
Committee on Trade and Development

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN 2002

Note by the Secretariat*

1. This note summarizes the presentation by the Secretariat at the 38th Session of the Committee on Trade and Development, held on 14 February 2002, on the agenda item "Coordinated WTO Secretariat Annual Technical Assistance Plan 2002".
2. First, the implementation of the Secretariat-wide Plan for 2002 began on 1 January 2002. Operational activities are being implemented on the basis of the New Strategy "welcomed and endorsed" by Ministers in paragraph 38 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration. Implementation of the Plan was preceded by exhaustive bilateral and plurilateral conversations between the Secretariat and Members. The Secretariat remains in continuous dialogue with Members. We welcome the advice that we are receiving, in some cases consistent, in other instances divergent.
3. Second, over the past six weeks, more than 30 activities have been executed. It is to be noted, however, that in several cases, planned activities had to be postponed, some at the request of the beneficiary countries concerned, and others postponed in order to be able to respond to emergency ad-hoc missions related to notifications to be executed within a mandatory timeframe. As to the on-going work, officials in the Technical Cooperation Division are in contact with delegations, in the regions of their responsibility, in order to identify definite dates and venues for the execution of the planned activities. The rate of implementation is equally dependent on beneficiary countries as it is on the Secretariat, and other providers of assistance.
4. Third, a revision was issued to the initial plan to respond to the helpful comments and observations by Members at the last meeting. The revision is contained in document WT/COMTD/W/95/Rev.1. The Secretariat will issue revisions at moments when it considers such revisions necessary. Evidently, last year and this year are transitional years in WTO technical cooperation. Members continue to explore optimal strategies on how best to respond to the new and unprecedented development agenda established at Doha. The Secretariat approach is as stated in paragraph 2 of the Plan. The Secretariat will continue to be guided by superior advice, which commands consensus.
5. Fourth, Members will certainly agree with the dynamic and evolving nature of the Plan. Both the Plan itself, as well as its implementation, are a work in progress. This would ensure that it meets the real needs of both providers of resources and of beneficiaries. In this context, since the last meeting, the Secretariat has consulted with several regional and sub-regional groupings, as for instance CARICOM, in order to fine-tune and focus the Plan more precisely around their needs. The Secretariat would like to express appreciation to the CARICOM Group for their helpful suggestions on the fine-tuning of the Plan to better respond to their needs, within the Latin American and Caribbean region. They were helpful, positive and constructive.

* This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and without prejudice to the positions of Members and to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

6. Fifth, consultations with multilateral agencies have been held, or are in progress, and have also been scheduled in order to identify complementary contributions that they can make. Four, examples are illustrative and should provide satisfaction for several Members who requested information, in this regard, at the last meeting:

- (a) On 25 January 2002 the Secretariat held inter-agency consultations with the World Bank, the OECD and UNCTAD. The purpose of the meeting was to develop enhanced inter-agency cooperation on technical cooperation and capacity building in the field of competition policy, to explain the Doha mandate to other agencies, in this regard, and to seek their support and cooperation in its fulfilment. The Secretariat also exchanged experiences on the needs of developing countries, and the best way of meeting them and each organization's specific technical cooperation plans, and identification of specific opportunities for cooperation and coordination between the organizations. The meeting was considered successful by participating agencies. Invited agencies underlined their support for enhanced cooperation aimed at meeting the requirements of the Doha Declaration. We were able to identify complementarities between the types of technical assistance provided by the various organizations of which advantage could be taken. A significant number of specific possibilities for cooperation, in the form of joint activities, mutual support for each other's activities, and coordinated activities were identified, especially with UNCTAD. It was also agreed that inter-agency cooperation had to be viewed as an on-going process and that representatives of the various organizations would remain in contact with each other on a regular basis and exchange information on upcoming events. The Secretariat is in the process of follow-up with each organization to work out the practical details;
- (b) The second example is the Working Group on Trade and Investment, which has already held an informal meeting to examine the issue of technical assistance and capacity building in this area, with the substantive participation of the UNCTAD Secretariat. More information will be provided as soon as possible on consultations with UNCTAD, in this regard;
- (c) The Secretariat has convened a meeting with several agencies and the key providers of technical assistance on 19 February 2002, to define the structure, parameters, and categories for the WTO-technical assistance Data Base that will be used to provide information to Members on trade-related technical assistance activities by beneficiary country and donor country in accordance with the Doha mandate. More information will be provided by the Secretariat, at a subsequent meeting of the CTD; and,
- (d) The Director-General has convened a meeting of Integrated Framework Heads of Agency, in Washington, on 26 February. Mr. Jim Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, has kindly agreed to host that meeting. The DG will also hold a joint meeting with the WTO African Group and the Least-Developed Countries Consultative Group to seek their advice on that meeting. The Heads of Agency Meeting will focus, *inter alia*, on the implementation of the IF Pilot Scheme and its extension. A report will be made to the Sub-Committee on Least-Developed Countries after that meeting.

7. Sixth, the Pledging Conference for the Doha Development Agenda Trust Fund. The Pledging Conference has been scheduled for 11 March 2002. We hope to have Ministerial participation. Invitations have been circulated to all Members. We appeal to donor countries and invited agencies to ensure that the Pledging Conference succeeds. Success will maintain the post-Doha momentum on this central issue of technical cooperation and capacity building.

8. Finally, the Secretariat repeats and emphasises that this Annual Plan will not respond to all the needs of the beneficiary countries. The Plan is only one out of five basic elements in the overall architecture for responding to the Doha mandates on technical cooperation and capacity-building. These are:

- Inter-Agency Strategic partnerships;
- Strategic partnerships with the bilateral donors;
- Strategic partnership with Regional Banks, Regional Institutions and Commissions;
- The Integrated Framework for responding to the needs and priorities of the Least-Developed Countries;
- The WTO Trade-Related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Database; and,
- The Secretariat Annual Plan for responding to the short-term needs, focused, *inter alia*, on WTO Agreements, building knowledge on the Agreements, explaining obligations, identifying rights, and enhancing trade negotiations and policy capacity.

9. In light of the above, and what we foresee as rapid developments in the implementation of WTO technical assistance, the Secretariat would very much appreciate the opportunity to inform Members periodically about developments in the Plan.
