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DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME MATTERS ON ITS IN-SESSIONAL MEETING HELD DURING THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, 16-19 FEBRUARY 1993

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D. Asia and the Pacific

Papua New Guinea

1. The Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific introduced the fifth country programme for Papua New Guinea (DP/CP/PNG/5), for the period 1993 to 1996, with a net IPF of $7.2 million. Estimated cost-sharing was $18.6 million. These resources would be concentrated in two main areas: structural adjustment, employment generation and participatory development; and environmental and natural resource management. He noted that considerable complementary assistance was also expected. He stressed that the country programme would support the implementation of the Government's structural adjustment programme, especially through the formulation of an employment strategy and human resource development in the non-mining sectors and stimulation of self-sustaining development at the grass-roots level. GEF funds would be used to promote ecologically sustainable development in rural areas.

2. The representative of Papua New Guinea thanked UNDP for its assistance and explained the long-term structural problems of his country. The mineral sector had been highly developed while the non-mineral sectors lagged far behind. He thanked UNDP for its efforts in obtaining a major GEF allocation for environmental conservation.

3. Delegates found the programme to be a good reflection of the development situation, objectives and strategies, but suggested that specific performance indicators needed to be identified for all elements of the programme. Moreover, UNDP should strengthen its lead agency role in the coordination of technical cooperation, especially in the areas of employment and human resource development and with major bilateral donors. The honest presentation of the matrix was commended. UNDP was also praised for its innovative use of TSS-1 and SPR resources. The programme thrust of private sector and grass-roots development, as well as the implementation of Agenda 21 were welcomed, as was the focus on human development working through NGOs and on mainstreaming women in development. The hope was expressed that support for institution-building in the public sector would lead to enhanced private sector development (especially for fisheries), not to an expanded public sector.

4. In reply, the Assistant Administrator thanked the Committee for its support for the programme, which had been prepared by the Government in consultation with all major donors. The strategies contained therein were those of the Government. Since aid coordination was the prerogative of the Government, the role of UNDP was to strengthen the Government's capacity in this regard. He assured the Committee that in supporting the structural adjustment programme, UNDP was working closely with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and other donors. UNDP would also continue to collaborate with other donors in the thematic areas of the programme.

5. The Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for Papua New Guinea.

E. Latin America and the Caribbean

Cayman Islands

6. The Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean introduced the third country programme for the Cayman Islands (DP/CP/CAY/3). Net IPF resources of $145,000 would be supplemented by estimated cost-sharing of $1.29 million for a total of $1.44 million.

7. Support was expressed for a well-conceived programme that was complementary to national development objectives and concentrated on the areas of economic planning and management and human resources development. Emphasis on management development, as illustrated in the matrix, was highly appropriate in meeting the needs of the small island territory.

8. The Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the third country programme for the Cayman Islands.

Jamaica

9. The Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean introduced the fifth country programme for Jamaica (DP/CP/JAM/5). The net IPF of $3.2 million would be supplemented by estimated cost-sharing and co-financing for a total programme of $14.1 million. The programme was concentrated on four themes: human resources development; increased production and productivity; environmental management; and poverty alleviation.

10. The representative of Jamaica noted the pivotal role of UNDP in assisting development in Jamaica and pointed to the importance of human resources development in the face of declining resources for technical cooperation.

11. Delegations commented on the need to concentrate on fewer areas, given the limited available resources; to establish targets and indicators for the subsequent measurement of achievement and sustainability; to have systematic, rather than ad hoc coordination; and to improve national implementation. The role of UNDP in coordination with other donor programmes and with other United Nations specialized agencies was recognized. It was suggested that the programme should place greater emphasis on women's issues, private sector development, environment and resource distribution and should be largely strategic in nature. Mention was made of the role of UNDP in narcotic control linked to AIDS education.

12. The Deputy Director replied that programme fragmentation was undesirable, but since the goal of projects was capacity-building, projects should be assessed on their own merits and on their impact. Regarding donor coordination, he noted that donors had diverse approaches that were often difficult to reconcile. He also noted that the scarcity of resources was more critical for UNDP than problems of implementation. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the open and frank discussion.

13. The Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for Jamaica.

Panama

14. The Deputy Director introduced the fifth country programme for Panama (DP/CP/PAN/5), which had a net IPF of $3.5 million and estimated cost-sharing of $55.9 million. These sessions would be concentrated in the areas of: (a) modernization of the State and public sector reform; (b) social development and poverty alleviation; (c) strengthening of the productive sector and employment generation; and (d) environmental sustainability.

15. He also mentioned that a corrigendum to the country programme document would be issued to reflect more accurately the present socio-economic conditions in Panama.

16. Three delegations took the floor and recommended approval for the programme. They pointed out with satisfaction that the programme clearly showed a concentration on key areas of the country's economic and social agenda. One delegation, however, noted that the goals of the programme were rather optimistic in view of the limited IPF available for programming and considered that more emphasis should be given to the environment.

17. In reply, the Deputy Director took note of the comments and stated that he would share the specific comments with the field office in Panama. He noted that UNDP had been providing support to the preparation of the national environmental programme, which was presented at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and that UNDP presence in this field would be guided by the programme.

18. The Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for Panama.

Turks and Caicos Islands

19. The Deputy Director for Latin America and the Caribbean introduced the third country programme for the Turks and Caicos Islands (DP/CP/TCI/3). The net IPF of $971,000 would be used to support national development efforts in public sector management, education and environmental management.

20. The programme was endorsed and appreciation was expressed for the continuing support of UNDP for the Government's efforts to overcome development problems specific to small island States.

21. The Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the third country programme for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

F. General discussion

22. After considering individual country programmes for approval, the Committee held a general discussion, in which a number of points were raised that were applicable to country programmes in general.

23. One feature of the country programmes for the fifth cycle was that they placed greater emphasis on cross-cutting themes; it was not clear, however, to what extent the programme approach had actually been applied. It was noted that the new country programmes were strategy documents and as such did not provide details at the project level. Several delegations suggested that performance indicators were needed both to show where changes were expected and to reflect lessons learned from previous cycles. Moreover, these indicators were essential benchmarks for use during the mid-term review and evaluations of the programme against which to assess achievements. In the absence of clear indicators in the country programme, attention should be given to developing or refining them at the time of the mid-term review.

24. There was a request for more information on progress in national execution. In addition, one delegate noted reference to TSS-1 funding in one country programme and suggested that this might be made a standard feature.

25. Field visits were considered to provide an excellent opportunity for delegations to get a better understanding of UNDP and it was suggested that they should if possible be organized around the time of the mid-term review. Delegations expressed satisfaction that a more selective use had been made of the Administrator's notes when presenting country programmes.

26. The Assistant Administrator and Director, BPPE, in response to points raised, said that UNDP was paying particular attention to performance indicators in the formulation of the specific programme support documents. Donors were encouraged to participate in the mid-term reviews, subject to the agreement of host Governments, and keeping in mind that these were not meant to be evaluations as such. Rather they were to be used as a management tool to guide programme implementation and contribute to future monitoring and programming. To illustrate examples of full-fledged evaluations, those for Djibouti, Ethiopia and Myanmar were cited. On the programme approach, it was said that if recipient Governments were not prepared or able to follow it, UNDP could not impose it, since by definition it had to be nationally led. The Committee was informed that a report would be presented to the Governing Council at its fortieth session on experience with the programme approach, together with decentralization. Turning to national execution, the Assistant Administrator noted that the use of the modality was rising. He reaffirmed that no targets had been or should be set. There was always a risk of going faster than the capacity of recipient countries would accommodate. On the question of TSS-1 and its being reported to the Council, it was recalled that the work programme for 1992-1993 had been presented to the Council at its thirty-ninth session (1992), and that a new programme for 1994-1995 would be given to the Council at its fortieth session for information. It was noted in this connection that UNDP should do more to explain how specialized agencies were being associated with the country programming process.

IV. FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK, INCLUDING TENTATIVE TIMETABLE FOR MID-TERM REVIEWS TO BE CARRIED OUT 1993-1995

Tentative timetable for mid-term reviews

27. The Director of Policy Division introduced document DP/1993/6, containing the tentative timetable for mid-term reviews of country and intercountry programmes during 1993-1995 and the procedures for their consideration by the Governing Council. He emphasized that it was indeed a tentative schedule and noted that preliminary guidelines had been drawn up for use by field offices to assist in the preparation and conduct of the mid-term reviews, taking into account Council decisions 89/11 of 24 February 1989 and 92/28 of 26 May 1992. The guidelines would be refined on the basis of experience during 1993. In response to a question, he confirmed that the mid-term review of the fifth country programme for Zambia was scheduled for the first half of 1993, as requested by the Governing Council.

28. During the discussion, delegations recalled the evaluation of mid-term reviews for the fourth cycle and suggested that a similar review might be done in future. They emphasized the importance of the reviews in the context of the programme approach since they would reveal what was actually being done within the broad strategy laid down by the country programme. It was stressed that the reviews should be seen as a major part of an ongoing process that might also include an in-depth evaluation of the country programme. Particular interest was expressed in the mid-term reviews of the country programmes for China, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Zambia; it was suggested that these should be among the two to six reviews that would be submitted to the Governing Council at its special session in February 1994. Delegations also asked about mid-term reviews of SPR activities.

29. The Assistant Administrator and Director, BPPE, recalled that the Governing Council had requested that a synthesis be made of the mid-term reviews to be taken up at each session of the Council. That would help provide the overview suggested by the Committee. A limit of about 20 pages had been set for the reports on mid-term reviews to the Council, but in view of their importance that limit would be enforced in a flexible manner. As regards SPR activities, half would be evaluated and reported on in 1994 and half in 1995.

Field visits in 1993

30. The Director of the Bureau of External Relations, in his presentation, proposed three field visits to a total of six countries in 1993. The first would cover two countries in the Africa region - Burkina Faso and Benin - and take place in the last two weeks of April. The second would include two countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region - Jamaica and El Salvador - and be fielded in the first two weeks of May. The third would be to the Eastern European and Commonwealth of Independent States region, to be conducted in August or early September. Consultations with Governments were under way to identify two countries, one in Eastern Europe, the other in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

31. During the discussion, the question of knowledge of languages elicited diverse views. Whereas it was noted that it might be useful to know the official language of the country being visited so as to gain the spirit of the dialogue, which could so often be lost in interpretation, some delegates felt that this need not pose a barrier, especially if interpretation was adequately provided.

32. One delegation, recalling that in its decision 91/2, the Governing Council had made provision for arranging up to four field visits per year, wondered whether a fourth visit could not also be included in 1993. In this context, he indicated his Government's preparedness to receive such a visit if his country - the Islamic Republic of Iran - together with another in the region were chosen for it.

33. The Director of the Bureau of External Relations welcomed the proposal, indicating that it would be possible if financial implications, based upon the number of participants in the three visits being planned, and other logistical and timing questions, permitted a fourth one in 1993. Otherwise, the next visit to Asia and the Pacific region could certainly be arranged for early 1994.

34. The representative of one developed country stated that, but for the current national budgetary constraints, the field visits would have attracted his country's active participation. He wondered whether under such circumstances, UNDP could not cover the expenditure. The Director of the Bureau of External Relations, clarifying the position, stated that the Governing Council, rather than taking a definitive decision in the matter, had only urged developed countries to pay for their delegate's participation in the field visits. This left room for flexibility in the financial arrangements. On the other hand, it remained the hope of the Administration that in deference to the supportive role of developed countries in UNDP undertakings, they would indeed continue to finance their participation in the field visits as far as possible.

35. The Committee took note of the plans for the field visits in 1993.

36. With regard to its future programme of work, the Committee decided to reconfirm the position reflected in paragraph 576 of document DP/1992/70 as its programme of work for 1993.
