

WORKING GROUP OF THE UNDP GOVERNING COUNCIL

Revised draft decision submitted by Gambia

The Governing Council,

1. Requests the Administrator to establish a UNDP study programme to be financed by voluntary contributions of Governments and private foundations, and to organize seminars to which high-level national policy makers, government representatives to international organizations, senior secretariat officials and field experts, should be invited to discuss informally various aspects of technical co-operation in order to promote greater understanding of development problems and to generate new resources and ideas;
2. Requests the Administrator to consult with interested Governments, relevant international institutions and private foundations in order to ensure the necessary financing for the United Nations Development Study Programme;
3. Invites member Governments, relevant international organizations and foundations to finance the programme and to co-operate with the Administrator, in organizing the activities of this programme; and
4. Requests the Administrator to report to the Governing Council at its twenty-ninth session on the implementation of this decision.

Establishment of a United Nations Development Study Programme

A. Issues and background

The decade of the 1980s was born into a period of tumultuous international economic relations. The world economy at present is in a slowdown phase, in both developed and developing countries. The rate of growth of developed market economy countries, which averaged more than 5 per cent per annum in the early 1970s, declined to 1.3 per cent in 1980 according to recent estimates. Similarly, the rather good growth performance of developing countries, averaging nearly 6 per cent per annum in the 1970s, decreased to 3.8 per cent in 1980. Inflation and unemployment are at the highest levels since the great depression of the 1930s. Current trends indicate movement toward a more sombre future for the world economy and international development co-operation.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the economic development of developed and developing countries was largely considered as two separate issues and not as being inter-linked and interdependent. In the early 1950s, development problems were largely seen in terms of aid. By the 1970s, however, it became evident that these problems could not be solved merely by the provision of aid, since they were fundamentally part of the weakness of the existing world economic system.

There are many lessons to be drawn from the experiences of the past few decades. At present not only are more resources required for assisting developing countries, but also greater understanding and technical knowledge of development issues and political determination are needed to remedy the existing situation. Similarly, due to insufficient public knowledge, there has been little recognition of the interdependence between issues and of the mutuality of interest and opportunities for partnership between developed and developing countries. According to the report of the Brandt Commission, international institutions need to communicate to an audience wider than the community of persons who participate in their intergovernmental bodies. The resolutions, decisions, and programmes adopted by these institutions can be effective only if they influence the public at large. On the other hand, it may be said that public opinion in industrialized countries has often been critical of assistance given to the developing countries. The mass media has given much publicity to cases of waste and failure, instead of to the aims of such assistance, to mutual gains and success stories. Such approaches have also negatively influenced parliaments and governmental circles, which has resulted in skepticism and created resistance to the adoption of more liberal policies.

Therefore, it appears that there is an urgent need to bridge the intellectual gulf which is growing dangerously between those who are directly involved in administering the aid programmes and those who are called upon to vote the requisite appropriations, as well as between governmental negotiators at international organizations and the internal policy makers. It is essential that every effort be made in order that the national policy makers and public mass media producers better understand the implications of arguments on international economic and technical co-operation for their own people.

Moreover, during the past three decades, the programmes, organizations and agencies of the United Nations system dealing with operational development

activities, which have acquired substantial experience and carried out extensive research within their own fields, have seldom had joint substantive exchanges of views and discussions for effectively combining their efforts, evaluating their accumulated knowledge and information and forecasting relevant developments for the attention of Governments. Similarly, at present, there is little dialogue between the negotiators at the global level and practitioners - namely field experts, consultants and project managers - who deal daily with specific development issues. It may be said that the general commitments agreed upon at the international level can produce tangible results only if convergent measures are being taken at every level.

As a programme for development and not simply a fund to finance technical co-operation, UNDP has a special responsibility to encourage a better understanding of development problems and the generation of new ideas and possible solutions. Indeed, the success of its operations depends largely on the conceptual framework of development and technical knowledge within which such operations are carried out. A better understanding of the issues involved in technical co-operation activities is required in order to respond promptly to the changing needs of the development process.

It is therefore proposed to establish a study programme for development issues under the umbrella of UNDP, to be known as the United Nations Development Study Programme (UNDSP). The output of such a programme may assist the Council in its consideration of policy issues related to the operational activities carried out by the funds and programmes under the Council's supervision. Similarly, the activities of the Programme may be beneficial to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for their comprehensive policy review of operational activities and their consideration of other development issues.

B. Seminars

The new Programme will organize and finance (as does, for example, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) special seminars to discuss informally various aspects of technical and economic co-operation and development issues. Its aim will be to promote a better understanding of issues and to work out possible options and alternative courses of action, which may also be considered by the relevant inter-governmental bodies. The new programme may also finance and publish independent research activities related to technical co-operation and development.

Twenty to thirty invitees from developed and developing countries and relevant international organizations will participate in such seminars. According to the subject matters, high-level government officials, government representatives to international organizations, senior secretariat officials, and field experts of international organizations, parliamentarians, journalists, academicians, etc. will be invited to these seminars. The invitees will participate in their private capacities.

The Administrator, with the assistance of an Advisory Committee, will establish annual work programmes, which will include the subject matter to be taken by different seminars. The subjects to be discussed will be related to problems of development and technical co-operation.

At the early stages of UNDSP, a maximum of three to four seminars will be organized per year. One of these will be for the senior officials of the United Nations system and will deal primarily with development co-operation problems. The seminars will normally be held in different developed and developing countries, depending on hosting facilities. In order to ensure to the extent possible that discussions are of a free and informal nature, retreat locations will be preferred. At the end of each seminar a short report will normally be issued, in order to bring the results to the attention of the Governing Council, ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Depending on the nature of the discussions, however, there could also be off-the-record meetings.

C. Organization and Management

The United Nations Development Study Programme will be administered by the Administrator. An honorary advisory programme committee will be established to be discussed at different seminars and for research activities to be carried out by independent researchers. For the related development policy matters of the Programme, the Administrator will consult and closely co-operate with the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, and seek, as appropriate, the advice of the executive heads of the relevant specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system.

The Secretariat of the Governing Council will normally provide support services to the seminars and other activities of the UNDSP. Close co-operation and continuous working relationships will be established with the secretariats of other relevant organizations of the United Nations system for the carrying out of these functions.

The programme will pay the travel costs and other expenses of the participants of the seminars, finance research activities and publish the reports of the seminars and the results of research activities. In order to meet the financial and administrative costs, a special trust account will be established for UNDSP. Voluntary contributions from Governments, international institutions or foundations will be sought by the Administrator for financing the activities of the programme. Similarly, Governments, international institutions or foundations may also provide free hosting facilities for the seminars organized by the programme.