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Capacity Building Task Force on Trade Environment and Development

UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force
on Trade, Environment and Development:

Programme for LDCs

A Summary of the

UN LDC III Briefing Session

Brussels, Belgium

16 May 2001

UNEP and UNCTAD held a briefing session during the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries (UN LDC III, Brussels 14-20 May 2001), to present the draft “Programme for LDCs” of the UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF).

The briefing informed potential beneficiary and donor governments, as well as other participants at the Conference, including intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations, about the CBTF and its proposed Programme for LDCs. The event revealed both strong LDC demand and donor interest in the capacity building activities of the proposed programme.

The meeting was opened by Mr Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, and Mr Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP, and was co-chaired by Mr Rene Vossenaar, Chief, Trade, Environment and Development Section, Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities of UNCTAD (UNCTAD/TED) and Mr Charles Arden-Clarke, Senior Programme Officer for Trade, Economics and Trade Unit, Division on Technology, Industry and Economics of UNEP (UNEP/ETU). Over 80 participants of UN LDC III participated in the briefing.

The briefing focused on presenting and discussing the proposed CBTF Programme for LDCs – a regionally structured and thematically focused capacity building programme for trade and sustainable development.

Opening Remarks

Mr Ricupero mentioned the increasing levels of cooperation between UNCTAD and UNEP since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. This cooperation has recently been reinforced with the establishment of the UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF. Mr Ricupero emphasized that the environment should not be treated as an afterthought to the development process, but rather as an integral aspect of it. Capacity building activities of the CBTF represent a practical and concrete approach to realising this goal for LDCs.

Mr Toepfer said that nine years after Rio, developed country commitment to providing development assistance to least developed countries has diminished at the same time as benefits from foreign direct investment and trade have decreased or remained stagnant in the majority of LDCs. He stressed the need for globalisation to provide greater benefits to LDCs through an integrated approach that also promotes their sustainable development. This will require greater capacity building and technology diffusion to LDCs and developing countries more generally. Mr Toepfer emphasized that the UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF has an important

role to play here, and that some developing countries and donor governments have already expressed great interest in CBTF activities.

Background on the CBTF and the Programme for LDCs

A presentation of the Programme was made by Mr. Robert Hamwey, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD/TED, describing the CBTF in general, and the proposed CBTF Programme for LDCs.

The UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF) was launched in April 2000. The task force provides a dynamic mechanism able to respond to the diverse needs expressed by Governments for technical assistance aimed at strengthening their capacities to address trade-environment-development issues, and to participate more effectively in related deliberations at the international level.

The CBTF employs a partnership-based approach to capacity building involving the cooperation of UNCTAD and UNEP, governmental and nongovernmental institutions in beneficiary countries/regions, and other international organizations. CBTF activities are comprised of five integrated and complementary activities – training, thematic research, country projects, policy dialogue and networking. Initial experiences in 2001 in participating countries have been promising, and UNCTAD and UNEP are planning to extend CBTF services to a larger group of beneficiary countries, particularly least developed countries.

The “*CBTF Programme for LDCs*” aims to help interested LDCs address emerging trade-environment-development challenges and opportunities by enhancing human and institutional capacities for trade and environment policy design, coordination and integration so as to promote sustainable economic development. The programme will support country-driven capacity building activities for LDCs, through both national and regional approaches, involving training workshops, policy dialogues, and sector-specific projects.

Trade and environment issues identified by policy makers in LDCs have been selected as foci for programme activities. Details on programme themes and modes of implementation are provided in the draft programme proposal (available at www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf).

Discussion Points

Some of the key points raised during the briefing on 16 May are summarised below:

- Participants in the briefing endorsed the CBTF's objective of strengthening LDCs' capacity to analyse and respond to trade-environment-development policy linkages. The need for such capacity building was stressed by high-level government representatives from several LDCs participating in the meeting (Angola, Cambodia, Nepal and Yemen).
- Special consideration will be given by the CBTF to requests for assistance received from *all* LDCs, particularly through the Programme for LDCs, should it succeed in attracting the funding needed for its implementation. In any case, developing countries, including LDCs, will continue to be eligible to participate in *regular* CBTF activities.
- UNEP and UNCTAD will continue to provide CBTF briefing sessions, extending the initial briefings in Geneva to Nairobi, New York, and an increasing number of regional and national venues.
- CBTF activities complement, and in some cases are integrated with, capacity building activities implemented by other organisations within the United Nations system, as well as the WTO. Linkages are also envisaged with the multi-agency “Integrated Framework” for LDCs.

- In addition to capacity-building at the national level, participants noted that CBTF Programme for LDCs can also enhance LDCs' ability to analyse international policies and standards issues relating to trade, environment and development objectives – including through assessments of trade policies – allowing LDCs to more effectively represent and secure national objectives in international discussions and negotiations. Also noted was the ability of the CBTF to help developed countries better understand how to integrate LDCs into their trading activities.
- Environmental and health standards in importing countries can limit the ability of LDCs to benefit from potential export opportunities. The CBTF will enhance LDCs' knowledge of these standards, and their ability to meet them.
- In CBTF country projects and research, beneficiary countries will assess and address issues of national importance that *they themselves* identify at the national level through multi-stakeholder consultations. Programme activities will be defined by proposals submitted by participating countries, which will be financed from the CBTF Trust Fund established for this purpose.
- Requests were made that CBTF training materials be made available on the internet to facilitate *distance learning*. UNEP and UNCTAD plan to make increasing use of the internet for wider dissemination of training and other resource materials.
- Follow-up is ensured for CBTF projects since they are structured to be sequenced and complementary, each benefiting from the input of previous projects and providing outputs for subsequent, implementation-oriented projects. This linkage between projects helps encourage and motivate upstream project participants to deliver successful outcomes, and downstream project participants to follow-up on earlier project achievements.
- UNEP and UNCTAD hope that adequate funding will be secured to support proposed programme activities and permit wide participation of LDCs. The indicative Programme budget of approximately US\$ 1.5 million for 3 years may need to be adjusted once the level of demand for capacity building from the forty-nine LDCs is more accurately determined.
- Developed country government representatives (from the European Commission and Denmark) expressed interest in the CBTF and its Programme for LDCs. The nationally-driven nature of its projects was seen as helping LDC officials *in capitals* to identify trade-environment-development synergies. At the international level the CBTF could also help developing countries synthesise their own developing country agenda for future trade-environment discussions.
- Funding is required to launch and support the Programme for LDCs. At the time of this briefing, the programme remains un-funded.

Follow-up

Following the meeting, UNCTAD and UNEP were approached by potential beneficiaries. In each of these exchanges, representatives of LDC governments enthusiastically expressed their interest and intention in participating in CBTF activities. These discussions have led to plans for initial activities under the Programme for LDCs with several countries expressing an interest – and urgent need – for a prompt start to capacity building. Funding to support these activities is being sought by UNCTAD and UNEP.

- For **Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali** a four-day training workshop will be held in Burkina Faso during July 2001 with funding from the French Government. Following discussions

with country representatives at LDC-III, the workshop will be used as a platform to launch the CBTF regional component for Francophone countries.

- **Mozambique** has proposed a technical cooperation project on Trade and Environment comprising a training course for Lusophone Countries in Africa.
- The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP: **Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome**) are planning a workshop to build cooperation on trade and environment between CPLP countries and launch the CBTF regional component for Lusophone countries.
- **Cambodia and Lao** have requested TrainForTrade training. A mission was carried out in Cambodia on 11 and 12 June 2001 to assess training and other needs.
- The Minister of the Environment of **Cambodia** proposed a CBTF country project on agricultural trade.
- **Nepal** has requested CBTF services some time ago and showed strong interest at LDC-III.
- **Tanzania and Uganda** expressed strong interest in CBTF at a recent workshop in Dar es Salaam.
- In the **South Pacific**, the FORUM secretariat, in cooperation with the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) has proposed a seminar on biodiversity and traditional knowledge as a CBTF Programme for LDCs project.
- **Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo** have proposed to undertake a regional assessment of the environmental and social impacts of trade liberalisation on the cotton sector in the region.

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