

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-seventh session

Item 6:

STRENGTHENING THE ORGANISATION

UNECE Secretariat's Self-Assessment

With the commencement of his second term of office, the Secretary-General has expressed his desire to continue the process of strengthening the organization in the light of the Millennium Declaration principles and priorities. In addition, in view of the requests by the General Assembly for various reviews of the Organization's activities, the Secretary-General has launched a review of the Secretariat's programme of work coupled with an evaluation of its management processes and support structures. It is his intention to submit a comprehensive report to the General Assembly in the Fall proposing institutional, programmatic and process improvements. With this in mind, departments have been asked, as a first stage, to prepare self-assessments of their programme of work and submit it to the Secretary General by 15 April.

1. PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

The UNECE'S Review of the Programme of Work is a complex process which includes examining priority-setting mechanism, as well as the activities review of the Secretariat and the UNECE inter-Governmental bodies. It could result in organisational changes and may well have implications for re-allocating the programme budget (albeit within the budgetary envelope voted by the General Assembly) and could lead to some staff redeployment and have job implications.

It may point to the necessity to improve the technical assistance provided to transition economies through the adoption of appropriate selection mechanisms for operational activities and requirements for the appointment of Regional Advisors. It will call for a review of meetings and publications and other outputs. The Programme Review might have implications leading to the need of updating the mandate of the UNECE.

At this stage the review is based only on the Secretariat's self-assessment. In the near future member states will be involved in "Strengthening the Organisation's" debate on different levels:

- (i) Governments (questionnaires)

- (ii) UNECE meetings (ad hoc, annual session).
- (iii) Bureau
- (iv) Steering Group
- (v) Group of Experts on Programme of Work
- (vi) Principal Subsidiary Bodies

The Programme Review should not be taken as an ad hoc exercise but as a consistent part of a year-on-year Action Plan.

1.1 Mandate of UNECE updated (The strategic directions of the UNECE)

In order to better serve the member countries and to fulfil the ECE's mandate of promoting economic and social integration of the region, it is proposed to:

- **Refocus** some of the UNECE activities more to policy dialogue and policy-making which is needed to bring about economic and social integration. Therefore the UNECE should be more policy oriented and not only a technical oriented organization. At the same time, UNECE should consolidate its strength in setting up norms and standards to the extent it is needed. More efforts should be given to the implementation, monitoring and assessment of binding and non-binding law.
- **Use sub-groupings of member countries to formulate common policies and views** of the member countries. Through country groupings whenever agreed, positions and policies could be formulated and presented for policy dialogue in UNECE meetings so that the consensus with other groupings of member states could be achieved. Country groupings could help to stimulate discussion within the ECE region, including best practices and setting priorities for the UNECE thereby contributing to shaping the organisation's activities at the inter-governmental and secretariat levels.
- **Expand UNECE's activities to include the social dimension of growth**
The UNECE region is extraordinarily heterogeneous in terms of development level. Many members represent economies in different stages of transition. Despite the fact that they work hard to accelerate their growth, and to close the gap which exists between them and the most advanced economies in the region, a number of them can be considered developing countries facing not only major economic transformations but also very serious social problems. More advanced transition economies have still to achieve sustainable growth both socially and environmentally. Therefore, it is proposed the UNECE expands its activities to include the social dimension of growth – environment is already included in the UNECE activities. This approach complies with the UN focus on sustainable development (WSSD, August/September 2002, Johannesburg) and the fight against poverty (Millennium Declaration Goals and ICFD, Monterrey, March 2002).

As a follow-up to FfD and prior to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the possibility of extending ECE's mandate to deal with social development, including poverty reduction, local development (incl. human settlement already within the activities) and human resources (ageing and gender issues being a part of new activities) should be looked into. Human resources development is considered a precondition to a knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.

In addition to the above, sectoral analyses would include a social dimension (e.g. social dimension of industrial restructuring including energy restructuring, SME, etc.)

The identification of any new areas should be guided by various criteria, including:

- a) emerging new issues and concerns considered as **priority** by the ECE member countries,
- b) ECE's **comparative advantages** and consolidated areas of expertise
- c) **coordination** and division of labour with other international organisations (see also para. below)

At the same time, the exercise must be guided by the need for **focus** – ECE cannot and should not become too dispersed. Therefore, new activities must be taken on only when other activities are dropped.

Extension and strengthening of old mandates

It is proposed to strengthen three areas in particular:

- a) Sustainable Development; particularly the third pillar i.e. social sustainability. Links with economic growth and environmental protection.
- b) Policy analysis and policy recommendations in the ECE areas of work bearing in mind sectoral and cross-sectoral policy issues to be accompanied by implementation and monitoring of the agreed or recommended policies.
- c) Strengthening the implementation and monitoring of standards and norms and finding technical assistance in terms of expertise, policy advice and training.

The ECE is the only forum where economic and social aspects of integration in the wider Europe can be considered with the full involvement of North America, Russia, the CIS, the Balkans, the EU, etc. (pan-European forum). A series of seminars in collaboration with the EU Commission has been suggested. ECE will have to respond to such questions such as “What is the future for Europe”? What will be post-enlargement Europe like? In order to participate in building a new vision of Europe, a High Level Advisory group of former heads of states and ministers once set up could provide Commission with extraordinary expertise and experience that could assist in finding answers to above questions.

The UNECE region includes some of the members (USA, Russia) groupings (EU) that play a leading role in shaping globalisation. Therefore UNECE would contribute to UN level in the relevant issues of globalisation using its expertise in sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches.

The Commission might also decide to incorporate into the relevant ECE areas various cross-cutting aspects such as the economic aspects of security and human rights etc.

1.2 Priority Setting

1. In order to strengthen the role of member countries in priority setting it is proposed to complement the bottom-up process in priority-setting (on the intergovernmental level from PSB bureaux to the Commission, on the secretariat level from divisions to OES) by a top-down process through;

- (a) Taking into account priorities set at the UN global level (General Assembly ,resolutions, declaration, etc. like the Millennium Declaration, UN World Summits and Conferences, etc.
- (b) Taking into account priorities communicated by governments and governmental representatives through questionnaires distributed to governments of member states, using ECE Annual Session, ECE ad hoc meetings, Bureau, etc.
- (c) Strengthening the inputs of the Steering Group and Group of Experts on Programme Work in priority setting.
- (d) Improving the coordinating role of OES including the regional advisors' contribution (regional advisors based on country groupings will be responsible for consultations with governments of transition economies in setting up priorities for operational activities)

2. In order to respond to the changing demands of member countries, it is important to introduce greater flexibility into the programme of work through adjustments of the programme of work in the two-year budget cycle (within the budgetary envelope) according to the changes in the programme of work agreed by member countries.

1.3 Review of the Programme of Work

The Review of the Programme of Work is based on analysis of three primary factors:.

- (a) Consistency with the main priorities of the Millennium declaration
- (b) Identification of activities that are no longer as relevant or which duplicate the work of other agencies.
- (c) Identification of new areas of activity (including Follow-up to FfD, WSSD, World Conference on Ageing, etc)

In addition to the above, attention will be focused on the areas where UNECE

- responds adequately to member states (demand oriented)
- enjoys a recognised expertise (supply-side, making use of complementarities in terms of issues)
- provides complementarities in terms of membership.

A Preliminary self-assessment of the ECE programme of work is attached to this document (Annex 1). It is based on the first self-assessment of directors of divisions who were requested to assess whether their programmes of work are fully consistent with the main priorities of the Millennium Declaration, to identify new areas of activities and to identify activities which are no longer as relevant or which duplicate the work of other agencies or which have little impact.

As a next step the directors will be invited to suggest adjustments to allocations of human resources within the divisions and redeployment of resources to activities, which correspond to changing priorities.

In view of the budget limitations, redeployment of resources is considered to be the most feasible solution to address the above changes. On the other hand, due to the increasing recognition of the role of regional commissions (Secretary-General's report to ECOSOC in 1998 E/1998/65) in both the preparatory and follow-up activities global conferences, such as FfD, WSSD, WSIS, Second World Assembly on Ageing which requires significant human resources, it is advisable to consider some reallocation of resources within the UN may need to be considered if UNECE is to need meet the global requests.

1.4 Intergovernmental structure

Updating the mandate of the ECE and increasing its capacity to respond to new priorities requires an adjustment of the existing inter-governmental structure.

Critical self-assessment of the Existing Inter-governmental Structure

- Feedback and guidance from Member Countries on the overall programme of work, priority setting, allocation/reallocation of resources among sectors/activities, new issues needs to be reconsidered and strengthened.
- Despite some positive developments the prevailing rigid sector-based approach of the inter-governmental bodies determines barriers to inter-sectoral work and to the establishment of new lines of activities.
- ECE's lack of inter-governmental structures in some key areas of ECE interest (e.g. economic policies, social affairs)
- Not all members of ECE are represented in some inter-governmental bodies (lack of human or budget resources)

Possible Reforms:

Commission (Annual Sessions and ad-hoc Informal Meetings)

The role of ECE must be strengthened in setting priorities on strategic policy issues that will be reflected in the preparation of the programme of work and the medium-term plan, etc.

PSBs

The intergovernmental structure should reflect the refocusing of ECE activities; it needs to be more homogeneous, better focused and flexible. Therefore it is advisable to:

- Merge some of the existing PSBs, where there is insufficient critical mass of resources for servicing them or when their role is clearly inter-related. Risk: the resulting PSB may be heterogeneous and unfocused. There is therefore a need to define a focused programme of work, a mandate of working parties to be reviewed accordingly.
- Create new PSBs: particularly in the field of economic policy and social affairs. Risk: there may result some duplication and a partial over-lapping with other organisations like the OECD, the ILO and the EU. It is important therefore, before creating new PSB, to consult closely with other partner organisations active in the region.

We propose that the PSBs should be further examined, in the light of their capacity to stimulate policy debate and to mobilise resources.

The activities of all the existing PSBs should be re-examined, although the Inland Transport Committee and the Conference on European Statisticians may well remain broadly unchanged at this time. The feasibility of possible mergers between existing PSBs, such as, for example, linking the Trade Committee and the Timber Committee could be considered. Further consideration should be given to creating two new Committees: a Committee on Social Affairs, Local Developments and Human Settlements and a Committee on Economic Development.

A possible new structure of PSB to be considered as follows:

Unchanged: Inland Transport Committee, Conference of European Statisticians, Committee on Environmental Policy.

New restructured or merged committees to be considered:

- Committee on Social Affairs, Local Developments and Human Settlements.
- Committee on Economic Development
- Trade and Timber Committee
- Committee on Industrial Restructuring, Enterprise Development and Sustainable Energy.

The proposal for new committees is drawn from the extension of new mandates and strengthening old mandates of UNECE. A Committee on Social Affairs, Local Development and Human Settlements would basically have an agenda of a social dimension of sustainable development and incorporate human settlements issues, which include not only environmental but also local and social developments aspects, and institutional issues including land management, housing market etc.

In the course of the review, strategies should be defined to promote possible synergies between PSBs, for example organising joint activities, joint plenary sessions, and joint studies.

The Plan of Action (1997) stressed the need for reduction of the number and the length of the meetings of PSBs and of their related bodies, for aiming at focusing debates on well-defined issues.

Ad-hoc Inter-Governmental Bodies

In order to enable UNECE to respond to new cross-sectoral demands, it is proposed that new and more flexible mechanisms for developing policy dialogue could be created. These would be Ad Hoc Inter-governmental Bodies.

These Ad Hoc Inter-governmental Bodies could be initiated by the Bureau for endorsement by the Commission. They would be set up to guide policy dialogue in cross-sectoral issues or emerging new issues, such as:

- Transport, Environment and Health
- ICT
- Economic Aspects of Security
- Preparation of follow-up of specific global summits or events.

Working Groups

In the 1997 Plan of Action, working groups were limited to two categories: working parties of a standing nature and ad-hoc groups of experts for a two-year period, with a precise programme of work and sunset clauses.

A review of existing standing working groups should be made with the view of identifying those which would be phasing them out and replacing them with ad hoc working groups with a specific mandate, defined outputs and sunset clauses.

Bureau of the Commission

The 1997 Reform strengthened the responsibility of the Bureaux of PSB. It is also important to strengthen the role of the Bureau. The functions and composition of the Bureau should be reconsidered depending on whether the Bureaux should be more a strategic body or more operational in nature.

In both cases it could be enlarged to represent more widely the different sub-regions.

Based on the first option, representation could be set at the Ministerial level, in line with what is done in other organisations (CEI, OSCE, etc.): the Bureau could be made up of Prime-Ministers or Deputy Prime Ministers. The Bureau could establish Ministerial meetings and Ministerial level-Task-Forces (e.g. meetings of Foreign Ministers, Environment Ministers, Transport Ministers, or Inter-Ministerial Events, i.e. in Health Environment and Transport). Rule of representation and “rotation” should be established.

Based on the second option the eligibility could be set at the Ambassador level.

The Steering Group

The Steering Group (in terms of mandate, composition) needs to be revised and its activities strengthened. The Steering Group should play an important role in identifying new issues including cross-sectoral issues that should have implications in preparation, revision and assessment of programme of work before submitting it to the Commission. It is assumed that it would discuss all strategic decisions (such as Strengthening the Organisation) preceding the Commission.

1.5 The UNECE Annual Session and the Spring Seminar

1. Background

(a) Objectives

In the Plan of Action, adopted by ECE member States in 1997, the following objectives of the Sessions of the Commission were outlined:

- to review PSB’s work and provide orientations for the preparation of the biennial programme budget.
- To allow for an annual exchange of views on the strengthening cooperation within the ECE region, a debate is supposed to be organised on a major economic issue.
- To allow for a dialogue with the chairperson of PSBs on cross-sectoral issues.

In the 1997 Reform, it was decided to do away with the formal statements, the lengthy detailed and bureaucratic reporting on, and detailed review of, programmes and activities. It was decided to focus instead on strategic policy

issues of a cross cutting nature of priority interest for member countries, and through these discussions to analyse the past contributions and the future orientations of the UNECE work programme.

The 1997 Action Plan foresaw a reduction not only in terms of meeting time but also in terms of number of and length of documents and reports.

(b) Length and Structure

The Plan of Action (1997) stated that the length of the Annual Session of the Commission will be reduced to 3 / 4 days.

It was decided to organise a Seminar, preceding the formal Session, where the discussion led by high-level analysts and academics could proceed freely and informally (the Spring Seminar).

The Plan of Action was very specific about how the Annual Session would be structured:

The first day of the Annual Session was to be devoted to the policy discussion of the implications for ECE of the outcome of the Spring Seminar. A one-half day dialogue would be organised with the chairs of Principal Subsidiary Bodies on cross-sectoral concerns and intersectoral activities, a one-half day discussion with sub-regional groupings, and , depending on decisions taken by the Commission a one-half day dialogue with the Business Community, plus the election of the Bureau, adoption of the Report, etc.

c) Spring Seminar

As indicated in the Plan of Action (1997) the economic discussion during the first day of the annual session of the Commission:

“Will be preceded by a fully served seminar held just before the session to which economists from the Government, academic and business sectors, as well as from other international organisations, will be invited”.

Suggestions for improving the Annual Session.

(a) Objectives

- To review ECE’s work and provide policy directives for the preparation or adjustments to programme of work and the medium term plan
- To provide more opportunity for shaping policy dialogue on strengthening cooperation and achieving economic, social and environmental developments within the ECE region.
- To discuss burning topical policy issues if needed.

- To allow for a dialogue on strengthening the organisation
- To allow for an exchange of views on regional/global links (including how to strengthen the role of ECE in shaping global developments)

(b) Length and Structure

The format of the Annual Session should be made consistent with other Ministerial level meetings. In particular the meetings should be business like and not exceed three days. The Plenary session could be complimented by parallel panels and round tables that would allow more indepth discussion of some policy issues.

Flexibility must be the key to improving the Session. Therefore there must be enough flexibility in the structure of the Annual Session. This could be achieved by including two types of segments into the Commissions session, (1) Obligatory, (2) Optional.

Obligatory Segments would include:

- A segment related to “management” issues (management issues segment)

This segment would deal with strategic direction for the preparation, the revision and the assessment of the Programme of Work (see below), the medium-term plan, the preparation of the budget and the results of the process, and such issues as the funding situation of ECE in terms of its extra budgetary funds and other management issues.

- An annual exchange of views among member states on a major policy issue (High-level policy Issues segment)
- Election of the Bureau and adoption of the report

Optional segments could include:

- Any “Burning Topical” policy issue segment. This was done when the Kosovo conflict erupted and with success. It means that sometime, depending, the timing of the issue, Member States accept receiving documentation at rather short notice and without translation. Otherwise, there are other topical issues, which can be planned more in advance.
- Sectoral and Cross-sectoral segment related to emerging issues in the various sectors, including cross-sectoral issues. What are the main policy issues being tackled by the PSBs and what will be those in the coming year?
- A Global/Regional Links Segment. Under such a segment, the activities of the commission in terms of preparation for and follow-up to Global Conferences could be discussed. But, in addition, this segment could discuss, as appropriate, ideas it wants to feed to global bodies before processes are initiated at the global level.

- An ECE external relations segment in which emphasis could be placed on the ECE's cooperation with other Regional Commissions and UN agencies with international organisations and with sub-regional groupings. It may also be desirable, in alternate years, to consider relations with the business and/or NGO communities.
- A segment could also be used to debate such issues as a reform (Strengthening the organisation), or parts of it (centralisation versus decentralisation, etc.)

In addition to the above and in order to attract high-level representatives such as ministers, prime ministers) it is important:

- Whenever possible, Ministerial Declarations or Resolutions should be taken at the Annual Session. Ministers should feel they meet to take decisions or commitments, rather than simply to discuss.
- Ministers should be invited as keynote speakers to High-Level Policy Issues Segment.

(c) Spring Seminar

The Group of Experts on the Programme of Work submitted recommendations that included the possibility of extending the Spring Seminar in length in link with a corresponding modification in the length of the Annual Session (Nov. 2000)

If the objective were to enhance the strategic orientation of the Annual Session and to attract higher-level interest from member governments to demonstrate a higher profile of participation at the session it would be more appropriate to consider the following option:

- To separate the Spring Seminar from the Annual Session despite the fact that to the Group of Experts (Nov. 2000) separation of the two events appears to be “both disadvantageous and is advisable”. This option takes into consideration that the Spring Seminar “has proved popular” and also would allow sufficient time for the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar to be discussed in advance to the annual session properly.

Programme of Work

In the 1997 Reform it was decided to focus on strategic policy issues of priority interest to the member countries and on the basis of this to provide general guidance for the review of programme of work and activities. The detailed exam of the programme of work and the implication were left to the PSBs.

In other words the division of labour between the Annual Session and the PSBs was to be the following: the Annual Session would deal with the broad strategic guidelines of activity for the UNECE and ensure coordination, while the intergovernmental guidance on the specific aspects of the programme of work would be provided by the PSBs.

Despite the efforts not much progress has been achieved. The Commission has not strengthened enough its Governance/policy making in guiding the PSBs Programme of Work.

The link between the Annual Session and the PSBs has not been sufficiently strong and effective. The participation of PSBs Chairpersons in the Annual Session has not been sufficient to ensure coordination and consistency despite the fact that the need for more intersectoral work and greater consistency has been more strongly felt by member countries. This concern led to the creation of the Steering Group.

The feedback from the Annual Session to the PSBs has been limited. PSBs have made full use of their autonomy, leaving little to be decided on by the Annual Session. If the Commission is to exercise its governance role, it may be that some shifting of the timing of the PSB meetings viz that of the Commission will be needed so that in fact, the Commission can decide on its priorities/directions before the PSBs decide on their programme of work for a given year.

For the above reasons above, the strategic discussions at the Annual Session have become rather detached from the actual decisions on the programme of work, decentralised to the PSB level. Not surprisingly, therefore, they have been perceived as “academic” and ineffective in enabling the Commission to play its role of providing guidance and actually steering the orientation of ECE activities. There is no link between the first day’s discussions and the programme of work.

In order to strengthen the role of the Commission in the priority setting exercise that would provide guidance to the preparation and adjustment of the programme of work, the following is recommended:

- The formal endorsement of the ECE programme of work could be transferred from the PSBs back to the Commission. It would be important not to go back to the bad old habits of detailed and micro-management oversight of single items, but rather to keep the discussions and the decisions at the strategic level. A condition for this should be the raising of the profile of participation to the Ministerial level, which could be established if the Chair is a Prime Minister or a Deputy Prime Minister, like in other organisations (OSCE, CEI, SPECA, etc.).
- Ministers at the Annual Session could give the responsibility of preparatory work for such decisions to the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work who could review the PSBs deliberations and proposals and prepare the ground for formal endorsement. The discussion of the programme of work at the Annual Session should remain focused on strategic issues of policy relevance.

1.6 Review of Operational Activities (Technical Assistance)

The UNECE has undertaken technical assistance activities aimed at supporting transition countries.

- In their application of norms and conventions developed by the UNECE;
- The improvement of their statistical data systems; and
- Strengthening of technical expertise in their administration.

A Coordination Unit for Operational Activities was established to deal with issues and activities of specific groups of countries from which most of the transition economies benefit. Regional Advisors have been appointed on sectoral basis (energy, enterprise development, entrepreneurship and SME's development, environment, investment promotion, trade facilitation, development issues and policies and statistics).

The analysis of experiences until today shows that

- Operational Activities are based on priority-setting in divisions and not on a "macro level".
- Operational activities are very heterogeneous, not sufficiently streamlined and focused.
- They often include the activities from which the countries least benefit and exclude meeting more important needs.
- The quantity of workshops, seminars, study tours training courses and other meetings and activities should be reviewed as to their productivity and efficiency.

The evidence is clear that we need:

- a) A stronger coordination of technical assistance across the country-groupings and sectors.
- b) More support to sub-regions where technical assistance is most needed.
- c) More demand-oriented mechanisms and also a mechanism to decide on which demand will be met.

To reach these objectives we propose to reconsider:

1. A Coordination Unit for Operational Activities within the OES consisting of Regional Advisors based on a country groupings approach.
2. The appointment of regional advisors based on a mixed system: on country groupings (SECI, SPECA, BSEC, CEI, CIS, etc) and on sectoral basis with consideration of a gradual fading out of the latter.

3. A Programme of Operational Activities be prepared by UOA/OES and approved by the Commission on the basis of a) transition countries requests b) work programme.

The role of all Regional Advisors must be extended to include the fund-raising function. We must insist on a reduction of meetings where Regional Advisors participate only as “observers”.

Regional Advisors based on country groupings will be assigned new responsibilities:

- Assure country/country grouping analysis of needs for capacity building in the ECE areas of work.
- To undertake consultations with member governments on their request.
- To cooperate with all PSB and divisions in providing an adequate response to a member country’s request/if necessary hiring external consultants.

Their role will be predominantly organisational (to organise missions, the provision of expertise, training courses) and communicative (communications with governments, civil society, businesses, other organisations). This will not have implications for lowering the quality of Regional Advisors as professionals with high qualifications and flexibility will be required.

The cross-sectoral country-groupings based regional advisors’ approach will

- a) Better respond to members’ priorities
- b) Allocate technical assistance funds according to members’ requests and take into consideration the allocation among countries in country groupings and among country groupings.
- c) Reduce expenses (based on reduction of travelling costs, number of projects, workshops, meetings etc.).
- d) Will ensure better use expertise of UNECE in sectors like environment, energy, transport, etc.

OPA/OES will

1. Overview the current programme of operational activities for 2002 and that for the subsequent year.
2. Put more focus on providing expertise, policy advice on norms and standards implementation, reviewing and monitoring.

2. COOPERATION WITH OTHERS

2.1 The role of the Regional Commissions and the linkages with the global level of the United Nations

1. The UNECE serves as a regional arm of the UN and it plays a double role. It (a) ensures that regional problems are addressed at the global level of the UN and contributes to the UN's global work programme, and b) facilitates regional cooperation and follow-up to the global events at the regional level.

2. Both roles require a clear distribution of tasks and coordination with regard to both other entities of the UN and other regional bodies.

3. More work is clearly needed within the Secretariat to define "who does what".

Division of Labour

The question of who does what, of the division of labour among organisations should be kept under constant review – as the mandates of work programmes of organisations change, as the priorities change, the division of labour may also need adjusting. Moreover, the division of labour should not only be looked from the perspective of avoiding duplication but also from the perspective of determining what division of labour is most rational from the point of view of the final product. If organisation x is undertaking a comprehensive programme in one area, covering all aspects except one which is dealt with by another organisation with very limited resources, is this the best division of labour? It might be more logical for the first organisation to cover the entire programme and allow the second area to re-deploy the corresponding resources elsewhere. The point is that a review of the division of labour should analyse all factors and not stop at a simple determination of whether there is evident duplication or not.

Preparatory and follow-up to Global Conferences

The Secretary-General's report to ECOSOC in 1998 (E/1998/65) speaks of an interface between the above two roles which is the capacity of the regional commissions "to bring global concerns to their regions, and regional concerns to global forums." Preparatory and follow-up activities to global conferences are, as stated in the report, part of this interface.

In this connection, the regional commissions are increasingly tasked to contribute to the preparations of global conferences and to undertake follow-up responsibilities, including the monitoring of the implementation of commitments. These tasks are more rationally done at the regional level. However, this trend, welcome as it is in recognizing the inherent value of regionalism, has a number of implications, which must be addressed.

The first implication relates to resources. Both the preparatory and follow-up activities entail significant human and financial implications, given the number of global conferences in which the Regional Commissions, including ECE are/have been

involved: e.g. Financing for Development, World Summit on the Information Society, World Summit on Sustainable Development, Second World Assembly on Ageing, to name a few of the most recent and upcoming events. In the vast majority of cases, the Commissions receive no additional funding to help defray the cost of the efforts.

The second implication relates to the impact of such efforts on the global process, particularly the preparatory efforts. In many instances the results of regional preparatory activities, which articulate the regional perspective on various issues, are not taken on board during the global negotiations on the “outcome” document of the global conference. The “fault” for this lies on both the secretariat and intergovernmental level. The draft document is prepared, in the first instance by the secretariat unit servicing the Preparatory Committee of the Global Conference in Question, located in most instances in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in New York. While DESA attends the regional preparatory activities and receives the related regional reports, it does not share its draft of the global outcome document with the Regional Commissions nor is that document discussed in, for example, the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA) whose membership comprises, among others, DESA and all regional commissions. That committee was established by the Secretary-General precisely to ensure a coordinated approach to economic and social activities within the UN. As a result, it is not surprising that the regional perspective is often lacking in the draft global document.

The “fault” also lies at the intergovernmental level due to a lack of coordination and linkages between representatives of the same government in Offices away from Headquarters such as Geneva, New York and the capital. This can result in the worse case scenario with a different view being expressed, or with the left hand not knowing what the right hand has articulated.

How to address these problems?

In the current climate, it is not realistic to expect that large amounts of additional resources from the regular budget will be forthcoming. On the other hand, when, in relation to a draft resolution which calls for new activities, a statement of programme budget implications is submitted – the mechanism by which additional resources are approved - there should be a discussion among the concerned parties about what is requested and for whom so as to ensure a more equitable distribution of additional resources among the entities being called upon to implement the new activities.

Secondly, the centrally managed trust funds for such global conferences should allocate some of the contributions to the regional commissions. While this possibility was flagged in the past, the commissions never received anything.

Even if the above two matters were more satisfactorily handled, it remains that sufficient additional resources will never be forthcoming. This clearly calls for adjustments and redeployments of resources within the regional commission and an adjustment of the programme of work. The UNECE was able to organize its major Conference on Finance for Development in December 2000 only because the Executive Secretary informed Member Countries that the third issue of the Economic

Survey for Europe would not be henceforth published. In the end however, more thought has to be given to how the programme of work can be adjusted in the light of demands from “parent” bodies and how the ECE Member Countries can be better implicated into the process.

Turning to the problem concerning the lack of impact of the regional activities at the global level, one suggestion might be for the Bureau members of each region to be given a role in the Global Preparatory Committees. Member States could also commit themselves to establishing better links as appropriate and necessary.

Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA)

In the above-cited report, the Secretary-General also states that “the opportunity of bringing the activities of the regional commissions more closely within the compass of the overall activities of the UN in the economic and social sectors should be greatly enhanced by their active participation in the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs, a decision that has already been implemented.”

The Executive Committees of the Secretary-General are intended to be instruments of policy development, decision-making and management, with the heads of UN entities consulting with one another on work programmes as well as other substantive and administrative matters of collective concern in order to facilitate strategic planning and decision-making. However, the Executive Secretaries are of the collective view that EC-ESA is not functioning as intended and thereby not in fact leading to the desired result.

There are many reasons for this, not the least of which lies in difficulties associated with the scheduling of such meetings. In most instances they are held in the context of other events which bring the participants (who are based the world over) together, such as during ECOSOC, or during Global Conferences or during the meetings of the Executive Secretaries. The reasons for doing so are obvious. But at the same time this leads to a situation where the time allotted for the meeting is limited. Secondly, to maximize on the presence of all participants, the agenda of the meetings is often heavy making a serious dialogue on any given issue more difficult than if the agenda contained fewer items. For the same reason, this leads to a situation where the meeting consists of more a briefing by the chair than by a truly interactive meeting.

Whereas the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) is very process-oriented and operational in nature, dealing with the coordination of field operations, the EC-ESA functions largely as an information-sharing group. It has also been pointed out that its operations are hindered by not having a secretariat or an Executive Committee.

During its meeting in Monterrey, members of EC-ESA had a preliminary discussion on the functioning of the Committee and the fact that improvements were needed. All members agreed to reflect on the matter and to react to proposals that the

Chair committed to circulating by 15 April. The Executive Secretaries welcome the opportunity to improve the functioning of this Committee.

2.2 Cooperation with non-UN organisations

Non-UN Cooperation

ECE cooperates with two regional entities with similar membership: the OSCE and the Council of Europe. It also cooperates with institutions covering a part of the region, including the European Commission, the OECD and the EBRD. Finally, it also cooperates with a number of sub-regional initiatives/organizations such as the South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organisation (BSEC).

As discussed below, the division of labour/relationships with these organisations are clear. Nevertheless, as pointed out above, this should be kept under constant review. Should ECE increase the scope of its activities dealing with the social dimension, particular care will need to be taken to review its relationship with its partners which have a social dimension to their work

(a) Regional Organisations

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

OSCE, with a membership almost identical to that of ECE, has a comprehensive approach to the establishment and maintenance of peace and security in Europe, involving political, economic and human dimensions. While OSCE established in recent years the position of Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, its supporting secretariat is very small and it therefore relies on the UNECE to provide substantive support for a number of its activities including the annual OSCE Economic Forum and to seminars addressing more focused economic issues. The problem in the past has been one of a lack of recognition of the work of UNECE but this situation, has, in recent years changed for the better.

The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe deals primarily with institutional issues, human rights, democracy and social matters. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development meet on a yearly basis to discuss its analytical work on the economies of the region and invites the Executive Secretary to present ECE's work to one of its plenary sessions.

There exists a clear division of labour in environmental matters with the Council of Europe covering issues related to pan-European biological and landscape diversity strategy, areas not addressed by the UNECE.

As the Council of Europe is very active in social matters, particular care needs to be taken, as mentioned above, to avoid any duplication should ECE take on more social work.

(b) Institutions covering a part of the ECE Region

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

As OECD covers all the areas addressed by ECE, the need for cooperation between the two institutions is particularly essential. The following summarizes the major relationships which have been developed:

- Economic analysis: OECD makes country studies, including on some of its non-member countries on a rotating basis while ECE analyses macro-economic developments in all countries of the region, examines interdependencies between them and the rest of the world and focuses on issues related to the transition process.
- Statistics: ECE relies heavily on data collected by OECD for Western Europe and North America, while ECE is the major provider of economic statistics for transition economies. With regard to the conceptual and methodological development of statistics, OECD participates in the CES, and its head of statistics is a permanent observer in the Bureau of the CES. Thus it helps, along with EUROSTAT, the IMF and the World Bank to harmonize the programmes of work of all organizations active in the region.
- Environment: OECD focuses its work on studies and recommendations on economic tools for environmental protection while ECE develops conventions and norms and provides assistance for their implementation. At the country level, OECD conducts environmental performance reviews (EPRs) for its members and ECE for the transition countries.
- Agricultural trade standards: OECD takes UNECE standards as the basis for its work on guidelines and explanatory materials for fresh and processed agricultural products, and significantly contributes to implementing these standards.

Cooperation has existed/exists in other fields, including trade facilitation and investment promotion.

Already in 1998, given the changing context in both organizations, it was proposed that a meeting at the senior management level take place between ECE and OECD to examine the long-term directions for cooperation between the two organizations and to set the framework for regular consultations to be held for each common area of work between ECE divisions and OECD directorates. This initiative is currently being reactivated.

European Commission (EC) /European Union (EU)

The EU has developed bilateral “partnership agreements” with a number of ECE countries including partnership and cooperation agreements with the Russian

Federation and most of the CIS and stability and association accords with transition countries in South-East Europe. The ECE serves as a multilateral forum for dialogue between the EU and non EU countries on issues calling for regional agreements or policy debates. This occurs in particular in the field of norms and standards where ECE legally binding instruments are translated into EU legislation and sometimes EU legislation is used as a model when drafting legal instruments within ECE for the region as a whole, i.e. the Commission can take full advantage of using the ECE multilateral framework so as to extend its best practices.

The above demonstrates the complementarity which exists between the two institutions and how each can serve each other. It is clearly in the interest of both organisations to continue and further strengthen the existing cooperation and collaboration. With this in mind, the Executive Secretary undertook a mission to the EC in April 2001, accompanied by four ECE Directors and a series of joint seminars are being currently considered dealing with various sectoral issues.

Many departments of the European Commission make important contributions to the work of UNECE in the PSBs, subsidiary bodies and cross-sectoral activities, such as the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society. Further efforts are underway to deepen relations for mutual benefit.

(c) Cooperation with Sub-Regional Initiatives

ECE provides substantive support to a number of sub-regional initiatives such as SECI, the Stability Pact, the CEI, and the BSEC. These initiatives enjoy a strong political backing but, in most instances, do not have the required infrastructure and expertise to translate political dialogue into concrete activities, or, when such activities are identified, to provide the necessary technical support. They therefore rely on ECE to provide the technical inputs in the fields where ECE has an acknowledged expertise and comparative advantage.

Such support needs to be provided in a coherent manner and that the projects decided upon and supported be carefully worked out and reviewed. This point was emphasized by the Director-General of the CEI Executive Secretariat in the recent UNECE-CEI Annual Meeting when he underlined the lack of quality projects and the need, therefore, to monitor the flow of projects through a method of project monitoring and screening.

The UNECE and the CEI are “natural” partners in that both organizations have member states that are divided among EU members, future EU members and those that will remain outside of the current enlargement process. Thus both focus their efforts in favour of a broader European integration. If the UNECE and the CEI are able to strengthen their cooperation through the identification and implementation of specific operational activities, this should help to ensure not only that scarce resources are utilized optimally but also to maximize the impact of such projects.

Follow-up

1. The draft of “Strengthening Organisation (UNECE) has been and will continue to be discussed in the ECE Secretariat.
2. Divisions will be requested to work on new prioritisation which will be re-discussed at the Directors’ meeting and areas of work (existing and new) will be assigned priority level (H, M, L).
3. On the basis of this divisions will be requested to start a revision exercise that would include review of activities (meetings, publications, etc.).
4. Revised and reduced version will be discussed with the inter-governmental bodies (Bureau, Steering Group, Annual Session in an outlined time-order) At this stage we do not expect adoption of the document at the Annual Session.
5. The future ad-hoc meetings of the Commission will be used to re-discuss the document . It has to be in line with the reform of UN to be submitted by Secretary-General to the General Assembly.
6. On the basis of the adopted “Strengthening the UNECE” document the reform will be implemented.