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POLICY

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
AT PREVIOUS SESSIONS

Implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action
for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the 1980s

Report of the Administrator

Addendum

Introduction

1. In his report to the Governing Council on the Implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the 1980s, (DP/1984/13), the Administrator indicated his intention to provide the Council with an updated report on experiences with the round-table conferences undertaken with UNDP assistance. The following information is based, in part, on the preliminary results of an in-depth assessment currently being undertaken by the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), which will be completed later this year. Meanwhile, in May, discussions have taken place in Bangkok with the aid co-ordinators of the Governments of the LDCs, the results of which are also discussed in this paper, as well as the preliminary results of the Djibouti round-table conference in the Arab States region.

I. AFRICA

2. Without pre-empting the conclusions of the study being carried out by the Regional Bureau for Africa which is to be completed later this year, a few tentative observations may be offered at this time:

(a) The round-table process, as it has been initiated by the African LDCs, with the assistance of UNDP, has proven to be a useful tool for the mobilization and co-ordination of assistance from their development partners. Several

round-table conferences convened by African Governments have resulted in commitments and indications of interest to help meet a large part of the current investment or development plan. It is anticipated that the LDCs and donors will continue to utilize this useful device. Already several important changes have been introduced to strengthen national and sectoral macro-economic analyses. It has also become evident that the round-table method of donor consultations can be further strengthened and improved, taking advantage of the existing dialogue between the donor community and recipient countries which have developed in the past few years and have shown a potential for yielding increased and more effective aid;

(b) The round-table process, by reinforcing the dialogue and exchange of information between donor and recipient countries, has proven that it can effectively facilitate both the flow of aid as well as the concentration of inputs into several key sectors, in a co-ordinated fashion. The round-table conference itself, while not viewed simply as a "pledging conference", has proven to be a reinforcing event in the ongoing dialogue between the LDC Government and the individual donors. Increasingly, African Governments have recognized the many means at their disposal to sustain this dialogue on a national or sectoral level. As a consequence, UNDP has been able to provide useful assistance to the central co-ordinating authorities and to assist them in conducting their follow-up dialogue, which, through updated information and frank and open discussion with the collective donors, facilitates increased aid flows and improved co-ordination, in full consideration of the recipient Governments' priorities. Moreover, an additionality of aid may result, at least in part, from these other consultative arrangements organized between the developing country and its donors in the course of setting up and following up on round-table conferences;

(c) Round-table conferences have benefited the host countries in a variety of important ways apart from and in addition to the mobilization of additional resources. They have contributed to the setting up or improvement of donor co-ordination arrangements at the country level, the strengthening of national planning and co-ordinating institutions, more effective presentation of non-project aid requirements and the preparation of improved priority project proposals.

3. The conclusions of the Government of Lesotho at the close of the donor conference held from 14-17 May in Maseru, that the significance of the discussions with donors lies in the very ability to sit together and speak frankly with each other, and that it is only when they meet at regular intervals that the LDC Government and the donors can understand each other better and harmonize their expectations, reflects aptly the most important aspect of the process of donor consultations.

II. ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

4. In May 1983, in Geneva, round-table meetings were held with potential donors for the Governments of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives and Samoa. These meetings led to the following results:

- The capability of the Governments concerned to define their national development strategies, plans and programmes and convincingly make their case to the donor community, was clearly demonstrated;
- The organized presentation to the participants and the explanations, at the ministers' level, of national economic strategies contributed significantly to enhanced mutual understanding.

- The documentation prepared for the meeting by each LDC, presenting its macro-economic development strategy and the related external assistance needs, was in itself a significant achievement. In several instances, it was the first time that such complete information had been assembled in a coherent and integrated manner;
- The combination of the documentation prepared for the meeting, and the discussions that ensued, formed a sound basis for continuing exchanges between each LDC and its development partners.

5. At the Geneva meeting, it was decided that during 1984 the LDC Governments would meet with UNDP to further assess the results of the round-table process and to consider the need for and nature of further action. These consultations took place in Bangkok in May 1984, in conjunction with a UNDP meeting with aid co-ordinators of the region, and provided an opportunity for each LDC Government to report on results obtained since Geneva and to discuss proposals for future action.

6. LDC Governments confirmed the utility of the round-table process with regard to the preparation of development strategies, their discussion with the donors present at the meetings, and the opening of a dialogue with new and potential donors. Two of the LDC Governments reported a reasonable donor commitment of assistance for projects presented at the Geneva meetings. The other three Governments reported less satisfactory results. However, they recognized that a longer period may be required before a new donor can actually deliver the promised assistance and that in some cases further results may still be forthcoming.

7. The five LDC Governments will continue their individual contacts with development partners to further mobilize project assistance. Some of them will request UNDP's continued assistance in this process. In one specific example, a Government intends to prepare a number of small-scale projects, mainly for rural development, for which non-governmental organizational support will be solicited. UNDP will assist the Government in preparing and presenting these projects.

8. As concerns further round-table consultations, one Government clearly indicated its desire for another formal meeting within the next two years. A second Government indicated its desire to have a follow-up review meeting. The other three Governments indicated that they are still assessing the results of the first round-table consultations and will decide later whether they desire future round-table meetings.

9. The Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific will continue, where necessary, and mainly through Resident Representatives and specific consultations, to identify with the LDC Governments in the region the manner in which UNDP can further assist in and facilitate their consultations with development partners.

III. ARAB STATES

10. The only round-table conference held so far in the Arab States region, which counts five LDCs, took place in Djibouti in November 1983. The results of this conference may provide a good example as to how a very small LDC can genuinely benefit from the donor consultation process. In terms of firm commitments made by participating donors, this conference is regarded as an unusual success. The Regional Bureau for the Arab States considers the following as key factors which have contributed to that success:

(a) The extensive groundwork, with substantive and logistical support provided by UNDP, led to the preparation of documentation of good quality;

(b) The preparation of the conference was undertaken with the involvement of a team of the most qualified officials in the country;

(c) A preliminary donors conference, held well in advance of the conference, led to a more incisive assessment and better understanding of the sectoral needs and priorities of the country;

(d) The bilateral consultation initiated by the Government with donors, following the conference mentioned under (c), further contributed to the session of the subsequent round-table conference.

11. In the view of the Regional Bureau, the ultimate success of the round-table conference will be determined more by the ability of the country's institutions to manage the increased external aid than by the magnitude of pledged resources. Thus, the setting up of an adequate mechanism for follow-up activities to donor conference is of the utmost importance.
