations to be implemented by each Sectoral Committee at the request of the Commission.
4. Each of the two systems has its legitimate requirements, and cannot be ignored or short-circuited. The challenge is to align all the processes and to streamline the use of resources, for instance by harmonizing planning periods, and using the same methods to assess performance.

II. UNITED NATIONS-WIDE MANDATORY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

5. In order to achieve the best possible results and as mandated by the United Nations, two key tools are employed by all its entities to ensure that the work carried out corresponds adequately to objectives set and the needs of users and stakeholders:
 - (a) The United Nations results-based management and results-based budgeting framework; and
 - (b) Self-evaluations.
6. According to the United Nations results-based management and results-based budgeting system, all subprogrammes, before each biennium set up a strategic framework that determines their objectives in terms of “expected accomplishments” and, for each of them, indicators of achievement. The 2008-2009 Strategic Framework for the Trade subprogramme was approved by the General Assembly (A/61/6 (Prog. 16)).
7. Apart from the above assessments, subprogramme managers are also requested to undertake self-evaluations of selected areas of work, projects or key activities. The main aim of these self-evaluations is to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the work undertaken and to optimize its impact. For example, in the 2008-2009 biennium, the following self-evaluations are planned:

- (a) A survey analyzing UN/CEFACT stakeholders' satisfaction with the UN/CEFACT Forum. The survey will be conducted through a web-based questionnaire.
- (b) A survey analyzing the participants' satisfaction with activities related to the WP.6. The survey will also be conducted through a web-based questionnaire.

III. UNECE BIENNIAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS 2008-2009

8. The UNECE member countries, being committed to the transparency and effectiveness of programme management, agreed, at the Commission session in 2004, to place more emphasis on evaluation as a tool in managing the Commission's work. The Sectoral Committees were therefore requested by the Commission to conduct biennial evaluations of their respective subprogrammes and to take into account the results of these evaluations in determining their work programmes. The 2005 UNECE reform further strengthened this approach.

9. The biennial evaluations should give an opportunity for the members of each Sectoral Committee to review and reaffirm, on a continuous basis, the relevance of the activities and their clusters in view of the subprogrammes' objectives. The results of these evaluations should contribute to defining subprogramme priorities and the related redistribution of resources.

10. In the context of the biennial evaluations, each Sectoral Committee has been mandated to identify clusters of activity and agree on expected accomplishments for 2008-2009 for each of them, together with the related indicators of achievement and measurement methodologies. This approach is at a level of detail corresponding more closely to reality in the UNECE context than the necessarily more aggregated United Nations-wide approach (see section II above), while following the same results-based methodology.

11. These biennial evaluations should comprise two phases: a) a planning phase, prior to each biennium as mentioned above; and b) an evaluation phase, towards the end of any biennium, drawing up an accomplishment account for each expected accomplishment, including lessons learned and recommendations for possible programmatic adjustments.

12. The secretariat has drawn up draft expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for each cluster of its activities for review and agreement by the Committee. In 2009, at its annual session, the Committee will be requested to address some key evaluation elements (relevance, effectiveness, impact and efficiency) in reviewing the accomplishments of the subprogramme in each of its clusters. Some guidelines for these evaluations have been prepared by the UNECE Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and are available in the "Guide for biennial evaluations of subprogramme performance by UNECE sectoral Committees" available at <http://www.unece.org/commission/biennial-evaluations-guide.pdf>.

13. The following clusters of activities were identified for the Trade subprogramme 6: Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business; Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies; and Agricultural Quality Standards.

14. The draft expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for these clusters for the purpose of the 2008-2009 biennial performance evaluations are presented in annex 2.

15. *The Committee is invited to discuss and agree on the expected accomplishments for the 2008-2009 biennial performance evaluations.*

IV. UNITED NATIONS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2010-2011

16. In accordance with the UNECE programme planning process, the draft strategic framework has to be reviewed by the Sectoral Committees before submission to the Executive Committee in November/December 2007 and to United Nations Headquarters in early 2008.

17. As outlined in annex 3, the 2010-2011 strategic framework for the subprogramme contains the following elements:

- (a) Subprogramme objective;
- (b) Expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement;
- (c) Strategy to achieve the subprogramme's expected accomplishments and objective; and
- (d) List of legislative mandates.

18. For reference purposes, the approved Strategic Framework for 2008-2009 can be found in annex 3.

19. *The Committee is invited to review the draft 2010-2011 Strategic Framework before its submission to the Executive Committee.*

ANNEX 1

**Expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement
for the Trade subprogramme, per cluster of activities, for the purpose of 2008-2009
biennial performance evaluations**

1. The following three clusters of activities have been identified:
 - (a) Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (implemented by UN/CEFACT);
 - (b) Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (implemented by WP.6);
 - (c) Agricultural Quality Standards (implemented by WP.7).

2. Below are the expected accomplishments related to each cluster of activities and their respective indicators of achievement.

A. Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Expected accomplishments for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business.	(i) Number of new and/or revised UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business agreed upon by member States. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 12</i>
	(ii) Number of countries (regions), international organizations and sectors involved in the development of UN/CEFACT standards.
(b) Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms and standards for trade facilitation.	(i) Number of downloads of key recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools from the UNECE Internet site, as a proxy for their use. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 100.000 downloads</i>
	(ii) Number of requests for assistance received from countries and other international organizations to promote and implement UNECE trade facilitation and e-business instruments and responses. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 11</i>

B. Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies

Expected accomplishments of Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for regulatory cooperation.	Number of new and/or revised UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for regulatory cooperation agreed upon by member States. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 2</i>
(b) Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for regulatory cooperation.	(i) Number of requests for assistance received from member States and other international organizations to promote and implement UNECE regulatory cooperation and standardization policy instruments and responses. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 4</i>

C. Agricultural Quality Standards

Expected accomplishments of Agricultural Quality Standards	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for agricultural produce.	Number of new or revised international standards, recommendations and implementation guidelines agreed upon by member States. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 25</i>
(b) Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools for agricultural produce.	(i) Degree of application of UNECE standards to be measured through a survey. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 982</i>
	(ii) Number of requests for assistance received from member States and other international organizations to promote and implement UNECE agricultural quality standards instruments. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 5</i>
	(iii) Number of participants trained through capacity-building activities (workshops and training courses) on the implementation of the agricultural standards. <i>Target 2008-2009 - 150</i>

ANNEX 2

Proposed strategic framework for the period 2010-2011

Subprogramme 6 – Trade

1. The Strategic Framework is the key planning document for the United Nations results-based budget. For each subprogramme, the following components are defined for planning and budgeting purposes: (a) the objective, (b) the expected accomplishments and (c) the indicators of achievement. All programme outputs must be related to one of the expected accomplishments, and the indicators of achievement are used to measure the implementation of the subprogramme.

2. The Draft Strategic Framework for 2010-2011 has been reviewed by the Bureau of the Committee and, after approval by the Committee, the final version will be submitted first to the Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for approval, and then to United Nations Headquarters.

3. At its 2008 session, the Committee will approve its programme of work for 2010-2011 which will be based on this strategic framework and will provide the information for the items to be included in the detailed budget submission. The actual budget submission will be reviewed by the Bureau of the Committee, to ensure that it is in conformance with the programme of work, and will be submitted, like the Strategic Framework, first to the Executive Committee of the Economic Commission for approval and then to UN Headquarters for approval.

A. Objective of the Organization

4. To facilitate trade and trade-related economic cooperation among countries of the ECE region and with the rest of the world.

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enlarged and enhanced set of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools, for trade facilitation, electronic business, regulatory cooperation and agricultural produce.	(i) Number of new and/or updated UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, and tools for trade facilitation and electronic business.
	(ii) Number of new and/or updated UNECE recommendations and standards for regulatory cooperation agreed by member States.
	(iii) Number of new and/or updated UNECE recommendations and standards for agricultural produce agreed upon by member States.

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat	Indicators of achievement
(b) Increased implementation of UNECE recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools, for trade facilitation, electronic business, regulatory cooperation and agricultural produce.	(i) Number of countries that reported the implementation of key trade facilitation, electronic business recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools.
	(ii) Number of countries that reported the implementation of agricultural quality standards.
	(iii) Number of downloads of key recommendations, norms, standards, guidelines and tools from the UNECE Internet site, as a proxy for their use.
	(iv) Number of requests for assistance received from member States and other international organizations to assist in the promotion and implementation of UNECE trade related instruments.
	(v) Number of participants trained through capacity-building activities (workshops and training courses) supporting the implementation of UNECE trade related instruments.

B. Strategy

5. The responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Trade and Timber Division. The subprogramme supports the United Nations Millennium Declaration Goal 8 of, “an open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading system” and takes into account the importance given to trade as a key vehicle for economic growth, elimination of poverty, and greater regional cooperation and stability in other major United Nations documents. The subprogramme will achieve this by working to *reduce barriers to trade in goods and services caused by differences in regulatory approaches and differences in the procedures, standards and documents used by governments and business for trade*. More concretely, it will develop and promote:

- (a) *Simple, transparent and effective processes for global commerce* through the development and maintenance of international trade facilitation instruments, especially to support international supply chains and the integration of countries into the global economy. These instruments include global standards and best practices for: moving from paper-based to electronic business-based processes;

and for the harmonization, simplification and automation of information flows and business practices used in international trade.

- (b) *Predictable, transparent and harmonized regulatory environment for commerce and business* through the development of frameworks for regulatory convergence, the promotion of international standards within the regulatory environment, and the identification of best practices for regulatory enforcement.
- (c) *Trade in agricultural produce supported by agreed upon, clear and easy to use commercial quality standards* through the development of up-to-date agricultural quality standards that are used by governments for regulatory purposes as well as by the private sector.
- (d) *A harmonized interpretation of agricultural quality standards by developing explanatory brochures* based on the UNECE standards in cooperation with the OECD Scheme for the Application of International Standards for Fruit and Vegetables.

6. The subprogramme will also support governments, with a special emphasis on the less economically developed countries in the region, in the national and regional adaptation and implementation of UNECE trade related standards and recommendations including their integration into national and regional trade facilitation strategies, trade policy and regulatory regimes.

7. The subprogramme will draw on the work of its intergovernmental bodies and expert groups and will reinforce cooperation with principal partners which include: the World Trade Organization, the Organisation for International Standardization (ISO) the World Customs Organizations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), other United Nations regional commissions and a wide variety of private sector organizations.
