United Nations Technical Cooperation Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) was established by the General Assembly, by its resolution 47/212 B of 6 May 1993, in the context of the ongoing United Nations Secretariat reforms and in response to the need expressed by the Secretary-General:

...to sharpen the focus, and enhance the impact, of United Nations technical assistance to meet priority requirements of developing countries and countries in transition in respect of institution-building and human resources development. (A/C.5/47/88, para. 21)

2. The Department is the successor to other departments and entities in the United Nations Secretariat charged with technical cooperation responsibilities, going back to the earliest days of the Organization. Since its inception the new Department has taken numerous actions for strengthened and more forward-looking development assistance in several targeted areas.

3. The areas of DDSMS substantive concentration are (a) environmental management and social development and (b) public administration and development management. The first heading includes the clusters of natural resources and environment planning and management, energy planning and management, and social development management. The second includes the clusters of governance and public administration, public finance and enterprise management, and development planning and policies. With funding from the United Nations regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, the Department provides technical and managerial support and advisory services on request to bolster the development efforts of Member States. It furthermore conducts operational research and seminars, and provides parliamentary services to expert groups and intergovernmental bodies in the above areas.
4. Orientation and guidance for the work of DDSMS comes from several sources:
(a) the United Nations medium-term plan and biennial programme budget, and the
associated processes and resolutions; (b) other resolutions of the General
Assembly and the Economic and Social Council; (c) deliberations and decisions of
the UNDP-UNFPA Executive Board, in relation both to the agenda item on United
Nations technical cooperation and more broadly to the funding and programming of
development assistance through UNDP; (d) the programmes of action of global
conferences; and (e) most immediately and practically, the requests for
assistance from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
In keeping with all these, the work of DDSMS is increasingly conceived along
thematic, multisectoral lines, addressing the concerns of poverty elimination,
sustainable human development, environment, and governance in its broadest
sense.

5. In last year's report on United Nations technical cooperation activities
(document DP/1994/26), the Executive Board received an overview of the
programmes and capabilities of DDSMS, and information on the cooperation of the
Department with other entities, especially with UNDP. The strong focus on
technical capabilities and substantive services in that report fit well with the
Board's deliberations and decision on the UNDP "Initiatives for change"
proposals, and the related interest in creating a truly supportive environment
for the programme approach, national execution, quality assurance, etc., by,
among other things, using more effectively the linkages within the United
Nations family.

6. In its decision 94/27 of 10 October 1994, on United Nations technical
cooperation activities, the Executive Board noted and encouraged steps towards
closer collaboration between DDSMS and the regional commissions and other
entities of the Secretariat, and between the Department and UNDP in relation to
areas of common concern, and, in this context, urged the Programme to consider
greater utilization of the technical capacities of the Department.

7. The endorsement and encouragement of the Board has been a motivating factor
in the succeeding months. DDSMS and UNDP have held a series of senior
management and working-level meetings to identify areas for closer collaboration
and joint initiatives. Also, DDSMS prepared and widely distributed a compendium
on its technical capabilities, including fact sheets on the programmes and
biographical information on the substantive personnel already engaged or readily
available. The Administrator sent a circular to all heads of regional bureaux
and all resident coordinators/resident representatives on measures to maximize
the use of expertise available from the Department. DDSMS has strengthened
and regularized its consultative relations with visiting resident coordinators/resident
representatives. The Department has also taken on loan a senior staff
member from UNDP to serve as senior adviser to the Under-Secretary-General and
has in turn loaned one of its senior staff to the UNDP Office for United Nations
System Support Services (OUNS).

8. These actions are having significant implications in terms of working
relations and cross-fertilization of ideas generally, and in a quantifiable
manner through UNDP funding of DDSMS substantive work through the mechanisms for
technical support at the programme level (TSS-1) and at the project level
(TSS-2). An increasing proportion of the Department's work is in the provision
/...
of upstream technical guidance and advice to Governments and assistance in the context of national execution of UNDP-funded development efforts. The natural partnership of UNDP as a body for coordination, resource mobilization and initial programming and DDSMS as one of the United Nations system centres of excellence for substantive contributions to development, is accordingly gaining further strength.

9. UNDP regional bureaux and the Department have been working together in various programming exercises and in programme and project development in the priority areas of poverty elimination, environment, employment, women, and governance, including follow-up to recent global conferences and implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (formerly known as the Secretary-General's Special Initiative on Africa).

10. UNDP and DDSMS are also working in support of the training courses on the management of development: national capacity-building, being offered to developing countries through the International Labour Organization (ILO) International Training Centre at Turin, Italy. Institutionalization of such training programmes in several African countries is now getting under way through DDSMS-Turin joint action, with UNDP encouragement and funding. This also responds to Executive Board decision 93/30 of 18 June 1993, in which, inter alia, the Board invited further attention from DDSMS to the strengthening of national capacities for programme management and project execution and implementation.

11. Most recently, the Department and UNDP have been seeking to maximize their comparative advantages in assistance to countries in the very important area of post-conflict rehabilitation and recovery. Collaboration is being strengthened both in relation to the related regional bureaux and the UNDP Emergency Response Division. DDSMS, together with UNDP and the United Nations Department for Humanitarian Affairs, have been requested by the Consultative Committee for Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), to engage in consultations and the preparation of several papers that may be useful at the system-wide level (see ACC/1995/18).

12. Partnership is also being built between DDSMS and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), through an agreement whereby UNOPS may increasingly call upon the substantive capabilities of DDSMS and the Department may call upon the project-servicing capabilities of UNOPS. In the light of the information in the above-mentioned DDSMS compendium and through strengthened contacts at the working level, the two are identifying and targeting areas for cooperation, including activities to be implemented with expertise from the Department. Joint staff meetings on selected topics have been instituted to stimulate better knowledge and understanding of the comparative advantages of the two and to foster team work in the best interest of the countries requesting assistance. The first such area is post-conflict peace-building, where the current situation in several countries provide new opportunities for common efforts.

13. DDSMS, UNDP and UNOPS are building new collaborative relations through the mechanism of the UNOPS Management Coordination Committee (MCC), where the heads of UNDP, DDSMS and the Department for Administration and Management are members...
and the Executive Director of UNOPS is the Secretary. An early focus of attention is again post-conflict peace-building. At the urging of the UNDP Administrator, a paper on roles and functions in the field of reconstruction and rehabilitation has been prepared for submission to the MCC for endorsement as a basis for action.

14. With regard to the regional commissions, certain posts and financing relating to natural resources and energy were decentralized to them under the United Nations programme budget for the 1994-1995 biennium, and the Management Board of the United Nations Programme in Natural Resources and Energy was established, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for DDSMS. This was agreed upon and carried out in 1994, and has led to adjustments in the functions of DDSMS. The Department now focuses more on natural resources and energy planning and management while also helping in the development of joint programmes with the commissions and assisting them in strengthening regional programmes in the related fields.

15. As may be seen from the above paragraphs, and in the annex on highlights of the Department’s current work, DDSMS is continuing to evolve in its substantive achievements and its institutional relations. Clearly, the technical cooperation and normative activities carried out by the Department remain valid and are increasingly in demand by UNDP and others in the changing situations of many countries. The need for DDSMS technical cooperation efforts remains; the nature of the need is changing. The Department is strengthening its capacities to meet these challenges and to respond to opportunities.

Executive Board action

16. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the report of the Secretary-General (DP/1996/7);  

2. Invite the Department for Development Support and Management Services, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations entities and departments to give further attention to strengthened programmatic linkages within their respective mandates;  

3. Invite the Department to give further emphasis to strengthening national capacities for programme management and project execution and implementation, both substantively and operationally, upon request;  

4. Invite the Department to take further action for reconstruction and development in post-conflict situations in response to the needs and requests of affected countries.
Annex

HIGHLIGHTS OF DDSMS CURRENT WORK

Organizational reform and redefinition

1. Born of the United Nations Secretariat reform process, and participating in the associated functional redefinitions, DDSMS is actively engaged in the integration and adjustment of its substantive capabilities to respond more effectively to the requirements of Member States. This process includes an ongoing and critical review of the Department's internal capacities to ensure that the skills and experience at hand can respond to evolving needs, both operational and normative.

2. The Department sees its mission as essentially that of assisting developing countries and transitional economies in managing their development. This objective is being achieved through technical cooperation in building human and institutional capacities, which is necessarily a multidisciplinary endeavour, involving a number of interrelated components. Support in achieving more efficient government through strengthening macroeconomic planning and management, improving public administration and civil service, assisting the attack on poverty through social development and social integration of vulnerable groups, tackling the social dimensions of structural adjustment, assisting in the management and more rational use of scarce natural resources - all these aspects of DDSMS responsibility are aimed at ensuring that development efforts undertaken in countries are successful and sustainable. The Department is becoming increasingly active in TSS-1 and TSS-2 responsibilities funded through UNDP. Its related portfolios are growing in development planning and policies and in other substantive fields. Attention is also increasingly being directed to post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, for assistance in rebuilding government structures so that basic services can be provided in a sustainable manner and so that conflict will not occur again.

3. Successful response to these needs requires a broad-based, flexible and responsible cadre of substantive specialists, who are sectorally state-of-the-art and capable of innovation, multidisciplinary cooperation and teamwork. The Department is devoting considerable attention to this aspect of internal reform.

Follow-up to recent global conferences

4. As the Department in the Secretariat responsible for operationalizing development concepts, and for providing linkage between global agreements and country-level realities, DDSMS has an important role to play in the follow-up to conferences such as the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) and the Fourth World Conference on Women, both held in 1995.

5. With regard to the WSSD Programme of Action, the Department's initial efforts focus on action at national and community levels in such areas as: formulation of comprehensive social development strategies; modernization of state mechanisms in order to implement these strategies through programmes at
various levels; and strengthening the capacity of communities to conceive, design and implement social development programmes that benefit them directly.

6. In several cases, DDSMS is assisting countries in formulating social development or human development strategies specifically in response to recommendations made by the Social Summit. With support from the Government of Sweden, Swedish public sector organizations and UNDP, the Department convened in October in Stockholm a conference and workshop on public administration and social development, as follow-up to WSSD.

7. Assisting countries to formulate integrated development plans is one of the main functions of the Department. To deal better with the social side of socio-economic development, DDSMS has devised a training programme for economic planners that focuses on the social impact of the economic policies likely to be implemented, and how all those concerned should interact in a mutually supportive way. The experts who attended a panel organized by DDSMS on preparing social strategies as a follow-up to WSSD came to the same conclusion, namely that social and economic planners must become more conversant with each other's issues and need to interact effectively.

8. Decentralization of responsibilities to local communities is another important instrument of social development, requiring the strengthening of local government capacities to undertake social development programmes. DDSMS has conducted seminars and studies on the theme of effective decentralization of such programmes and is disseminating the results.

9. The ultimate success of the Fourth World Conference on Women and its Platform of Action will depend on the degree to which strategies seeking to achieve sustainable development embody the full participation of both women and men. In order to participate fully in the development process, women must be capable, self-confident, and empowered. The Department's activities are consciously being designed to reflect the reality that it is essential to empower women and improve their status to realize the full potential of economic and social development.

10. DDSMS is increasingly engaged in helping support women's productive activities as independent generators of income and their social and political empowerment as leaders and decision makers from the community level on up. Projects, studies, seminars and advisory services are taking shape that elicit the Department's contributions, ranging from women's involvement in artisanal small-scale mining, to rural credit schemes, to the development of African women's entrepreneurial skills, to the fostering of gender awareness in the civil service and public enterprises, to improving the access of women to positions of influence and authority in public policy.

Preparations for resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly on public administration and development

11. The increasing complexity of public administration, finance and public sector management in general, and their interaction with the private sector, has prompted the General Assembly to turn its attention to the importance of public
administration and development. At its forty-ninth session the Assembly adopted resolution 49/136 of 19 December 1994, on public administration and development, by which it called for a resumed fiftieth session in April 1996 to examine this question, exchange experiences, review the activities of the United Nations in this field, and make recommendations, as appropriate.

12. This is the first time that the General Assembly will organize a special meeting to discuss exclusively the question of public administration although the central programme of the United Nations in this field goes back to the earliest years of the Organization. The resumed session is geared to heighten international awareness of the key role of public administration in development and to enhance international cooperation in this field.

13. Among the various elements of preparation, the Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to submit to it a consolidated report, through the Economic and Social Council, containing an analysis of the role of public administration in development and recommendations for strengthening the role of the United Nations in this field for the benefit of interested developing countries and countries with economies in transition. DDSMS has responsibility for this report and for the overall coordination of preparations for the session.

14. The Assembly has requested involvement from numerous sources. All Member States have been invited to participate actively in the resumed session and to be represented at the highest possible level. The Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council serviced by DDSMS, has been asked to provide information about experience gained in assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition. UNDP, the regional commissions, other relevant United Nations organizations, and interested non-governmental organizations have all been invited to make contributions.

15. In addition, a technical committee has been constituted to provide general guidance and to contribute to the preparation of the resumed session. The Committee includes representatives from the World Bank, UNDP and ILO. Affiliated institutions are the International Institute of Administrative Sciences and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

16. Laying the groundwork for the resumed session, the Group of Experts held their biennial meeting at Headquarters from 31 July to 11 August 1995. More than 50 international experts discussed themes that included policy development, administrative restructuring, civil service reform, the role of public administration in promoting social development, financial management, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction of government machinery, public-private sector interaction, and the role of public administration in the management of development programmes. Recommendations of the Group have been submitted to the Council at a resumed session. The recommendations for action, and the Council's comments, will serve as the basis for the report of the Secretary-General to the Assembly.
Natural resources, energy and the environment

17. DDSMS has an important role in assisting Governments for the strategic coordination of natural resources and energy development, planning and management at the national and local level. The matter has particular urgency for the least developed countries, where the implementation of natural resources development has to be both accelerated and made sustainable in technical, environmental and financial terms. Some examples follow.

18. Requests for DDSMS assistance are increasingly aimed at integrating natural resources and energy development with the broad concerns of sustainable development, including advisory services for formulating country programmes. This is particularly important in environmental matters, which necessarily cut across economic sector activity.

19. In water resources planning and management, DDSMS is an experienced technical agency of the United Nations system. Projects have evolved - from simple provision of rural water supply and training of technicians, to complex interventions involving models, computer software packages, capacity-building and community empowerment. In several West African countries, for example, current work focuses on the participation of all basin stakeholders in decision-making and the introduction of new regulatory principles. Participatory approaches are being used to improve management and protect resources, from local sub-catchments to the entire basin.

20. For capacity-building in water resource organizations, DDSMS assists in training national multidisciplinary teams and using advanced tools for integrated water resources management. DDSMS has helped to establish networks for assessing water supply and demand, which provide essential inputs to planners formulating strategies for water and land use, protection and conservation, and for making decisions on water allocations. Examples of this are the establishment of computer-based economic planning models in China and the Sudan, incorporating geographical information systems (GIS) databases with water resource allocation techniques that reflect social, environmental and economic criteria. In November 1995, the Department released its sales version of "Groundwater software for Windows". This was developed in two versions over a period of eight years, with initial support from UNDP. The software provides a package for total management of groundwater resources.

21. In the extractive resources sector, artisanal mining is an economic mainstay of many rural communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, providing income for local economic and social development. Many developing countries and economies in transition are interested in formalizing artisanal mining into legal, small-scale mining so as to maximize revenue and minimize environmental degradation. DDSMS is currently acting as a catalyst in several such national efforts through activities emphasizing legislative approaches as well as community mobilization.

22. DDSMS is also focusing on energy services and poverty, particularly in least developed countries. In promoting access to energy, DDSMS support combines income-generating activities with education. Current energy programmes for rural and poor urban populations concentrate on sources that will enhance
community capacities to generate income and eventually improve both the domestic energy supply and material well-being. Such an approach requires close collaboration between the technical experts and the communities involved.

23. DDSMS has broad experience in assisting Governments in land use planning and the development and use of GIS. One application is to assess environmental damage by using this technology for thematic mapping. In Bulgaria for example, DDSMS is assisting with GIS for the assessment of polluted agricultural lands, leading to better management and development. The system will contribute to a cadastral and land registration system and the production of land use maps. In India, DDSMS is assisting the Government to use GIS technology for local-level development planning.

24. One recent meeting deserves special mention: the International Symposium on Coal Bed Methane, held in October 1995 in Beijing. This brought together more than 90 participants from 20 developing and industrialized countries, as well as 100 representatives from China. Discussion focused on the prospects for recovery and use of coal-bed methane, which is an emerging technology with promise as a new, clean and economical use for coal, indeed substituting for coal as a high-quality, environmentally preferred fuel. The Symposium also reviewed the status and potential of ongoing coal-bed methane recovery projects in China. Coal mines in that country characteristically have high seepage rates of the gas, with consequent danger of atmospheric pollution and a grave risk to the safety of miners and the productivity of the mines. To help address this problem, DDSMS is assisting China through a $10 million programme funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

25. The Symposium explored the questions of attracting advanced technologies, promoting more foreign investment, and increasing the emphasis on coal-bed methane use in other developing countries. Twenty foreign companies are currently conducting coal-bed methane exploration and research in China. Representatives attended from many of these, including AMOCO, TEXACO, ENRON and MITSUI. Organized by DDSMS in cooperation with the Government of China, Symposium co-sponsors included UNDP, the Asian Development Bank, the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry of Japan.

Post-conflict rehabilitation and recovery

26. The outbreak of within-country conflicts throughout the world has highlighted the interdependence and interaction between peace, improvement of the human condition, and development, as societies must often begin to reconstruct their human and administrative infrastructures even before conflict has ceased. DDSMS is increasingly being called upon to address the specific requirements of countries in crisis, which need assistance in rebuilding government structures so that basic services can be provided to their populations in a sustainable manner and so that an environment is created where conflict does not resume.

27. Such DDSMS assistance is directed towards rebuilding government institutions; social welfare programmes; multisectoral pilot reconstruction
projects and economic recovery programmes; preparation of plans for dealing with
demobilization; support to vulnerable groups, especially women; re-establishing
water, energy and physical infrastructure requirements; promotion of popular
participation in rehabilitation; and self-help reconstruction.

28. With its mandate, experience and capacity, the Department is a natural
partner of national authorities and communities in rehabilitation and recovery
of war-torn societies. Technical cooperation in rebuilding good governance,
reinforcing the healing process of society, and reconstructing the economy of a
country emerging from conflict and devastation is of paramount importance.

29. In Rwanda, DDSMS is providing support to the process of restoring
technical, human, logistical and institutional capacities of the country’s
public administration through a project on emergency rehabilitation of the
capacities of economic management. This aims at establishing, in key
ministries, small operational units endowed with a minimum of functional
logistics and composed of national and international short-term expertise to
provide policy advice and to generate new programmes. Also in Rwanda, DDSMS is
involved in a programme for the rehabilitation of the country’s judicial system.

30. In Haiti, DDSMS is providing support to the rejuvenation of public sector
management by strengthening public institutions and training civil service
employees. In Yemen, the Department is assisting in the rehabilitation of water
supply systems and sanitation facilities damaged by conflict. In Bosnia and
Herzegovina and in Croatia, DDSMS is engaged in several multisectoral pilot
projects for social service, and is involved in preparations for the rebuilding
of the infrastructure, the planning of economic reconstruction, and the
re-establishment of government machinery and municipal services. In Angola and
Mozambique, election assistance and planning for development have been early
priorities. In Liberia, recent development planning and social development
management missions have focused on project preparation related to the
resettlement of internally displaced persons, and related community development.
In the Occupied Territories, plans are being made to help to establish civil
service structures and to help to strengthen the ability of public finance
specialists to administer the incoming foreign funds for development.

31. To help to stimulate a better exchange of ideas on post-conflict
reconstruction strategies, the Department organized a colloquium in June in
Austria, with support from the Government of Austria and in cooperation with the
Austrian Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution. This informal gathering
brought together representatives from several Governments, as well as a number
of United Nations departments and agencies, non-governmental organizations and
academic institutions. The main issues included principles and mechanisms for
United Nations action; identification of needs and capabilities; design and
implementation of reconstruction and development plans; and securing of external
resources and support. The chairman’s synopsis of the meeting was submitted to
CCPOQ as a basis for discussion at its September session (ACC/POQ/INF.11), which
led to the actions cited above in the main section of the present document.
Moreover it has, at the request of the Government of Austria, been published as
a document of the General Assembly (A/50/345).
Statistical information for 1994

32. During 1994, DDSMS had more than 1,000 technical cooperation projects under execution in a dozen substantive sectors, with a total project expenditure of some $100.6 million. Projects financed by UNDP represented $50.5 million; those by trust funds, $39.5 million; by UNFPA, $7.3 million and by the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation, $3.3 million.

33. On a geographical basis, the DDSMS-executed programme included expenditures of $44.5 million in Africa; $21.6 million in Asia and the Pacific; $17.8 million for interregional and global programmes; $11.0 million in Arab States; $4.4 million in the Americas; and $1.3 million in Europe. Project delivery in Africa remained the largest, with a 44 per cent share of total delivery.

34. Distribution of expenditures by substantive sectors was as follows: social development management, $2.6 million; energy, $10.5 million; natural resources and environment planning, $20.3 million; development policies and planning, $23.1 million; governance and public administration, $14.4 million; public finance and enterprise management, $5.0 million; national execution and capacity-building, $10.3 million; advisory services and training, $0.1 million; statistics, $7.6 million; population, $4.5 million; and the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa, $2.2 million. Of the total of $100.6 million, development policies and planning comprised 23 per cent; natural resources and environment planning, 20 per cent; and governance and public administration, 14 per cent.

35. On a component basis, DDSMS delivery in 1994 included $56.6 million for project personnel; $5.5 million for subcontracted services; $12.0 million for training; $20.3 million for equipment; and $6.2 million for miscellaneous expenses.

36. Information of participation in the programme for developing countries and by women is as follows: equipment purchased in developing countries totalled $1.6 million, or 11 per cent of the total. Of the 905 international project personnel serving during the year, 405, or 45 per cent, were from developing countries and 120 or 14 per cent, were female. Of the total of 2,716 training placements made during the year, 1,422, or 52 per cent, were for study in developing countries. Trainees themselves numbered 2,511 and of these 623, or 25 per cent, were female.

37. Table 1 provides information on technical cooperation project expenditures by organizational entity of the United Nations, including DDSMS, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the five regional commissions. Table 2 provides information on DDSMS project expenditures by field of activity. Additional details are available from the Department.
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