

Concept Note

UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF Phase II activities for African Countries

Introduction

This note has been prepared to facilitate discussions between African countries, regional organisations, UNEP, UNCTAD and WTO officials on design and implementation of capacity building activities that will take place in phase II of the CBTF. The overarching objectives of these activities are to assist countries in understanding and developing policy responses to linkages between trade, environmental protection and economic development, to maximize sustainable development gains from trade and trade-liberalization. Potential activities discussed in this CBTF workshop relate to trade and environment issues being discussed or negotiated in the Doha Work Programme, with the aim of strengthening African countries participation in this work programme.

Replenishment of CBTF funds by an EC DG Development grant allows us to foresee spending some \$100,000 to \$150,000 on capacity building activities for Anglophone African countries in the next year. We propose for your consideration the organization of a regional event in the first half of 2004. Background papers, based on thematic research, country projects and the outcomes of needs assessments workshops such as this one (Cape Town, May 2003) and the one that took place in Windhoek in July 2002, will inform this regional event. The event may also include a training component, based on training materials already prepared (TrainforTrade) or in preparation.

Needs assessment and conduct of CBTF workshop

Participants in the Cape Town workshop are being asked to fill in a questionnaire to identify capacity building needs of countries in the region, as well as regional organisations which can be partners in these activities. This questionnaire will supplement the preliminary assessment undertaken in Windhoek which indicated the following as priority areas for Anglophone African countries: environmental measures and market access; agriculture and environment issues; enhancing market access for agricultural products; WTO-MEA relations; “win-win” situations where liberalising trade also contributes to development and protecting the environment; and TRIPS, environment and traditional knowledge.

The preceding WTO regional seminar will include sessions on MEA-WTO relations, and environmental requirements and market access. Specific sessions in the Cape Town CBTF workshop will focus on: promoting production and trade in organic agricultural products; the protection of traditional knowledge and issues relating to access to genetic resources and benefit sharing; and integrated assessment of trade related policies. This last issue is considered important as UNEP’s Regional Office for Africa has identified the need for strategic environmental assessment of Poverty Reduction Strategies in the region, so as to foster sustainable development.

These WTO and CBTF events will help shape an initial elaboration of the specific activities for the proposed regional CBTF event that will take place in 2004. Clearly these must meet the demands and needs of the countries represented in the workshop, but workshop participants are also called to build on the expertise and experience of

regional organisations present, who are expected to be important partners. The discussions during the workshop, as well as analysis of the completed questionnaires, will lead to prioritisation of issues for the 2004 event, and for events later on.

Suggested preparations for CBTF workshop

UNCTAD and UNEP kindly request participants to undertake the following preparations for the workshop:

- 1) complete the attached questionnaire and return it to UNEP (by fax 00 41 22 917 8076, or preferably email: desiree.leon@unep.ch) by 15 May, or by hand at the start of the WTO regional seminar on 19 May;
- 2) initiate discussions between trade and environment counterparts on capacity building priorities while still in the capital, and preferably complete only one questionnaire in consultation;
- 3) read the background papers on environmental requirements and market access, and integrated assessment that will shortly be sent to you, as well as the report of the policy dialogue on “Promoting Production and Trade in Organic Agricultural Products” that was convened in the ACP Secretariat in Brussels in February 2002.

We consider that the WTO Regional Seminar itself will also be a valuable preparation for this workshop, and have agreed with our WTO colleagues to show flexibility and responsiveness to your needs and requests, so as to maximise the utility of these two meetings. We look forward to participating in these events with you, and also to your responses ahead of them, that we believe will enhance the focus and value of our collective work during the seminar and the workshop.

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