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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
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Seventh session, 13 and 16 May 2003
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY EIGHTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Note by the Secretariat

<p>DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION</p>

1. The fifty-eighth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) took place in Geneva from 4 to 6 March 2003. At the session, the Commission made decisions in several areas that directly impact the work of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED), including discussions regarding: the strengthening of UNECE's intergovernmental structure, UNECE's major policy directions and UNECE's activities, and technical cooperation. The principal decisions made under each of these topics are summarized below. The complete report from the UNECE session can be found in documents E/2003/37 and E/ECE/1406.

Strengthening the Organization

2. Delegates present at UNECE's fifty-eighth session noted that the 1997 Plan of Action is still valid and should guide the work of UNECE.

3. In addition, delegates pointed out that UNECE Reform should be a continuous process and part of the broader United Nations Reform. Specifically, the delegates felt that UNECE should regularly review its intergovernmental structure with the full participation of Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) and their subgroups, bearing in mind the following considerations:

- a. UNECE's intergovernmental structure should reflect its mandate, meet the Commission's main priorities and yet be flexible enough to respond to new challenges.
- b. UNECE should consider possibilities for streamlining and restructuring the PSBs, to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness.
- c. PSBs should evaluate the processes they use to review their strategic directions, priorities and Programme of Work, to see if these processes can be improved.
- d. The PSBs should review the frequency of meetings held and the number and length of reports produced.
- e. Sunset clauses should be introduced, whenever appropriate, and evaluations of work achieved should be made at the end of specified periods.

Substantive Issues: Major Policy Directions and Activities

4. The UNECE should maintain its focus on areas where it has recognized expertise and proven advantages, such as standard setting. Any adjustments in UNECE's activities should be demand-driven, but should not adversely affect its well-established work. New activities should be introduced by adjusting the work programme, so that additional budgetary resources are not required.

5. PSBs should continue to regularly review their strategic directions and priorities. In particular, during the budget submission year, future directions for the programme of work should be discussed in preparation for the next programme budget and medium-term plan cycles.

6. Regular reviews of existing and planned activities should take place in order to consider what might be dropped and replaced by new activities

7. In the context of European enlargement, the Commission felt that UNECE should continue to support and develop regional economic cooperation between the EU and the non-acceding countries, as well as among non-acceding countries.

8. The Commission agreed that the UNECE should continue its current approach of mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social development) into all UNECE areas of work, in response to the Plan of Implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

9. The development of information and communication technologies (ICT) and a knowledge-based economy are particularly important for transition economies. All PSBs should further incorporate activities promoting ICT into the work of all subprogrammes. However, UNECE needs to define further the scope of its activities in these areas, keeping in mind the work of the International Telecommunication Union, the principal body in this field.

10. PSBs should continue developing and integrating cross-sectoral activities into their programmes of work, that is to say gender, security sustainable development and ICT issues

11. The PSB Bureaux should continue to coordinate their work programmes with those of other organizations involved in the same types of activities, to avoid duplication and strengthen the complementarity of work. In this context, the Executive Secretary indicated during the annual session that examples of integrated presentations of the work programmes of relevant international organizations would be developed two areas: Timber and Trade Facilitation, and presented to the 2004 session.

12. The Commission has requested that PSBs further develop intersectoral cooperation and activities, e.g. by scheduling bureau meetings of two or three PSBs in the same week in order to hold a joint meeting of these PSB bureaux.

Technical Cooperation

13. The PSBs should participate in the review and streamlining of technical cooperation activities, paying particular attention to the conclusions of the Commission detailed below. The PSBs' discussions on technical cooperation should also take into account section V of the UNECE Reform paper (E/ECE/1399) prepared by the Executive Secretary for the Commission's annual session.

14. Technical cooperation should focus on assisting the transition economies of non-acceding countries and less advanced, low-income countries with economies in transition, in particular those in South East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

15. The priority setting mechanism for technical cooperation activities needs to be strengthened in order to ensure that these activities meet the real needs of member countries, call upon the expertise mandate of the ECE, and do not duplicate the work of other organizations.

16. Technical cooperation activities should be carefully screened to avoid overlap with EU assistance programmes in particular. It was stressed that strengthening this type of cooperation with the European Commission could help reinforce the implementation of UNECE's norms.

17. Financial assistance should be made available to low-income countries with economies in transition to enable them to participate in UNECE activities such as workshops and seminars.

18. Evaluation of technical co-operation activities, though recognized as being difficult and complex and requiring resources, is important and necessary.

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