



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ECE/1423
10 December 2004

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Sixtieth session

22-25 February 2005

(Provisional agenda item 7)

PROGRAMME OF WORK PLANNING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

Note by the secretariat

I. Programme planning process

1. Following General Assembly resolution 58/269 and as part of the reform of the Secretary-General, the programme planning process within the United Nations has been substantially revised. The main changes are as follows:

- The replacement of the four-year medium-term plan by the biennial programme plan which specifies for each subprogramme the objective, strategy, expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievement. This biennial programme plan has to be prepared two years before the plan period.
- The programme narratives which take up the objective, expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievement as already established in the biennial programme plan, with the addition of planned outputs as well as the external factors that may have an impact on the programme delivery. The programme narratives have to be prepared one year before the plan period.
- Both the biennial programme plan and the programme narratives relate to the same biennium but involve two distinct and comprehensive rounds of preparation by the secretariat, followed by extensive consultations with the member States.

2. It was the view of the secretariat that, in order to ensure the changes above and respond to the needs of the UNECE, a revamp of the UNECE programme planning process was necessary. This provided an opportunity to introduce two new important features: (i) a greater and earlier

involvement of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs), and (ii) an improved presentation by PSBs of their priority directions and areas for the next biennium.

3. The secretariat therefore made a first proposal relating to the new process for planning the programme of work. This proposal was discussed by the UNECE senior management, submitted to the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) for comments and subsequently presented to the Commission at its fifty-ninth annual session in 2004 as an annex to the note by the Executive Secretary on the UNECE reform (E/ECE/1411).

4. A slightly adjusted version of this proposal was tabled by the Chairman of the Commission during the 2004 annual session, following which the Commission requested the secretariat and the GEPW to work together to extend the proposal to include information on the timing of each stage of the process.

5. Using the Chairman's tabled version as the starting point, the GEPW and the secretariat discussed, reviewed and agreed on a new version which will be submitted to the Commission as a set of recommendations in a conference room paper (CRP.3). Attached to that paper will be a flow chart prepared by the secretariat, reflecting for each process (the biennial programme plan and the programme narratives) the timeline, the main steps to be undertaken and the parties involved.

6. The Commission is invited to consider and adopt these recommendations.

II. Biennial evaluation

7. It is to be recalled that the Commission at its 2004 annual session endorsed the recommendation of the GEPW that all PSBs put in place a biennial evaluation of their programme of work/activities. The main aim is to determine whether the set objectives and targets for the work programme have been achieved at the end of the biennium.

8. As a follow-up to the Commission's decision, a discussion took place at a GEPW meeting in October 2004 where a number of broad directions, in addition to the elements already contained in the relevant GEPW recommendations, for conducting these biennial evaluations were brought forward. These were:

- The need to follow a results-based approach;
- The need to link this biennial evaluation of the PSBs with the new programme performance report (PPR) which is a mandatory evaluation that the secretariat already has to undertake for each biennium. It needs to be underlined that the PPR is a time-consuming and resource intensive exercise. It requires all subprogrammes to take up their expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievement, and determine baseline and target data, as well as methodologies for each of these indicators. Throughout the biennium, the required data have to be collected and, at the end of the biennium, an analysis of the results has to be made for each expected accomplishment, based on the indicator measurements;

- The need to also use the results of other self evaluations which are conducted by each substantive Division, covering either specific topics/activities or sub-programmes as a whole.

9. As recommended by the GEPW and in order to build upon these existing practices, the secretariat has started to prepare a basic guide on evaluation methods which would facilitate the PSBs biennial evaluation. This guide will put together best practices in methodologies used in: (i) the PPR for assessing the extent to which the expected accomplishments have been achieved; and (ii) the past or planned self evaluations. These best practices would be grouped around the main types of UNECE activities. This guide is expected to be available in early 2005.
