



Capacity Building (2): CBTF

Background: As the pace of globalisation accelerates, enhanced trade and investment flows confront an increasing number of developing countries and countries with economies in transition with a diverse set of trade, environment and development challenges. It is now widely recognised that capacity building is urgently needed to assist decision makers in successfully addressing the challenges and fully capturing the benefits of globalisation.

The UNEP and UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF) was conceived as a response to expressed capacity building needs and requirements of governments. Through this joint initiative, UNEP and UNCTAD are pooling their efforts and resources to meet these capacity building requirements. Launched in March 2000, the CBTF provides a unique and flexible framework to implement a coordinated and comprehensive set of highly participatory activities.

Through activities in five clusters – thematic research, country projects, training, policy dialogue and networking – the CBTF aims to help beneficiaries effectively address trade-environment-development issues at the national level and to participate in related deliberations at the international level. Thematic research and country projects, involving a ‘learning by doing’ process, directly enhance the capacities of practitioners to assess and manage policy integration challenges in beneficiary countries. Training raises awareness and broadens the information base on critical trade, environment and development issues. Policy dialogue and networking reinforce the learning process by allowing CBTF beneficiaries to exchange ideas, experiences and perspectives and to develop partnerships which foster greater cooperation.

Following a March 2000 briefing session attended by officials from more than 40 Geneva missions, the CBTF Terms of Reference were established and the task force was officially launched. Meetings with representatives of potential donor countries were held in May 2000 inviting governments to collectively contribute to the funding of first year activities of the CBTF activities. To date, contributions have been received from the Governments of Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom, enabling the establishment of the UNEP-administered trust fund that will underpin the activities of the CBTF. However, additional financial contributions from other donors are sought to support a broad and balanced offering of CBTF activities during 2001.

A June 2000 briefing session was organised to solicit governments’ input on proposed first year activities of the CBTF, and to more deeply engage interested governments in future CBTF activities. Pursuant to this briefing, a CBTF call for proposals was circulated to all Geneva-based Missions. Over 25 countries responded to the ‘Call for Proposals’ with 39 proposed projects. Evaluation of country proposals is underway and projects selected for implementation are scheduled to begin in early 2001.

Goals and Objectives: The overall purpose of the CBTF is to strengthen the capacities of countries, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to effectively address trade-environment-development issues. The CBTF will help beneficiaries at their request, to:

- undertake comprehensive analyses of the relationships between trade, environment and development;
- assess the environmental and developmental impacts of trade policies, as well as the trade and developmental implications of environmental policies with a view to maximising the benefits of trade;
- develop and implement policy packages to promote integrated national trade, environment and development policies;
- explore approaches to address trade-environment-development issues at the domestic level with national stakeholders, and at regional and global levels with international experts, practitioners and negotiators;
- participate effectively in trade-environment-development deliberations;
- access information from, and build cooperation with, relevant organisations working in the trade-environment-development domain.

Activities: In response to expressed country needs, the CBTF will facilitate five integrated and complementary sets of activities, which will be constructed around a collaborative partnership-based approach. These are:

- Thematic Research on major issues in the trade-environment-development domain and on practical approaches to sustainably address them, bearing in mind the development priorities of countries;
- Country Projects to enhance countries' capacities to develop mutually supportive trade, environment and development policies;
- Training to enhance countries' appreciation of the relationship and complementarities between trade, environment and development;
- Policy Dialogue to facilitate awareness raising, consultations and the exchange of perspectives among experts, policy makers and negotiators at the national, regional and international levels;
- Networking and Information Exchange to provide technical and operational support at the national and regional levels and to widely disseminate the results of CBTF activities.

Demand-Driven Nature of Activities: All CBTF projects are conceived, designed and proposed by national institutions in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Selection of projects to be supported as CBTF activities is made jointly by UNCTAD and UNEP based on a number of criteria, which include:

- proposed project activities falling within the CBTF terms of reference and related to its proposed first year activities;
- building on acquired experience in the selected area while not duplicating other capacity building activities at the bilateral or multilateral level;
- willingness and commitment on the part of the national government to be involved in the proposed project activities;
- policy relevant and action-oriented nature of the proposed project and its likelihood of supporting a process of policy reform to address national needs and priorities;
- replicability of proposed project activities within the country or region;
- research and implementation capacity of the proposing national institution; and
- appropriate geographical distribution and recognition of the special requirements of least developed countries (LDCs).

First Phase of Projects: Due to the extra-budgetary nature of the CBTF, its activities are launched in phases according to the timing and availability of financial resources contributed by donors. Seven projects from the almost forty received have been selected for support and are being initiated in January and February 2001:

- Thematic Research: 2 projects in Indonesia on Cost Internalisation.
- Country Projects: A project in Lebanon on Regional Trade and Environment Policy Coordination; A project in El-Salvador on an Assessment of Regional Trade and Technology Transfer Needed for Waste Recycling.
- Training: Development of a CBTF Training Programme for: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos; Cuba; and African LDCs.
- Policy Dialogue: International Conference on Trade, Environment and Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean, in Mexico City, February 2001.

Further Information: on the CBTF is available at the website: www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf and through CBTF documents available online and in hardcopy format, upon request. CBTF staff may be contacted by e-mail at cbtf@unep-unctad.org.