

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General  
For Internal Oversight Services

Ref.: 2023/OES/050

From: Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary  
Economic Commission for Europe

Date: 17 February 2023



Subject: **Draft Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Evaluation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe: Subprogrammes 4 (Economic Cooperation and Integration) and 6 (Trade)**

1. I refer to your memorandum dated 10 February 2023, transmitting the formal draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Subprogrammes 4 (Economic Cooperation and Integration) and 6 (Trade).

2. UNECE appreciates the continuous efforts of OIOS to make recommendations on how the secretariat can improve its operations and better support ECE member States, included through strengthened coherence with other UN secretariat and UN system entities.

3. Substantive responsibility for subprogrammes 4 and 6 is vested within the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division (ECTD). In addition to servicing its two sectoral committees, with the same level of resources since 2018, ECTD has strengthened its support to the UN Country Teams in the programme countries of the ECE region within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

4. UNECE notes with satisfaction the report's findings that ECTD "found its niche in a crowded space of trade and economic cooperation" and that ECTD "has been effective in promoting policy dialogue and facilitating adoption of norms and standards", which constitutes the core pillar of UNECE's work.

5. UNECE accepts the 4 recommendations in the report and would like to share its overall perspective on them:

- a. Recommendation 1: When developing a comprehensive framework to document, track and report on member States' request for technical assistance, ECTD will maximize synergies with existing tracking and prioritization mechanisms. These include: i) the secretariat's regular reporting on technical assistance requests, response actions and respective extrabudgetary financing needs to ECTD-serviced inter-governmental and expert bodies, and ii) the UNECE-wide planning for the use of RPTC. In addition to the expected benefits

listed in the recommendation, a comprehensive tracking system is also likely to support the mobilization of additional extrabudgetary resources to better respond to member States' technical assistance requests. Strengthened technical assistance is likely to create synergies with the secretariat's core pillar of activities – its normative work.

- b. Recommendation 2: When developing a division-wide strategic plan to strengthen interlinkages between the two subprogrammes, it will be important to recognise the strong normative role of UNECE, where member States drive and shape the many processes for negotiating recommendations and standards and where each such process is typically undertaken by a very specific, focussed and clearly delineated inter-governmental or expert body. At the same time, the fact that ECTD's mandates on trade, infrastructure financing/investment and innovation centre around the three "means of implementation" as set out in SDG 17 provides excellent entry points for building synergies. Similarly, recent experiences gained through ECTD's division-wide focus on circular economy can offer best practices to build on.
- c. Recommendation 3: ECTD will operationalize existing UNECE-wide strategies on Resource Mobilization and Technical Cooperation. Upon adoption of the partnership strategy in 2023, ECTD will also operationalize it.
- d. Recommendation 4: When working to ensure equal integration of cross-cutting issues into its work streams, ECTD will build on its successes in integrating gender and environment. For example, ECTD's long established work on Gender-Responsive Standards (GRS), the recently established Team of Specialists on GRS, and the inclusion of gender aspects into its Evaluation Methodology on PPPs, into its innovation policy reviews, and into its trade facilitation assessments can serve as best practice. Similarly, ECTD can build on its pioneering role in integrating circular economy into its workstreams: among others, ECTD-serviced normative bodies developed two standards on PPPs for the Circular Economy, the Code of Good Practice for Reducing Food Loss, and the Sustainability Pledge, and established the Team of Specialists for Sustainable Value Chains for the Circular Economy. Entry points already exist for disability (e.g. Evaluation Methodology on PPPs) and for human rights (e.g. supply chain traceability).

6. I take this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Report and to commend the professionalism of the OIOS team led by Mr. Juan Carlos Peña.

cc: (Eddie) Yee Woo Guo, Director, OIOS  
Demetra Arapakos, Chief, Inspection and Evaluation, OIOS  
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**Annex: Recommendation Action Plan**

**Evaluation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe: Subprogrammes 4 and 6**

**IED-23-001**

<b>IED Recommendation</b>	<b>Anticipated Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Entity(ies)</b>	<b>Target date for completion</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1 (results A and C)</b></p> <p>In addition to the existing mechanisms, ECTD should develop a comprehensive framework to document, track and report on Member States’ requests for technical assistance to help the Division inform its prioritization of available resources, identify relevant potential outcomes, and assist in efficient project planning.</p> <p><i>Indicators of achievement:</i> A comprehensive framework for tracking Member States’ requests for technical cooperation discussed, developed and issued by UNECE</p>	<p>A comprehensive framework will be designed at ECE level to track Member States’ requests for technical cooperation and enable senior leadership to prioritize and plan accordingly. PMSSD will develop the tool in 2023 for implementation by divisions in 2024.</p>	<p>Director PMSDD for development in 2023</p> <p>Deputy Executive Secretary for deployment in 2024</p>	<p>December 2024</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2 (results A and C)</b></p> <p>ECTD should engage its staff, PMU and relevant stakeholders to undertake an integrated strategic planning process to develop a division-wide strategic plan to strengthen interlinkages between its two subprogrammes and identify at the minimum:</p> <p>a. the overall divisional vision and organizational objectives, which should be framed around its mandate, strategic framework, the SDGs and the new nexus areas, including Commission-wide topics;</p>	<p>ECTD Director will lead consultations with internal and external stakeholders to develop a division-wide strategic plan strengthening interlinkages between its two subprogrammes, identifying priority themes, potential risks and mitigation measures, following an RBM framework.</p>	<p>ECTD Director</p>	<p>December 2025</p>

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<p>b. the most relevant topics in the context of its mandate, including priority themes vis-à-vis the geographic sub-regions and/or Member States' priorities and need of support, and identify related potential risks and mitigation measures;</p> <p>c. a full results-based framework with clear performance indicators and an articulation of the roles of each organizational unit under ECTD, which includes how each unit will work together with others towards shared objectives within ECTD and outside across other ECE Divisions.</p> <p>d. an outreach strategy on how the Division will communicate with sister agencies including the RC system to ensure that relevant stakeholders are aware of ECTD mandates, roles and comparative advantages in providing the required assistance.</p> <p><i>Indicator of achievement:</i> A common strategy and strategic plan adopted and implemented.</p>	<p>The strategic plan will also include an outreach strategy.</p> <p>The strategic plan will be presented for approval to the two sectoral committees and to the UN/CEFACT by December 2025, for translation in the 2026 Proposed programme budget.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 3 (results A, C, D, E, F and G)</b></p> <p>Based on the common Division strategy (recommendation 2), ECTD should develop Division-specific actions plans to respectively operationalize existing UNECE Strategies on Resource Mobilization, Partnerships and Technical Cooperation, upon adoption, to plug identified risks and strengthen partnerships, especially at programme country level, with implementation deadlines, roles and responsibilities, and a monitoring and reporting framework.</p>	<p>Deriving from the division-wide strategic plan, ECTD Director will develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resource Mobilization action plan (covering XB);</li> <li>- RPTC workplan (covering Sect.23 RPTC);</li> <li>- Proposals for UNDA projects;</li> </ul>	ECTD Director	December 2025

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<p><i>Indicator of achievement:</i> Division-specific action plans issued to operationalize the three UNECE Strategies.</p>	<p>Upon finalization of the Partnership strategy in 2023, ECTD will develop required inputs aligned with the division-wide strategic plan.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 4 (result G)</b></p> <p>ECTD should ensure equal integration of cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, disability inclusion and environment) into its various workstreams, by establishing respective mechanisms and tools within the Division derived from a mainstreaming strategy, which should include the strengthening of partnerships with relevant UN agencies, national partners and think-tanks with subject-matter expertise.</p> <p><i>Indicators of achievement:</i> Common strategy for ECTD on integration of cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, disability inclusion and environment)</p>	<p>A common strategy on integration of cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, disability inclusion and environment) will be fully integrated into the division-wide strategic plan (Rec. 2) and subsequently operationalized in normative and technical cooperation activities.</p>	<p>ECTD Director</p>	<p>December 2025</p>