

**Working Group on Transparency
in Government Procurement**

**TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its meeting of 7 June 2000, the Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement requested the Secretariat to prepare a note summarizing the information that had been made available, to the Group or elsewhere in the WTO, on the technical cooperation activities of IGOs (intergovernmental organizations) in the area of government procurement (WT/WGTGP/M/10). This note has been prepared in response to this request.
2. The information summarized is that received from ten organizations¹ describing their relevant activities which was circulated to the Group in documents WT/WGTGP/W/20 and addenda 1 to 9 in response to a request of the Group at its June 1998 meeting (WT/WGTGP/M/5). The Secretariat has checked to see what other information might be available, including in response to the recent questionnaire sent by the Secretariat to other IGOs, but this has not yielded anything additional.
3. The objectives of the technical cooperation activities of IGOs vary depending on the mandate and function of each organization. However, there appear to be some features common to these technical assistance activities. The present note attempts to describe in broad terms the main features of the assistance available, and gives examples of activities - without referring to every relevant project of every organization. Section I gives a brief overview of the objectives sought by technical cooperation activities. The presentation of the information on the specific technical cooperation activities in Section II is structured on the basis of the types of such activities.
4. The note focuses on the activities of IGOs that have been specifically characterized as constituting a form of technical cooperation. However, it is worth also recalling that a great deal of useful information has been generated and exchanged among participating countries, including developing and least developed, as the result of the other work of the IGOs, including, for example, that of the Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement, the Working Party on GATS Rules, the FTAA Working Group on Government Procurement and the APEC/GPEG (Government Procurement Experts Group).

I. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

5. One of the main objectives of the technical cooperation activities of IGOs is related to ensuring the proper application of the principles and rules of the organization in question by interested governments. For instance, as part of their fiduciary role, the World Bank and the regional development banks focus their cooperation work on the application of their respective guidelines to procurements carried out in the borrower countries under projects funded by their loans. The WTO

¹ UNCITRAL, OECD, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, APEC Government Procurement Experts Group, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, ITC, UNDP, the World Bank and UNOPS.

Secretariat provides technical cooperation relating to the rules and implementation of the GPA (Agreement on Government Procurement) mainly to WTO Members acceding to the GPA and occasionally to other WTO Members seeking information on the GPA.

6. The establishment or improvement of the regulatory framework of procurement in individual countries is another major area of technical cooperation of IGOs, particularly from the perspective of ensuring that such countries are aware of the standards and the principles that are codified in the existing international instruments on government procurement or otherwise providing support to procurement reform activities in individual countries. In this connection, the World Bank has conducted CPAR (Country Procurement Assessment Reviews) in more than six countries in each of the six regions of the Bank. Each review includes the development of an action plan to improve the public procurement system in the country under review. In more general terms, it appears from the submissions that technical cooperation in the area of procurement is often part of the wider efforts of IGOs, for instance of the World Bank, the regional development banks, the OECD/SIGMA (the Programme for Support for Improvement in Governance and Management in Central and Eastern European Countries) and UNDP, to support public sector development, financial and fiscal management, good governance and the fight against corruption.

7. Another aspect of the technical cooperation work of the international and regional IGOs is to facilitate participation in activities aimed at the development of international principles and rules on government procurement to be agreed by governments pursuant to the more general objectives of the respective international or regional agreements or arrangements. Some examples of this type of technical cooperation are related to the APEC non-binding principles on government procurement developed by APEC/GPEG, the development of rules on government procurement in the FTAA Working Group on Government Procurement and the harmonization of procurement legislation in Central and Eastern Europe with that of the European Community by the OECD/SIGMA programme. The main focus of the WTO Secretariat's technical cooperation activities in this area has been on assisting WTO Members to participate fully in the work of the Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement.

II. FORMS OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION

8. Legislative reforms and strengthening and supporting national public procurement institutions to increase their capacity to manage and monitor procurement systems seem to be the main target of technical assistance efforts. Human resource development is carried out to support this work of capacity building.

Assistance in the preparation of laws and regulations

9. This form of assistance relates to the formulation of new, or the improvement of existing, laws, regulations, administrative guidelines and procedures and tender documents. The UNCITRAL Secretariat provides technical assistance to countries that propose to enact, or have enacted, legislation based on the UNCITRAL Model Law on Procurement of Goods, Construction and Services, 1994. The World Bank and regional development banks have also been heavily engaged in this area of activity in a number of countries worldwide. For instance, the World Bank has assisted in the preparation of new national procurement legislation in, among others, Albania, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, the Kyrgyz Republic and several other Central Asian countries. The Asian Development Bank has been active in China, Mongolia and Bhutan. The OECD/SIGMA programme and the ITC have provided assistance to a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa.

Institution building

10. Supporting the establishment or reinforcement of public procurement offices and agencies plays an important role in technical cooperation provided by some IGOs. This form of assistance involves advice and assistance on the establishment or strengthening of public procurement offices and procurement policy implementation units in individual government departments as well as of procurement complaint and arbitration mechanisms. The OECD/SIGMA programme's work in Lithuania, Romania and the three Baltic countries, the ITC's work in Albania and Slovenia and the Asian Development Bank's work in Mongolia and Laos are examples.

Application of Information Technology

11. Application of information technology to government procurement is part of the work of the APEC/GPEG, the Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement and the Committee on Government Procurement. Information on Members' national systems was made available in a demonstration session and a seminar on efficiency and transparency in public procurement, organized respectively by the WTO and the Inter-American Development Bank in 1998.

Human resource development

12. Assistance in the development of human resources to build up and to sustain the capacity for good management of public procurement is provided in various forms, such as training and organization of seminars, symposia and workshops.

Training

13. Training activities include the training of procurement officials, the development of local training strategies and the training of trainers. Procurement training is regularly provided by the World Bank and the regional development banks to the procurement staff who are directly involved in the projects financed by the banks and to the staff of the line ministries concerned as part of the implementation process for every new project and of the monitoring and supervision process for such procurement activities. The courses for training of trainers in the field of public procurement organized jointly by the OECD/SIGMA programme and the ILO Training Centre are another example of training activities. Moreover, training materials, in the form of manuals and handbooks, have been prepared, for instance "Public Procurement: A Manual for Central and Eastern Europe" jointly by the OECD/SIGMA programme and the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin.

Workshops, seminars and conferences

14. Another form of technical assistance has been the organization of workshops, seminars and conferences. Some of the topics that have been treated by these activities in the past include: procurement principles by APEC/GPEG; application of information technology to government procurement by the WTO; bid challenge mechanisms and remedies by APEC/GPEG; efficiency and transparency in public sector procurement by the Inter-American Development Bank; and the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement by the FTAA Working Group on Government Procurement and APEC/GPEG, respectively. The African Development Bank, ITC, the World Bank and UNDP have jointly organized the African Public Procurement Reform Conference. The WTO Secretariat has provided speakers to a number of these regional or national seminars on government procurement. Also the seminars and workshops aimed at providing an overall appreciation of the WTO provisions and mechanisms generally include a presentation on the work on government procurement in the Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement.
