Intermediate Progress Report – 18.01.2024

Evaluation of the Economic Commission for Europe:
subprogramme 4, Economic cooperation and integration, and subprogramme 6, Trade (E/AC.51/2023/5)

No.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Actions taken to close recommendation	Implementation date
1	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 to inform its prioritization of available resources, identify relevant potential outcomes and assist in efficient project planning. Indicator of achievement: a comprehensive framework for tracking member States' requests for technical cooperation discussed, developed and issued by ECE	Important	Findings and recommendations of the OIOS Evaluation and the Secretariat's Management Response were presented to 128th meeting of UNECE EXCOM (15 May 2023). The OIOS Evaluation was also presented to the spring 2023 sessions of the two Sectoral Committees serviced by ECTD (16th session of CICPPP 30 May – 1 June and 8th session of SCTCS 26 – 27 June) – under a specific agenda item, with feedback from member States and interactive discussion. In 2023, the Programme Management and Support Services Division (PMSSD) has developed an online tool to track all technical cooperation requests received by ECE. The tool will be rolled out in January 2024 in ECTD and other ECE divisions. ECTD has submitted tabulated summaries of the technical assistance requests received to the respective normative meetings. The tabulated summaries describe the content of the support requested, refer to the source/documentation of the request made and provide information on the budgetary implications of reach request. Each normative meeting discussed the respective list, and took a decision, typically, inviting the secretariat, donors and development partners to step up fundraising and resource mobilization in response. Examples include: WP PPP, December 2023 Annex 3 "Compilation of requests received by the secretariat from ECE programme countries for PPP capacity building and policy advisory	*In progress* *Target date: 31 December 2024*

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[1] Critical recommendations are those that address significant and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided regarding the achievement of programme objectives. They should be used infrequently and only applied when failure to implement the recommendation would result in programme failure. Any critical recommendations rejected by the evaluand may be elevated to the UN DSG or SG, if necessary. Critical recommendations that are due or past due are followed up quarterly, in January, April, July and October.

[2] Important recommendations address reportable deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance might be at risk regarding the achievement of programme objectives. Important recommendations are followed up semi-annually, in January/February and July/August.

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			services" in doc "Proposals for future work of the Working Party in support of Public-Private Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals" https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2023_INF2_0.pdf ToS ICP, November 2023 Doc "Supporting ECE member States in promoting innovation for sustainable development: an overview of fundraising needs and opportunities" https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/ECE_CECI_ICP_2023_INF.7_Fundraising%20as%20formatted.pdf WP. 7, November 2023 60. Decision 10: The Working Party requested the secretariat to seek extrabudgetary resources to continue and expand capacity-building on ECE standards and to expand resources and capacity-building on food loss and waste in agricultural supply chains. It was stressed that the participation of the secretariat in various meetings organized by countries to promote the work of WP.7 is important for capacity-building and promotional activities. WP.6. November 2023 "The Working Party took note of the Office of Internal Oversight Services evaluation's conclusions in document E/AC.51/2023/5 and welcomed the evaluations recommendations, notably on establishing a technical cooperation request tracking mechanism; develop divisional action plans to operationalize ECE strategies on resource mobilization and partnerships; and on the need to ensure integration of gender environment, disability inclusion, and human rights considerations in its workstreams. (Decision 4)'" UN/CEFACT, November 2023 Plenary decision 23-18: The Plenary welcomed the results of the evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, sustainability and integration of cross-cutting issues in subprogramme 4 and subprogramme 6 undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (ECE Executive Committee informal document no. 2023/21). The Plenary welcomed the resulting recommendations and called upon United Nations Member States and development partners to work with the secretariat to support the implementation of the ECE strategies on resource mobilization, partnerships and technical	

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			cooperation SCTC, June 2023 Annex Table A 1 entitled "Planned activities, implementation subject to the availability of XB funds" in document "Report on capacity-building and technical assistance activities" https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/ECE_CTCS_2023_8_E_0.pdf CICPPP, May 2023 Doc "Supporting ECE member States in promoting innovation and public-private partnerships for sustainable development: an overview of fundraising needs and opportunities" https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/ECE_CECI_2023_INF.8%20Fundraising_final.pdf	
2	ECTD should engage its staff, the Programme Management and Support Services Division and relevant stakeholders to undertake an integrated strategic planning process to develop a division-wide strategic plan with a view to strengthening interlinkages between its two subprogrammes and identifying at the minimum: (a) The overall divisional vision and organizational objectives, which should be framed around its mandate, strategic framework, the Sustainable Development Goals and the new nexus areas, including Commission-wide topics; (b) The most relevant topics in the context of its mandate, including priority themes vis-à-vis the geographical subregions and member States' priorities and need for support, and related potential risks and mitigation measures; (c) A full results-based framework with clear performance indicators and an articulation of the roles of each organizational unit under ECTD, which	Important	Several preparatory steps for developing an integrated strategic planning process and division-wide strategic plan were taken. For example 1. offering a possibility for the two Sectoral Committees, the four Working Parties and the numerous Teams of Specialists serviced by the two sub-programmes to exchange views among each other, both, within and across sub-programmes. Both of the two Sectoral Committees serviced by ECTD held respective discussions allowing for such an exchange during their May/June 2023 sessions. 2. offering member States in each normative meeting a briefing on the results and recommendations of the OIOS evaluation, followed by a discussion of the and typically the adoption of a decision, welcoming the results and expressing support for the implementation of the recommendation.	*In progress* *Target date: 31 December 2025*

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	includes how each unit will work with the others towards shared objectives within ECTD and outside across other ECE divisions; (d) An outreach strategy on how the Division will communicate with sister agencies, including the resident coordinator system, to ensure that relevant stakeholders are aware of ECTD mandates, roles and comparative advantages in providing the required assistance. Indicator of achievement: a common strategy and strategic plan adopted and implemented			
3	On the basis of the division-wide strategic plan (recommendation 2), ECTD should develop division-specific actions plans to operationalize existing ECE strategies on resource mobilization, partnerships and technical cooperation, upon adoption, to address identified risks and strengthen partnerships, especially at the programme country level, with implementation deadlines, roles and responsibilities, and a monitoring and reporting framework. Indicator of achievement: division-specific action plans issued to operationalize the three ECE strategies	Important	In light of the sequencing between recommendation 3 and 1 (with recommendation 3 to be implemented on the basis, i.e. subsequently to recommendation 1), so far initial, internal exploratory actions have taken place.	*In progress* *Target date: 31 December 2025*
4	ECTD should ensure the 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	Important	With a view to charting the way forward, ECTD started by taking stock of examples documenting the successful integration of gender, environment, human rights and disability in ECTD work streams. Examples include (i) for gender: the recently established Team of Specialists on Gender Responsive Standards, which resulted in the development and adoption of a "Code List for sex and gender in digitalized information exchange" (the Code List also provides guidance on how this information could be requested and subsequently utilized), the inclusion of gender aspects into	*In progress* *Target date: 31 December 2025*

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	with relevant United Nations agencies, national partners and think tanks with subject-matter expertise. Indicator of achievement: common strategy for ECTD on the integration of crosscutting issues (gender, human rights, disability inclusion and environment)		its Evaluation Methodology on PPPs and respective activities (in May 2023, UNECE's Annual International PPP Forum, hosted in Athens, Greece, convened several sessions on gender equality and women's empowerment in PPP; in November 2023, the WP.PPP launched work on a practical guide on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through PPPs), and its Innovation Policy Reviews, and into its Trade Facilitation assessments); (ii) for environment the two standards on PPPs for the Circular Economy (Guidelines on Promoting Circular Economy in PPPs for the SDGs and our Guidelines on PPPs for the Sustainable Development Goals in Waste-to-Energy Projects for Non-Recyclable Waste: Pathways towards a Circular Economy), adopted the Code of Good Practice for Reducing Food Loss, established the Team of Specialists for Sustainable Value Chains for the Circular Economy, and continued expanding the Sustainability Pledge (the Sustainability Pledge, a flagship initiative supporting the traceability of environmental, social and governance (ESG) compliance in circular value chains, reached 100+ pledges from 750+ industry actors in the textiles and clothing sector. Our Sustainability Pledge toolbox was tested in 20 blockchain pilots covering 23 countries across the world. ECTD experts are working to replicate this initiative in the agri-food and critical raw materials (CRMs) sectors). ECTD serviced normative machinery also provided a setting for member States to discuss Circular Economy initiatives, such as information exchange standards for Digital Product Passport (DPPs) (UN/CEFACT, November 2023) or suggestions for integrating Circular Economy considerations into UNECE Studies on RPBTs (Trade Committee, June 2023). ECTD also services the Circular STEP network, which provides a vibrant stakeholder engagement platform for more than 25 government-nominated focal points. This includes 16 focal points from countries with economies in transition, many of whom met at our first Circular STEP Regional Dialogue in Belgrade, Serbia in October 2023 Entry points already exist for disability (e.g. Evaluation Methodology on PPPs) and (iii) for human rights (the Sustainability Pledge for Textiles and Footwear, the PPP work stream). ECTD held regular consultations	

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			with experts helping to shape the way forward. In this context several meetings with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, were held in 2023 and with the "Business and Human Rights" community. Work on the integration of disability inclusion in ECTD work streams has not yet started.	