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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME
AND REGIONAL ADVISORY SERVICES**

Technical cooperation strategy

Summary

The technical cooperation (TC) strategy document was prepared in response to a request from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for its TC activities to be strengthened, and brought into line with current efforts to reform the United Nations. The document aims to help clarify the Commission's strategic position with respect to TC provision, improve the delivery, effectiveness and efficiency of TC, and lay the ground for the development of such cooperation. The document outlines the challenges to and the comparative advantages of the provision by ESCWA of TC services, and addresses the subject from the dual perspective of doing the right things and doing things right. The document also sets out a number of recommendations and future actions.

Member countries are invited to review and discuss the document with a view to its approval. They may wish to consider a number of follow-up actions by the secretariat, including the establishment of a mechanism that would allow the closer involvement of member countries in setting TC priorities; the identification of possible ways and means to attract extrabudgetary funds from donors for TC activities; the establishment of an effective TC monitoring and evaluation system; and improved information sharing.

Executive summary

1. Technical cooperation (TC) is aimed at capacity-development. The TC strategy aims to position the TC of ESCWA, improve its delivery, and outline how short- and long-term objectives are to be achieved. The ESCWA strategy builds on its accumulated TC experience and responds to the needs of member countries (clients) for effective and efficient TC.
2. In addition to the socio-economic challenges that face the region, ESCWA itself faces tests that require a proactive and responsive strategy for its TC programme. Those tests include growing development challenges and emerging issues in the region; increasing client demand for TC; increasing competition for donor funding; decreasing extrabudgetary funding; and increasing ad hoc and add-on approaches.
3. The strategy builds on the comparative advantage of ESCWA as a United Nations regional commission with intergovernmental status, multi-disciplinary staff and the role of regional advocate with a global perspective.
4. In order to improve TC effectiveness, the strategy assesses the type of TC in which ESCWA is involved, how we identify client needs, the type of issue being addressed by TC and how that assists clients. The strategy covers the different programme components and funding sources of TC, namely, the TC regular programme, the development account and extrabudgetary projects.
5. ESCWA TC is demand-driven and results-oriented, and focuses on the countries most in need and those areas to which the Commission can bring real value. It must therefore be aligned with the ESCWA strategic framework, which sets out the regional priorities to be addressed, namely, managing globalization and regional integration; social policies; water and energy; and information and communication technologies (ICT). It also gives special emphasis to selected cross-cutting areas, including the empowerment of women, gender mainstreaming and the development of statistics.
6. The focus of ESCWA TC covers five dimensions, namely: (a) common issues at the regional, subregional or multi-country levels, where countries can benefit from each others' experiences and tackle similar issues on a larger scale; (b) cross-boundary issues where neighbouring countries can benefit from cooperation and collaboration; (c) sensitive emerging issues where ESCWA can play the role of advocate and negotiator; (d) interregional cooperation between the five regional commissions and South-South cooperation between others; and (e) at the national level, and at the request of the Government, ESCWA responds to issues that are integrated in United Nations programmes.
7. In addressing some of the above-mentioned issues and foreseen challenges for the region and ESCWA, the strategy considers five TC modalities: (a) policy advocacy and dialogue; (b) policy advice and technical support; (c) training; (d) regional knowledge networking and generation; and (e) field projects. Striking an optimal balance between those interventions is essential if effective assistance is to be delivered to clients and its impact maximized.
8. In order to enhance TC delivery, ESCWA should initiate improvement in five distinct areas, namely, (a) the clarification of its strategic position; (b) the development of a strategic partnership approach; (c) the efficient management of resources; (d) the improvement of communication; and (e) the enhancement of the mode of operation.
9. ESCWA needs to have a clear strategic position in order to improve TC delivery. The TC programme needs to set out a well-defined direction based on existing comparative advantages, and to focus on the main priorities. The programme also needs to be aligned with the strategic framework showing regional priorities, and to use focal points and meeting venues to reassert those priorities with a focus on the least-developed countries (LDCs) and countries emerging from conflict. Where appropriate, advisory services must be supplemented by training, institution-building and clearly defined field projects. In addition, internal coherence and harmonization between programmes, divisions and resource allocation is essential to more targeted, responsive, effective and efficient services delivery.

10. The development of a strategic partnership approach in the region is crucial to the success of ESCWA. TC is therefore seen as a means of strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones. Closer collaboration must be sought with partners at the regional, global and national levels, and strategic alliances created with other international organizations. ESCWA can greatly benefit from increased cooperation with other United Nations agencies in the region, especially at the programming level, in order to avoid duplication and increase the impact of TC. Given that clients are our primary partners, the ESCWA TC programme must be in line with client national development strategy, visions and goals, and should be developed in close collaboration with local stakeholders.

11. ESCWA depends on a reliable flow of financial resources to implement TC activities. Improving the management of those resources in order to best serve the programmatic needs of ESCWA is vital. ESCWA must adopt an integrated resource management approach that addresses the different modalities of TC delivery, while taking into consideration the absorptive capacity of its human resources. It must also improve the quality of outcomes and showcase TC results, in order to attract donors and pool resources.

12. Communication with partners, stakeholders, potential sources of funding and the general public is an important aspect of public relations and image-building. A well-defined communication plan can greatly contribute to the improved flow of information and delivery of TC services. Promoting ESCWA ideas and results can enhance the understanding of donors, clients and the public as to what ESCWA can deliver, and of partners who would be better equipped to collaborate with the Commission. Furthermore, the sharing of information about the programme would improve transparency and accountability to all stakeholders.

13. In order to be more effective and efficient in delivering TC, ESCWA needs to address some operational aspects. The planning process is the starting point of all ESCWA programming activities and special emphasis should be put on ensuring that, as such, it is capable of supporting programme achievements. The planning process should therefore clearly be relevant to ESCWA objectives, be internally and externally coherent, and follow proper planning guidelines. Monitoring and evaluation are integral to the improvement of operations, and in view of the multi-disciplinary nature of ESCWA activities, are vital. ESCWA capacity needs to be further developed in order to respond to the need for an improved TC programme. As an organization of which the foremost asset is its staff and their knowledge, ESCWA needs to heavily invest in sharing, generating, updating and institutionalizing its knowledge. Having clearly-defined responsibilities and, more importantly, adhering to them, is essential to the successful management of the multi-disciplinary nature of ESCWA TC.

14. A plan of action is being developed to operationalize the strategy with short- and long-term expected results. That plan will identify roles and responsibilities, the timeline and resources required.

A. INTRODUCTION

15. The TC strategy is being formulated in response to the request of the Commission to develop TC services (resolution 249 (XXII)). It is also in response to United Nations reform efforts aimed at increasing the coherence and harmonization of development efforts, with a view to achieving greater impact.

16. In an effort to improve the delivery, effectiveness and efficiency of its TC services, and in line with a concerted effort across United Nations agencies, ESCWA aims to strategically position its TC. As part of that effort, the strategy identifies areas where ESCWA TC could excel and areas where it could improve. The strategy addresses two aspects of TC, namely, doing the right things and doing things right.

17. In developing this strategy, a participatory consultative approach was adopted to provide information about the undertaking and gain valuable responses and feedback. During the preparation of the strategy, meetings were held with management, division chiefs, team leaders, regional advisers and junior professionals.

18. This document begins by defining TC as it has evolved over time and outlining the conditions for the success of the TC strategy. The challenges to and comparative advantages of ESCWA are set out in order to

prepare the ground for answering the question as to what we should be doing. It then indicates how ESCWA can best operate, makes a number of recommendations and sets forth future actions.

19. As follow-up to the strategy, an action plan will be developed, comprising both short-term and medium-term phases, in order to prioritize and operationalize strategy recommendations.

B. WHAT IS TECHNICAL COOPERATION?

20. In the past, TC focused on the transfer of skills and knowledge to member countries. As the needs of clients evolved, it became apparent that TC, combined with stronger institutions, should move beyond human resource development into a more interactive and focused range of services that emphasize both national ownership and the sustainability of results.

21. That evolution led to a broader definition of TC, to include the development of three cross-linked layers of capacity: individual, institutional and societal, and a wider scope of services, namely, (a) capacity-building; (b) knowledge networking, which focuses on sharing knowledge and building knowledge partnerships; (c) policy advice; (d) advocacy on emerging and sensitive issues; and (e) promotion of ideas and concepts that are essential to country and regional development. Under the capacity-building umbrella, and beyond the modalities for the delivery of TC, target beneficiaries have been redefined, in both the public sector and civil society, to include individuals, institutions and society at large.

C. CHALLENGES TO ESCWA TECHNICAL COOPERATION

22. Faced with the many development challenges in the region, ESCWA will focus on those where it can best benefit its clients, recognizing the following current and potential challenges:

(a) The increasing number of development challenges and emerging issues in the region require ESCWA to show flexibility, be responsive and have access to the proper resources if it is to meet demands for TC;

(b) Growing demand for TC in the region requires ESCWA to make choices, in view of its limited resources, and to respond to client needs promptly;

(c) Increasing competition between international organizations for donor funding will affect the access that ESCWA has to resources. It must therefore market itself better and become more quality- and results-oriented;

(d) Extrabudgetary resources are more difficult to obtain and therefore, ESCWA needs to better plan its technical cooperation programme and ensure that it fits within a framework that would facilitate the mobilization of the required funding;

(e) Prevalence of ad hoc and add-on approaches requires ESCWA to adopt a programmatic approach in order to obtain the necessary resources and respond to expected needs in a timely fashion.

D. THE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE OF ESCWA

23. ESCWA promotes economic and social development with a view to achieving increased regional and subregional cooperation and integration. Through TC, it seeks to combine its analytical work with operational activities. It formulates and promotes development cooperation projects and activities commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region and acts as the executing agency for relevant projects.

24. The main comparative advantages that ESCWA has over other regional and international organizations are the following:

(a) A regional perspective and analysis of developments, with particular reference to the emerging issues affecting member countries. A long-term programmatic approach and a responsive TC programme have given ESCWA a good command of high-priority development issues;

(b) Its intergovernmental status facilitates the tackling of regional, multi-country and cross-boundary issues. The relationship of ESCWA with its clients is crucial to its ability to tackle regional issues;

(c) With staff from a range of disciplines able to mainstream multidisciplinary development issues, ESCWA has both the flexibility and the skills to address complex issues;

(d) Advocacy of emerging critical global issues at regional level. While other regional organizations are active in some of the same areas of development, ESCWA has the advantage of being part of a global organization that addresses emerging and sensitive issues from which regional organizations have shied away.

E. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL TECHNICAL COOPERATION

25. If TC is to be effective, the scope of the services provided to clients must be identified and their quality ensured. In order to maximize the impact of TC, it must be demand driven; results-oriented; focus on the countries most in need; and focus on those areas of work and types of activity where ESCWA can add real value, has recognized expertise and a good implementation track record.

26. The following general guidelines for successful TC should be observed:

(a) TC should be aligned with the ESCWA strategic framework (which defines the scope of ESCWA activities, based on regional and country priorities and on available capacities) and build on its accomplishments in order to ensure coherence within the programme of work and between the regular work programme and TC;

(b) TC should be viewed as translating the findings and recommendations of analytical work into operational activities. That requires varied, complementary approaches, one of its strengths which ESCWA may capitalize;

(c) Throughout the planning and implementation processes, ESCWA must develop a programmatic approach, providing integrated solutions to the development problems of the region and capitalizing on its multidisciplinary staff;

(d) A long-term approach which exceeds the biennium should be adapted, allowing TC programmes to take into account the long-term goals of clients;

(e) ESCWA should assume a leadership role, initiating approaches and activities and addressing emerging TC issues, especially in areas where it has a comparative advantage or where other funding organizations are not active. The TC programme should also facilitate the introduction of new ideas and showcase results that will be followed up through ESCWA or other donor activities.

27. The above guidelines constitute a checklist by means of which ESCWA can ensure that its TC is providing clients with optimum benefit.

F. DOING THE RIGHT THINGS

28. In order to improve the effectiveness of TC, answers must be found to certain questions including the following:

(a) What are the TC needs and demands of our clients?

(b) What types of issue can be effectively addressed through regional TC?

(c) What can TC contribute to our clients?

29. The answers to those questions will provide the focus needed to best serve clients and meet their demands.

1. *What are clients' cooperation needs and demands?*

30. In order to better target its TC services and reach the clients with the most pressing needs, ESCWA must systematically engage its clients and other stakeholders with a view to identifying needs and meeting demands in a timely fashion. Such engagement will involve the following:

(a) Effective needs assessment and discussions with our clients in order to clearly situate needs in the overall national and regional perspectives and plans;

(b) Follow-up on feedback received from missions, which can provide ESCWA with a more detailed perspective of the situation on the ground;

(c) Cooperation with other partners and stakeholders in the region, including donors, civil society and the private sector in order to identify the players, counterparts and potential strategic partners and their programmes and how they may be used to meet client needs;

(d) Knowledge of country and region development orientation and plans in order to ensure that the services provided correspond to the framework of the United Nations system development cooperation at country level and to the regional development cooperation provided by ESCWA;

(e) Comparative advantage assessment of ESCWA in areas of intervention, in order to ensure that it is best placed to provide the requisite services.

2. *What types of issue can be effectively addressed through regional technical cooperation?*

31. The aim of ESCWA is to assist countries in the region to achieve the goals set at regional and global conferences, including the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The ESCWA strategic framework for 2006-2007 identifies four regional priorities, namely, regional integration and responding to globalization; integrated social policies; the management of regional resources; and ICTs.

32. Special emphasis will also be placed on the following: countries emerging from conflict; the advancement and empowerment of women; statistics; and LDCs, specifically, Yemen.

33. The focus of TC provided by ESCWA is on the following areas of common concern to client countries:

(a) Common issues at regional, subregional or multi-country level, where countries can benefit from each others' experiences and tackle similar issues on a larger scale;

(b) Cross-boundary issues, where neighbouring countries can benefit from cooperation and collaboration;

(c) Emerging issues of a sensitive nature, where ESCWA can assist in raising awareness, advocacy and negotiations;

(d) Interregional cooperation between the regional commissions and South-South cooperation between other actors.

34. The regional dimension is a significant comparative advantage which should be continuously borne in mind and is very important to the sustainability of the ESCWA TC programme.

35. ESCWA will continue to respond to requests from member countries for assistance at the national level. Wherever relevant, such cooperation needs to relate to and reinforce United Nations system TC programmes. While country-level cooperation is not the focus of ESCWA TC, it provides a basis for scaling-up and introducing replication and the multiplier effect to some national issues at the regional level.

3. How does technical cooperation benefit clients?

36. The challenge for ESCWA is to ensure that clients reap maximum benefit from its TC, which can be offered in a variety of combinations under multiple or single sectors or disciplines, covering multiple or single countries, and addressing a variety of issues. A number of areas can be identified in which ESCWA can be most effective in assisting clients through TC, including the following:

- (a) The implementation of commitments made by client countries at regional and global conferences;
- (b) The formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies, strategies, programmes and legal and regulatory frameworks;
- (c) Preparation for and monitoring of progress at the regional level towards the goals and targets of United Nations global and regional conferences, including, inter alia, the Millennium Declaration (MD), and MDGs;
- (d) Building consensus and negotiating agreements in global and regional forums.

37. In addition to the traditional approaches, ESCWA may use some of the following modalities:

- (a) Developing partnerships with civil society and the private sector;
- (b) Encouraging and developing South-South relationships between ESCWA member and other developing countries;
- (c) Knowledge-sharing and networking through the establishment of formal and informal venues for information and experience exchange and sharing.

38. TC should not be restricted to the activities set out above, but those should form the bulk of the assistance.

G. DOING THINGS RIGHT

39. ESCWA has reached a point at which it needs to further develop and innovate its TC provision in order to serve clients more effectively. Answers must be found to the following questions:

- (a) How can TC be delivered and strengthened?
- (b) What approach should be adopted towards strategic partnerships?
- (c) How can available resources best be managed and extrabudgetary resources be mobilized?

40. The answers to those questions, together with the answers to the questions set out below will provide the framework for a TC strategy.

1. How can technical cooperation be delivered and strengthened?

41. TC activities may be divided into five different categories, with the focus on areas where improvements should be made in order to achieve better results:

- (a) Policy advocacy and dialogue responding to emerging and sensitive issues requiring immediate attention, and in order to assist in the fulfillment of regional and global commitments made by member countries;
- (i) Advocacy, especially at the national decision-making and policy levels, regarding implementation of international and regional plans and legal instruments;
 - (ii) Capitalization on the multidisciplinary advantage through combining the competencies and knowledge of ESCWA in support of policy-related dialogue between the various stakeholders at the national and regional levels. Internally, that will be supported by greatly improved multidisciplinary team work and information-sharing;
 - (iii) The addressing of emerging and critical issues through a number of modalities that are essential in order to facilitate dialogue and respond to needs.
- (b) Policy advice and technical support to strengthen the formulation and effective implementation of national policies, strategies and programmes, and to develop and strengthen legal and institutional frameworks;
- (i) Such advice and support are core components of TC services that are focused on addressing issues at the decision-making level; the management of capacity-building activities; the adoption and implementation of international legal instruments, norms, standards and regulations; and the provision of project planning support;
 - (ii) A balanced approach with other TC services is basic to the effectiveness of the TC programme and its sustainability;
 - (iii) TC services must build on clients' national and donor programmes in order to ensure that the delivery of services is consistent with the overall country programme.
- (c) Capacity-building (human resources, institutional and societal) to enhance the capacity of clients to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate national programmes;
- (i) Training and self-education activities for maximum impact, especially when combined with advisory services;
 - (ii) Establishment of capacity-building networks, at both the national and regional levels, in order to sustain and expand the learning process;
 - (iii) Multiplier effect in training to ensure the sustainability and replication of the training itself through the training of trainers.
- (d) Regional knowledge networking that facilitates the process of sharing information and experiences between member countries and beyond in order to innovate, replicate and combine efforts;
- (i) Internal knowledge management within ESCWA is a culture that must be adopted by the organization in order to preserve, develop and share available knowledge. Cooperation with regional resource facilities and United Nations organizations must be encouraged in order to benefit from knowledge management programmes that have already been initiated;
 - (ii) Stakeholder knowledge sharing and the advocacy of a culture of knowledge through networking, sharing experiences and feeding lessons learnt back into programmes. Knowledge sharing should not be limited to Governments but must include other organizations at the local and regional levels, notably regional knowledge centres with documented experiences and information;

- (iii) Knowledge sharing beyond regional borders to include experiences from other regional commissions would benefit both ESCWA and its clients. Already established global and regional networks and thematic groups should be a good venue for that type of knowledge sharing;
 - (iv) Knowledge generation, especially in areas where others are not active, could assist in establishing lessons learnt and improve operational work through research and documentation and the sharing of experiences.
- (e) Field projects that are innovative and replicable;
- (i) Demonstration field projects that bring the capacity-building effort to an operational learning environment, which would help translate learning into immediate and valuable field practice;
 - (ii) Field projects that have links with other TC activities relating to training and advisory services;
 - (iii) Small-scale field projects that prepare the stage for replication and scaling-up through ESCWA and other resources, with a clear exit strategy for ESCWA and dissemination of best practices and lessons learnt.

42. While in the past, ESCWA TC activities focused mainly on advisory services. A range of TC services, depending on needs and demands, would provide the best and comprehensive approach to maximizing their benefits.

2. What approach should be adopted towards strategic partnerships?

43. The strategic partnership in pursuit of excellence is a key aspect of TC development. ESCWA clearly does not have the resources to meet all the demands and cover all the issues that exist and are emerging in the region. The creation of partnerships that respond to a more strategic vision and approach, outline the priority issues to be addressed and set out clear goals is essential to the effective delivery of TC with sustained results:

- (a) The ESCWA work programme must be aligned with that of clients, in order to ensure that the TC services being provided are consistent with the overall vision and plans of the country and region;
- (b) Close collaboration with global, regional and subregional organizations. The Economic and Social Council of the League of Arab States works in the same areas as ESCWA, but it operates in a wider geographic area. Both organizations could benefit from closer, strategic collaboration. On the other hand, some issues covered by ESCWA can best be addressed at the subregional level. In such cases, ESCWA must work closely with such subregional organizations as the Gulf Cooperation Council;
- (c) The participation in TC planning and implementation of such local stakeholders as the private sector, the media, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other groups will involve them in the identification of needs and the formulation and implementation of policies, projects and initiatives;
- (d) Partnerships and coordinated TC planning and implementation with donors will greatly benefit the efforts exerted by ESCWA. Donors can have significant influence on the development of policies at both the country and regional levels and it would therefore be in ESCWA's interest to establish such partnerships and, in some cases, to initiate bilateral programming, in order to better combine resources and share experiences and best practices;
- (e) Development of effective partnerships with other United Nations agencies in order to clearly allocate resources, avoid duplication and promote synergy on national development strategies and activities,

with a view to maximizing the impact of TC. Regional coordination on issues of common concern must be strengthened. Strategic partnerships with such international organizations as the World Trade Organization and the International Trade Centre, that do not have a regional or national presence must also be strengthened.

44. ESCWA cannot operate alone. A concerted effort to create partnerships with key stakeholders in specific disciplines can only benefit ESCWA and its clients and enhance the impact of the TC provided by ESCWA.

3. How can available resources be managed and extrabudgetary resources mobilized?

45. ESCWA has always depended on a reliable flow of regular budget resources in order to implement TC activities. While those resources have fluctuated at times, they have remained sufficiently stable to meet most programming demands. However, it has become essential to improve the management of those resources in order to optimally serve the programming needs. Improved resource planning and utilization effectiveness and efficiency will increase the impact of TC. Furthermore, it has become more important to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to meet client needs and fully implement the ESCWA strategic framework.

46. Official development assistance (ODA) has, throughout the World, become less readily available: donors are channeling funding more carefully, and the earmarking of donor funding has become a common practice. Donors are increasingly concerned about what they fund, in which countries, how funds are being used and who implements the programmes associated with their funding. The number of donors that ESCWA can target has therefore been reduced. Increased competition for donor funding by United Nations agencies, sometimes operating in similar areas of development, has also made it more difficult to obtain funding. While there has been a reduction in the volume of voluntary contributions made by member countries, support from the private and non-profit sectors and non-traditional donors has increased.

47. Possible approaches to dealing with the situation set out above include the following:

(a) The integrated management of available resources, as part of an approach that combines the planning and budgeting of all activities, including the regular budget, the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation, the Development Account, and extrabudgetary activities. While the focus in programme budgeting has tended to be more on the budgetary categories, greater attention should be given to the integration of programmes under the strategic framework;

(b) A balance should be struck between demand for TC and the availability of human and financial resources and extrabudgetary financing. While it might be difficult to plan for extrabudgetary financing, an early effort should be made to identify specific needs and potential sources of financing;

(c) Improved activity/project quality will attract donors by demonstrating the impact that ESCWA and its clients have been able to make;

(d) Results should be so packaged and showcased as to clearly illustrate the work of ESCWA, its impact and its coherence with the overall development programmes of clients and the region;

(e) Resources pooled in partnerships will maximize outcomes and improve the planning process;

(f) A mechanism for generating contributions from member countries to the ESCWA Trust Fund should be established;

(g) Opportunities to obtain timely donor funding may be increased by accumulating information about donor trends, interests, emerging issues and donor funding cycles.

H. CONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TECHNICAL COOPERATION STRATEGY

48. If the strategy and the mechanisms and tools for its implementation are to be successful, the following conditions must be met:

- (a) Ownership by member countries;
- (b) Commitment to and complete support for the strategy of ESCWA management;
- (c) A receptive and responsive decision-making process at all levels;
- (d) The active participation of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the TC strategy;
- (e) Consistency in applying the TC strategy recommendations, and the institutionalization of recommendations.

49. The results and impact of the strategy will have to be regularly monitored and reviewed, with the objective of highlighting implementation issues, accumulating lessons learnt and, if necessary, making changes to the strategy or the tools used to implement it. Criteria which may be used in order to measure strategy success include the following:

- (a) The extent to which ESCWA and, ultimately, the client, own the strategy;
- (b) Improved monitoring of and reporting on programme and project activities and their results and impact;
- (c) The extent to which the strategy has been institutionalized;
- (d) Increased numbers of cases of lessons learnt and good practices;
- (e) The increased ability of clients and ESCWA to acquire and apply knowledge.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION STRATEGY

50. The above overview of what and how ESCWA should be doing in terms of TC, suggests a number of steps that should be undertaken in order to render TC more efficient and effective. Those steps include the following:

- (a) Clarification of the ESCWA strategic position;
- (b) Increased focus on external communication;
- (c) The development of a strategic partnership approach;
- (d) The improved management and mobilization of resources;
- (e) Means to improve ESCWA efficiency and effectiveness, including improved planning; monitoring and evaluation; strengthened capacity; knowledge management; and well-defined and focused roles and responsibilities.

51. Set forth below are details of the immediate objectives that should be achieved with respect to each of those recommendations.

Recommendation (a): Clarification of the ESCWA strategic position

52. ESCWA must have a clear strategic position in order to improve its TC delivery. The following objectives would help to focus the TC programme on priorities and set a direction in which advantage may be taken of existing comparative advantages:

(a) The programme of work should reflect the priorities established by the Commission. Greater attention should be directed towards LDCs and countries emerging from conflict in the region;

(b) Focal points are essential, being the main link between member countries and ESCWA. Interaction between those points and the secretariat must therefore be dynamic at all levels, from the needs assessment process to evaluation of the ESCWA programme;

(c) TC activities should be diversified to include more training and field project activities in support of and in synergy with advisory services;

(d) There should be more multidisciplinary activities;

(e) TC should not operate in isolation. It should be clearly linked to the work programme of substantive divisions and to the use of extrabudgetary, and Development Account resources in order to ensure coherence and harmonization and use TC funds more effectively and efficiently. The absorptive capacity of substantive divisions must be taken into consideration when adopting work plans, and priorities set accordingly.

Recommendation (b): Increased focus on external communication

53. Communication with partners, stakeholders, potential funding sources and the general public is an important aspect of public relations for ESCWA. A well-defined communication plan could improve the flow of information and delivery of TC services.

(a) ESCWA should be promoted, and its profile raised, with the focus on Commission undertakings and the results of its activities, and in particular, TC;

(b) Communication with regional and international partners should be improved, in order to facilitate the sharing of resources and experiences, pooling of funds, mobilization of resources and coordination of activities;

(c) Public information should focus on areas where ESCWA has a comparative advantage, in order to highlight the capacities of the organization;

(d) Through dialogue with clients, inter-governmental committees and focal points should be made more effective in relaying country needs;

(e) In its communication campaigns, ESCWA should more forcefully target countries with special needs, including LDCs and those in conflict and emergency situations;

(f) Innovative approaches, including improved web sites, with stakeholders should be used in order to improve communication;

(g) Unique ESCWA products and services should be branded and more heavily promoted;

(h) Transparency should be improved by the sharing of information on the sources and uses of funds, current and proposed projects, country requests and partnerships.

54. The communication strategy should keep a clear focus on the ESCWA goal of bringing added value to client development and ensuring that the messages relayed serve client interests. Furthermore, client orientation should remain at the forefront of the ESCWA culture.

Recommendation (c): The development of strategic partnership approach

55. Given the range of stakeholders in the region, most of whom have significant potential as partners for ESCWA, strategic partnerships should be developed, for the benefit of all parties.

(a) ESCWA should play a more active role in coordinating between stakeholders on regional and subregional issues, given that it has the regional and subregional vision and knowledge to advise and coordinate between clients;

(b) Greater South-South TC within and beyond the region would greatly benefit all concerned, and should therefore be encouraged;

(c) In order to facilitate communication with ESCWA clients, a database on client contacts should be maintained and made accessible to all staff members;

(d) A partnership should be initiated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Subregional Resource Facility for Arab States (SURF-AS) and other regional resource centres concerning the provision of services;

(e) Cooperation mechanisms should be established with United Nations resident coordinators and United Nations country teams at the national level.

56. In general, ESCWA needs to reach out, build bridges with other organizations and strengthen its partnerships, in order to maximize the services and products it offers to clients.

Recommendation (d): The improved management and mobilization of resources

57. As previously noted, resource mobilization and management are necessary in order to improve the planning and delivery of activities and projects. To that end, the following measures are recommended:

(a) Management of existing resources should be improved by integrating the budgeting and planning of all activities;

(b) A database of funding agencies should be created in order to facilitate the process of mobilizing resources. The database should be regularly updated and include, inter alia, contact information, areas and countries of interest and timelines for funding request;

(c) Staff should be encouraged to seek early and organized extrabudgetary resource mobilization. While in some cases it might be difficult to initiate planning well in advance, it is important that the information, budget and general direction as to potential sources of funding should be established, and the process of seeking funding begun well in advance of the need for the resources;

(d) A central resource mobilization facility should be instituted in order to match funds to potential activities and give direction to resource mobilization efforts at ESCWA. Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division (PPTCD) should be responsible for that facility;

(e) Long-term agreements with funding agencies should be negotiated in order to create strategic partnerships that would cover resource mobilization;

(f) ESCWA and its accomplishments should be given a higher profile, thereby mobilizing greater resources;

(g) Ideas should be better packaged and marked to potential donors: a simple listing of activities is insufficient to sell an idea or project to a donor. A private sector marketing approach could yield greater results in terms of resource mobilization. Resources should be made available to assist substantive divisions in project formulation;

(h) Opportunities for resource pooling, especially with other United Nations agencies, should be identified. That would ensure that the activities implemented meet their intended goals, and that the necessary resources are available for their completion;

(i) Cooperation and partnerships with the private sector should be strengthened.

Recommendation (e): Measures to improve ESCWA effectiveness and efficiency

(a) *Improved planning*

58. The planning process is central to ESCWA programming activities and special care should be taken to ensure that it is capable of supporting programme achievements. To that end, the planning process should be clearly relevant to ESCWA objectives, be internally and externally coherent, and follow proper planning guidelines.

59. The following measures should be taken with a view to ensuring the relevance of ESCWA TC programme:

(a) Client needs should be properly assessed using a number of methodologies for the collection of the proper information for the planning process;

(b) Programme planning, national and/or regional development goals and other donor strategies, should be integrated in order to ensure that planned TC is appropriate to the overall development context;

(c) Greater Government commitment to TC should be obtained by requiring the formal agreement of the Government to the services being provided;

(d) An inventory of the progress of the Common Country Assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report and other programmes should be developed and maintained in order to ensure that the TC forms part of the overall United Nations development effort;

(e) The regional and subregional dimensions of TC services should be borne in mind. Advisory and other TC services should have multi-country benefits, rather than being country-specific. Regional advisers and clients should be well aware of that;

(f) Regional advisers should develop preliminary workplans indicating the areas of assistance and countries in which they will be involved.

60. Programme coherence may be improved by the following measures:

(a) The integration and incorporation of all TC activities under the ESCWA strategic framework and the biennium work programme;

(b) The improvement of the link between analytical and field work in order to create a lessons-learnt approach to implementation and make research relevant to implementation;

(c) Increased participation in the planning process, in order to ensure commitment to and support for the work programme at all levels of the organization. When many of the staff are not involved in an exercise where their input is valued and incorporated into the overall programme results are less likely to be achieved. Failure to ensure participation will greatly undermine the ESCWA work programme;

(d) Improved planning coordination between substantive divisions and regional advisers: coordinated efforts in planning and implementation can be very rewarding and much more efficient. PPTCD should oversee and ensure compliance with such coordination;

(e) Cabinet meetings should provide a forum for division heads to share information on the planning and implementation of their activities serve as an opportunity for potential cooperation in some areas and encourage multidisciplinary programming.

61. In order to enforce project planning principles, the following resources should be taken:

(a) Funding targets should be set with a view to obtaining the resources necessary to undertake the work programme. The programme mix between the different types of activity and modality of implementation should be so defined as to achieve coherence and complementarity;

(b) Planning guidelines should be formalized and implemented and include, inter alia, the use of particular planning formats, the performance of a logical framework exercise and the development of proper methodologies for collecting indicators;

(c) The development and implementation of criteria for project selection and approval would greatly facilitate the process of selecting activities for funding. Such criteria should be developed in partnership with staff, and they should be implemented through PPTCD in a transparent fashion;

(d) Field projects should be designed with a strategy for replication and scaling-up, and produce a set of lessons learnt to be adopted in future projects;

(e) Exit strategies should be prepared for all activities, especially those relating to field projects, in order to ensure the sustainability of results and prepare for further funding stages if required;

(f) Such cross-cutting dimensions as gender should be incorporated into the planning process and compliance with trends ensured. Such dimensions should not be an afterthought when reporting on progress or during evaluation, but an integral part of activities and the overall work programme.

(b) *Monitoring and evaluation*

62. Given the multidisciplinary nature of ESCWA activities, monitoring and evaluation are essential. The types of activity offered also make monitoring and evaluation essential to the improvement of operations. A strategy should therefore be developed to ensure the effective use of monitoring and evaluation for the ESCWA programme. That strategy should adopt a comprehensive approach that involves all the relevant stakeholders.

63. A results-based evaluation system will entail the following procedures:

(a) The periodic external evaluation of TC activities and their interaction with other ESCWA activities, the results of which should be fed back into the planning system. It is recommended that triangulation evaluation methodologies should be used in order to ensure that different perspectives are obtained and provide easily comprehensible results. Clients, active donors in the region, and other stakeholders should play a role in such evaluations. Field projects should, on a random basis, entail on-the-ground evaluations;

(b) Feedback from clients should be systematized and improved in quality and timeliness. Focal points and clients are critical to evaluation;

(c) The sustainability of TC efforts should be evaluated;

- (d) Evaluation results should be fed back into planning as part of the learning process;
 - (e) The consultancy services provided to ESCWA should be evaluated in order to ensure consistency of quality.
64. The monitoring system may be improved by the following measures:
- (a) The use of e-TC and IMIS in project monitoring should be encouraged in order to ensure that data is standardized and that it is easy to produce the reports needed;
 - (b) The submission of TC progress reports should be enforced, and they should be synchronized with those of the regular programme;
 - (c) More evaluative evidence of activity results should be ensured through the establishment of evaluation-oriented monitoring that would assist in collecting data throughout the implementation process, with the focus on results. Financial monitoring should also be carried out;
 - (d) In support of both monitoring and evaluation, a proper management information system should be used to provide the timely access to information and the reports that are needed both internally and externally.
65. One of the expected benefits of improved monitoring and evaluation is improved quality. Transparency and accountability will be enhanced by the adoption of measures that clearly identify the performance of staff, divisions and services.
- (c) *Strengthened capacity*
66. The capacity of the Secretariat needs to be strengthened in order to respond to the development of improved TC. That will entail the following measures:
- (a) Improved coordination and collaboration between divisions and regional advisers, through a better understanding and an improved definition of roles and responsibilities. Divisions and regional advisers must work in tandem to produce effective results;
 - (b) The recruitment and mobilization of the proper human resources in order to increase the capacity of ESCWA to take part in operational activities;
 - (c) The provision of staff training in project planning, management, monitoring and evaluation and other substantive areas;
 - (d) The identification of quality trainers within divisions, to strengthen the capacities of staff organization-wide. Such in-house trainers would assume a permanent capacity-building support role in their areas of expertise;
 - (e) Client focal points are an integral part of the ESCWA - Government link. Therefore, it is important to ensure that their capabilities meet the needs of both those parties.
- (d) *Knowledge management*
67. Knowledge management could greatly assist ESCWA in improving its understanding of regional issues; documenting its successes, lessons learnt and best practices; and engaging in information generation and sharing with stakeholders. As an organization whose primary asset is its staff and their knowledge, ESCWA should heavily invest in generating, updating and institutionalizing knowledge. The following measures should be adopted:

(a) Knowledge management should be promoted and institutionalized. The concept should be introduced to staff through a knowledge management strategy. A knowledge culture should ensure that staff have required information at their fingertips;

(b) A depository on training and advocacy-related lessons learnt and other subjects should be created as part of the knowledge management strategy of ESCWA. Such a depository would greatly enhance ability to improve practices;

(c) The balance and mix of TC services should be ensured by managing knowledge about ESCWA programmes and the results that are being achieved. Lessons learnt from other activities within and beyond ESCWA can assist in developing better mixes between TC activities and between those and other ESCWA activities;

(d) The experience and knowledge of regional advisers should be codified in order to ensure that the impact of those advisers is not confined to their immediate contribution;

(e) Knowledge networks and communities of practice should be created for clients with common interests, thereby increasing the scope of TC and exposing both clients and ESCWA staff to new, mutually beneficial, experiences;

(f) Partnerships should be established with UNDP SURF-AS and other regional resource centres with respect to knowledge sharing and comparative analysis. ESCWA should become a player in the area of knowledge generation and use and should engage in partnerships and activities that increase its exposure and capacities in that area.

(e) *Well-defined and focused roles and responsibilities*

68. Having clearly-defined responsibilities and, more importantly, adhering to them, is key to managing the multidisciplinary nature of ESCWA TC activities. The following main areas of improvement are highlighted below:

(a) Roles and responsibilities in the processes relating to TC should be both clear and respected. It is recommended that a process for each function is mapped out, including the marketing of TC services and products, clients requests and the evaluation and showcasing of results. In general, a more coherent and efficient business process must be developed;

(b) With a view to integrating the work of the division and that of the regional advisers, the latter should advise divisions on sectoral issues and review and give feedback on division outputs;

(c) Not only should regional advisers contract limits be respected, a more effective combination of long- and short-term regional adviser staffing should be adopted. While long-term regional advisers are necessary in priority sectors, other sectors only require short-term advisers. A roster of possible short-term consultants should be created and maintained. The use of short-term advisers should be clearly justified, and their recruitment to address divisional staffing needs should be avoided;

(d) TC support positions in PPTCD should be filled, because they represent the cornerstone for managing, coordinating and supporting all the ESCWA TC efforts;

(e) The role of team leaders vis-à-vis regional advisers should be clarified;

(f) Active collaboration should be promoted between the substantive divisions and between those divisions and regional advisers by developing synergies and seeking complementarity of effort.

J. ACTION PLAN

69. Given the limited resources available for implementation, an action plan for the operationalization of the above recommendations should be developed, that clearly indicate the prioritization of activities and sets out a short-, medium- and long-term implementation schedule.

70. The following graphic shows how the action plan would be presented and sets out a detailed time line for activity implementation.

