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Independent evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 3: International trade and commodities*

Summary

At the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and Programme Budget, member States requested, inter alia, an independent evaluation of subprogramme 3 on international trade and commodities, managed by the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC). For this purpose, UNCTAD selected an independent evaluation team that conducted the evaluation from March to June 2024, covering the work programme of subprogramme 3 for the period 2020–2023.

The evaluation used a theory-based approach to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, partnerships and coherence, sustainability and impact of the subprogramme, and the mainstreaming of human rights, gender, inclusion and equity. The evaluation triangulated findings using multiple data sources and analytical methods, including document reviews, interviews, financial analysis and surveys of DITC staff, member States and external subprogramme 3 stakeholders.

The evaluation found substantial evidence of subprogramme 3 being effective in achieving targeted outputs and outcomes. For example, during the evaluation period, subprogramme 3 made 201 global-level policy recommendations and 399 country-level policy recommendations and trained 8,000 individuals across more than 2,000 organizations. Moreover, external respondents to the evaluation survey provided 4,000 ratings of 32 different subprogramme 3 activities/outputs. Of these 4,000 ratings, 97 per cent rated subprogramme 3 activities/outputs as useful, with 76 per cent rating subprogramme 3 activities/outputs as “indispensable” or “very useful”. While subprogramme 3 initially lacked detailed results-based management (RBM) data, the adoption of a new UNCTAD-wide results framework in 2023 was a significant improvement in monitoring subprogramme 3 results.

* This evaluation was prepared by an independent evaluation team consisting of Mr. Nathan Galer (team leader), external consultant; Ms. Amy Stuart, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia; and Mr. Leandro Santos Teixeira, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil. Supporting materials for this evaluation are presented in document TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1.



Subprogramme 3 contributed towards targeted impacts. There was evidence of subprogramme 3 influencing national-level decision-makers and policies that promoted economic diversification and transformation to more sustainable and resilient economies. There was evidence of subprogramme 3 providing influential inputs into the multilateral trading system at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the multilateral system at large, including the General Assembly. Monitoring of subprogramme 3 outcomes and impacts, beyond the high-level UNCTAD-wide results framework, and ensuring their long-term sustainability remained a key challenge, due primarily to a lack of dedicated resources.

The trade, gender and development programme is at the forefront of integrating gender equality and trade, and subprogramme 3 made a promising start to considering the rights of persons with disabilities, for example, organizing a panel discussion and inter-agency working group on disability in trade. However, subprogramme 3 insufficiently mainstreams gender beyond gender-specific programmes, and other cross-cutting issues are insufficiently mainstreamed.

DITC delivered more than planned against subprogramme 3 proposed programme budgets and made important efficiency gains. DITC may realize additional efficiencies by increasing collaboration with United Nations regional commissions and country teams. While there has been collaboration between subprogramme 3 and other subprogrammes, several internal and external stakeholders expressed appetite for DITC to be more fully involved in crafting the *Trade and Development Report*. The evaluation could not determine whether subprogramme 3 are allocating resources cost effectively (i.e. doing the right things with limited resources) because DITC lack disaggregated cost–output–outcome data to optimize allocation decisions.

The subprogramme is rooted in UNCTAD mandates, including the Nairobi Maafikiano (TD/519/Add.2) and the Bridgetown Covenant (TD/541/Add.2), and the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, subprogramme 3 is highly relevant to the needs of member States. There is an ongoing risk that subprogramme 3 are unable to optimize relevance to the least developed countries (LDCs) because resource constraints limit engagement through consensus-building and technical cooperation activities. Stakeholders perceive subprogramme 3 as broad but appreciate DITC efforts to link outputs and reporting to cross-cutting priority topics, such as critical energy transition minerals. There was consensus that subprogramme 3 is at a pivotal moment, and there is an opportunity to craft a renewed and more focused vision for subprogramme 3.

The evaluation recommends that DITC should: further embed RBM across subprogramme 3 activities/outputs; develop a long-term strategic operational plan covering, inter alia, people management, resource mobilization and partnerships; develop a communications strategy; revitalize intergovernmental meetings they handle; undertake a prioritization exercise to ensure cost-effective allocation of subprogramme 3 resources; and more fully mainstream United Nations cross-cutting issues.

I. Introduction

1. According to the 2024 proposed programme budget of UNCTAD, an independent evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 3 (SP3), covering the period 2020–2023, is to be presented at the eighty-eighth session of Working Party on the Programme Plan and Programme Performance of UNCTAD. The purpose is to identify key lessons on programme performance, strategic positioning and management arrangements. Moreover, the evaluation may provide insights and suggestions to improve general programme performance at an UNCTAD-wide level.

II. Subject of evaluation

2. SP3 are delivered by the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC). DITC are organized into five branches of work: (a) commodities; (b) competition and consumer policies; (c) trade analysis; (d) trade, environment, climate change and sustainable development; and (e) trading systems, services and creative economy. It also has a separate programme dedicated to trade, gender and development. DITC implement SP3 through the three UNCTAD pillars of research and analysis, technical cooperation/capacity-building and intergovernmental consensus-building. SP3 products include:

(a) A strategic publication, namely, *Commodities and Development Report*, and global trade updates, *Trade and Environment Review* and *Creative Economy Report*.

(b) Technical cooperation projects across the sectoral areas of the branches and platforms, including the Trade Analysis and Information System (TRAINS) for non-tariff measures (NTMs).

(c) Intergovernmental meetings; for example, the Trade and Development Commission, intergovernmental groups of experts on competition and consumer protection law and policy, and multi-year expert meetings on commodities and on trade, services and development.

III. Methodology

3. As prescribed in the terms of reference for the evaluation (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 1), the evaluation used a theory-based, mixed-methods approach to assess SP3 achievements towards the outcomes and impacts targeted in the UNCTAD proposed programme budget. The evaluation team developed and validated a theory of change using SP3 proposed programme budget targets, supplemented by the new UNCTAD results framework. An evaluation results matrix guided data collection, analysis and reporting for the evaluation. Primary evaluation data sources included:

(a) 45 responses to an e-survey of DITC staff, with a female-to-male ratio of 52:48;

(b) 261 total responses to an e-survey of SP3 stakeholders, including member State representatives in Geneva and at the country level. This included 145 full responses (several questions were optional), with a female-to-male ratio of 42:58;

(c) 77 interviews with 62 different SP3 stakeholders (23 external stakeholders, 21 UNCTAD staff independent of DITC; and 18 DITC staff), 70 per cent of the interviews were independent of DITC.

4. Secondary data sources included intergovernmental records, technical cooperation reports and SP3 planning, implementation and reporting documents. A selection of five walk-through case studies facilitated a review of SP3 processes. Some SP3 technical cooperation projects undergo separate evaluations, thus the current evaluation placed

emphasis on SP3 research, analysis, publications, and intergovernmental activities, which represent 85 per cent of the SP3 total regular budget.

5. Limitations included a brief time frame, lack of a unified SP3 contacts list and limited engagement from member States in both interviews and the survey.

IV. Findings

A. Contribution to results: Outputs, outcomes and impacts

1. To what extent has a monitoring system been set up for relevant and reliable measurement of subprogramme 3 results?

6. In 2023, under the general guidance of the Secretary-General, UNCTAD made transformational progress by deploying a new UNCTAD-wide results framework and embedding RBM processes in each subprogramme. DITC responded comprehensively to the new system, monitoring results throughout 2023 and retrospectively compiling results for 2021 and 2022. The evaluation team reviewed the UNCTAD pilot online RBM tool, which allows analysis and reporting of results under RBM indicators, including impacts linked to the Bridgetown Covenant. While refinement of this UNCTAD-wide results framework is beyond DITC control, it could be further improved (see TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 2).

7. There were efforts to apply RBM prior to 2023, but SP3 generally lacked RBM data, relying primarily on quantitative output data. Desk review of planning and results data for selected case studies indicated that RBM is still not integrated into all activities. While DITC may have been able to extract results data upon request, DITC were not consistently and regularly monitoring important results data, such as publications downloads. Going forward, DITC should fully embed RBM indicators throughout SP3 activities/outputs, including in planning documents. Moreover, DITC should establish SP3-specific indicators to gather nuanced results data. RBM data gathered for SP3 are summarized in table 2.

2. What evidence is there of outputs and outcomes achieved through the work of subprogramme 3?

8. SP3 delivered a substantial number of outputs and achieved its targeted outputs, with small variances in 2020 and 2021 due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Similarly, SP3 achieved all proposed programme budget “planned results” (a blend of targeted outputs and outcomes) for each year. SP3 results as reported in proposed programme budgets are summarized in table 1 (for details, see TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 3).

Table 1
Summary of proposed programme budget results

	2023			2022			2021			2020		
	P	A	Dif.	P	A	Dif.	P	A	Dif.	P	A	Dif.
Parliamentary documents	19	20	1	20	20	-	21	18	-3	22	15	-7
Field and technical cooperation projects	20	27	7	20	23	3	24	22	-2	21	27	6
Seminars, workshops, and trainings (days)	118	240	122	108	211	103	125	171	46	124	124	-
Publications	35	32	-3	36	42	6	35	38	3	31	30	-1
Technical materials	12	12	-	12	13	1	12	13	1	16	15	-1

Source: Proposed programme budgets, 2020–2024.

Abbreviations: P, planned results; A, actual results; Dif., difference.

9. Data from the new UNCTAD RBM system offered further and substantial evidence of SP3 outcomes, in addition to outputs. Table 2 demonstrates SP3 achievements against these indicators. The evaluation team traced a selection of results to source data to confirm their accuracy.

10. UNCTAD web statistics provided ample evidence of stakeholder interest in a selection of SP3 outputs (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 4). For example, dedicated webpages for the *Commodities and Development Report* and *Trade and Environment Report* were both separately visited 7,000 times during the evaluation period.

Table 2

Summary of subprogramme 3 achievements against the UNCTAD results framework, 2021–2023

	2023	2022	2021	Total
IO1 Number of people who acquired new skills, through successful completion of training.	2,482	2,492	2,733	7,707
• % of female participants	48	45	49	47
• % of participants identifying as person with disability	No data	No data	No data	
IO2 Overall appreciation from post-workshop surveys (% of satisfied participants).	85	82	83	84
IO3 Number of institutions receiving training.	1,269	575	912	2,756
IO4 UNCTAD issues captured in parliamentary documentation.	67	56	54	177
IO7.1 New policy recommendations which have been put forward in the United Nations by UNCTAD analysis at the global level.	94	53	54	201
IO7.2 New policy recommendations at the country level.	130	127	142	399
IO8 Number of active accounts in digital platforms.	29,959	23,793	17,532	29,959
IO11 Number of requests for services and information.	29	31	32	92
IO15 List of issues from Secretary-General/Deputy Secretary-General/Directors brought to international forums.	25	8	3	36
IO16 Number of interventions by Secretary-General/Deputy Secretary-General/Directors in international forums.	11	6	2	19
IO17 Number of messages expressing appreciation for UNCTAD activities and services.	28	6	2	36

Source: UNCTAD results framework.

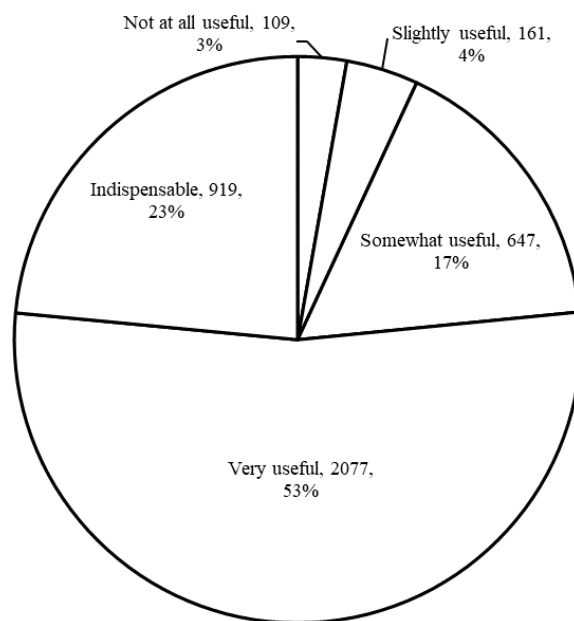
Abbreviations: IO, output indicator.

Note: As not all IOs apply to SP3, there are gaps in IO numbering. See TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 6, for definitions of each indicator.

11. The evaluation survey of member States and external stakeholders provided nearly 4,000 ratings on the “usefulness” of 32 different SP3 activities and outputs. The survey defined “usefulness” as an activity/output that “catalyses or influences discussions/decisions/activities or improves systems/knowledge”. Of 4,000 ratings, 97 per cent rated SP3 activities/outputs as useful, with 76 per cent rating SP3 activities/outputs as “indispensable” or “very useful” (figure 1). This is new and substantial evidence of SP3

achieving positive outcomes. These results reflect feedback from informed stakeholders because the survey emphasized that respondents were not expected to rate all activities/outputs and should skip to those with which they were most familiar. Perceptions were consistent across stakeholder and economic groupings, though slightly weaker among respondents from regional/international organizations and non-governmental organizations. (For detailed survey results, see TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5.)

Figure 1
“Please rate the usefulness of the subprogramme 3 activities/outputs”*



Source: Evaluation survey.

* Consolidated responses across 32 DITC activities and outputs.

12. Stakeholder perceptions of individual SP3 activities and outputs were more varied but remained positive. Table 3 shows SP3 activities/outputs perceived as most and least useful. It is indicative of success that the “least useful” SP3 activities/outputs were nonetheless perceived by the majority of survey respondents as “very useful” or “indispensable”, that is, they were “least” useful rather than “not” useful. Indeed, only two activities/outputs were rated “not at all useful” by at least 5 per cent of survey respondents: an update on COVID-19 and tourism (5 per cent) and the e-learning on trade and gender (6 per cent). Survey results showing the most and least useful activities/outputs across DITC branches and by economic groupings are provided in TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, tables 1–4.

Table 3
Activities and outputs most and least rated as “very useful” or “indispensable”

	<i>Percentage</i>
Activities and outputs most rated as “very useful” or “indispensable”^a	
<i>Trade and Environment Review</i>	84
A double burden: The effects of food price increases and currency depreciations on food import bills	82
Key statistics and trends in trade policy	82

	<i>Percentage</i>
Activities and outputs least rated as “very useful” or “indispensable”	
Oceans Forum	70
Voluntary peer review of competition law and policy	69
Biotrade Congress	68
COVID-19 and tourism	57

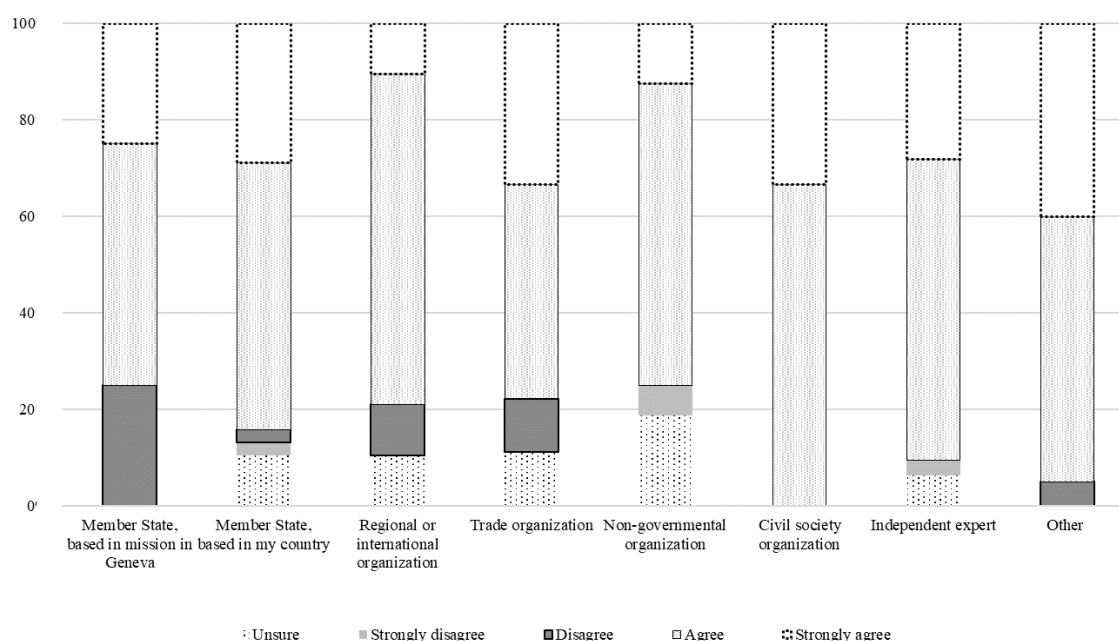
Source: Evaluation survey.

^a Votes are for individual items e.g. 35 per cent of votes for that specific activity/output were “indispensable” or “very useful”.

13. Eighty-five per cent of external stakeholders surveyed agreed that SP3 provide useful policy recommendations, with these positive perceptions quite consistent across stakeholder groups (figure 2). The most positive results came from LDCs, with 90 per cent agreeing SP3 provide useful policy recommendations (see TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 23). Figure 3 shows stakeholders had similar views of SP3 contributions towards other targeted outcomes. Feedback from interviews substantiated the results of the survey. Figures 4 and 5 present survey responses from member States and external stakeholders related to SP3 outcomes specific to developing country contexts. Around 80 per cent agreed that SP3 successfully achieved outcomes related to economic diversification and impact assessments for sustainable development strategies. Feedback from interviews substantiated the results of the survey, with member States and external stakeholders sharing positive perceptions of SP3. For example, interviewees explained that member States, particularly from developing countries, often quote SP3 reports and research at WTO proceedings. Moreover, several SP3 external partners explained that SP3 outputs influence their decisions and/or work.

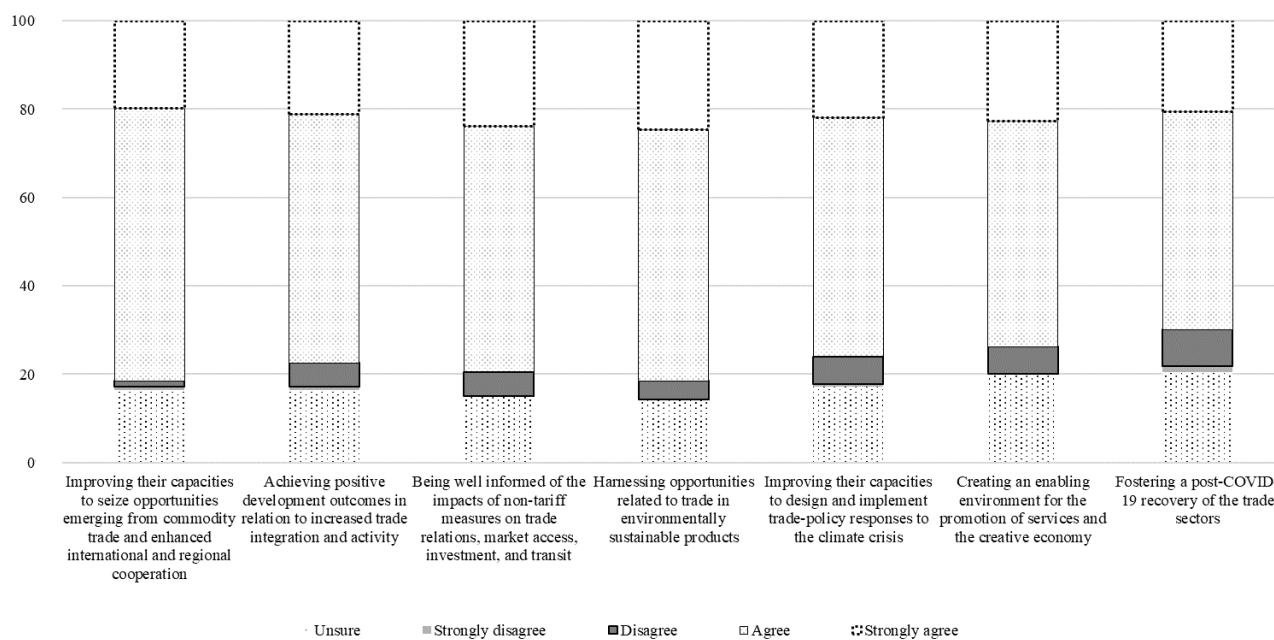
Figure 2
“To what extent do you agree that subprogramme 3 provides useful policy recommendations?”

(Percentage)



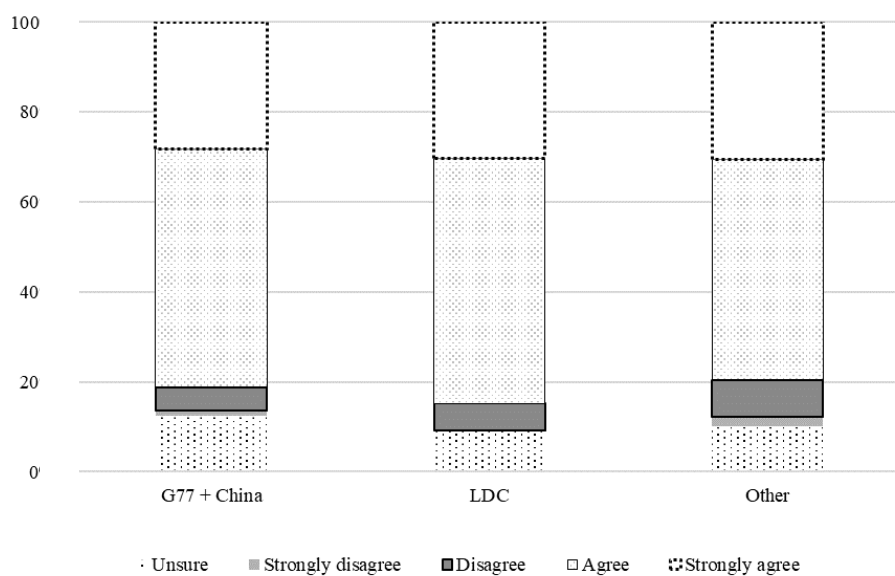
Source: Evaluation survey.

Figure 3
“To what extent do you agree that subprogramme 3 positively contributed towards member States...”
 (Percentage)



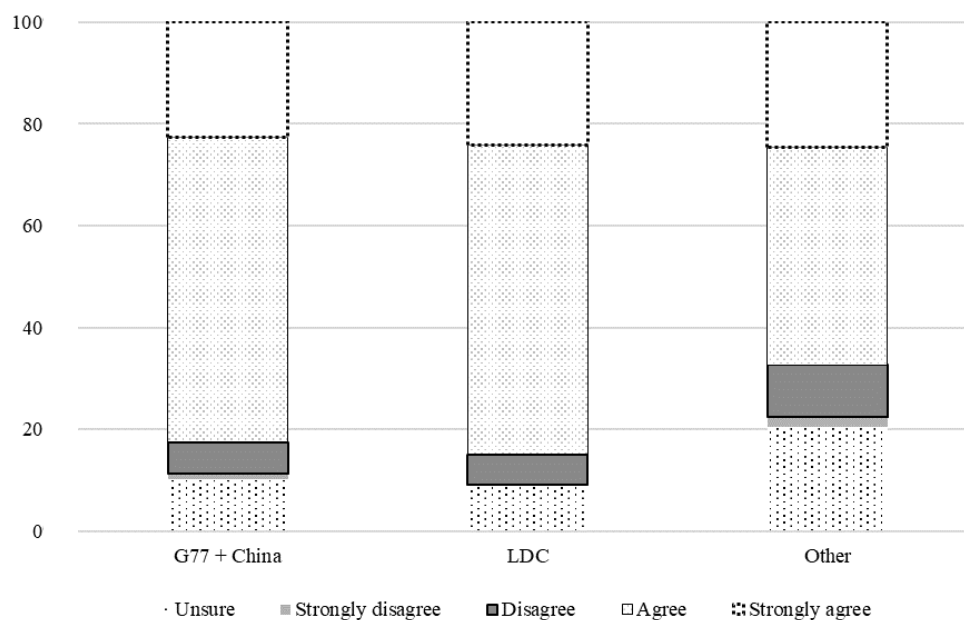
Source: Evaluation survey.

Figure 4
“To what extent do you agree that subprogramme 3 encourages and supports developing countries to foster structural transformation through economic diversification?”
 (Percentage)



Source: Evaluation survey.

Figure 5
“To what extent do you agree that subprogramme 3 provides helpful impact assessments of alternative scenarios for a country’s sustainable development strategies”
 (Percentage)



Source: Evaluation survey.

3. What evidence is there of actual (or potential) long-term impact of subprogramme 3? (Effectiveness)

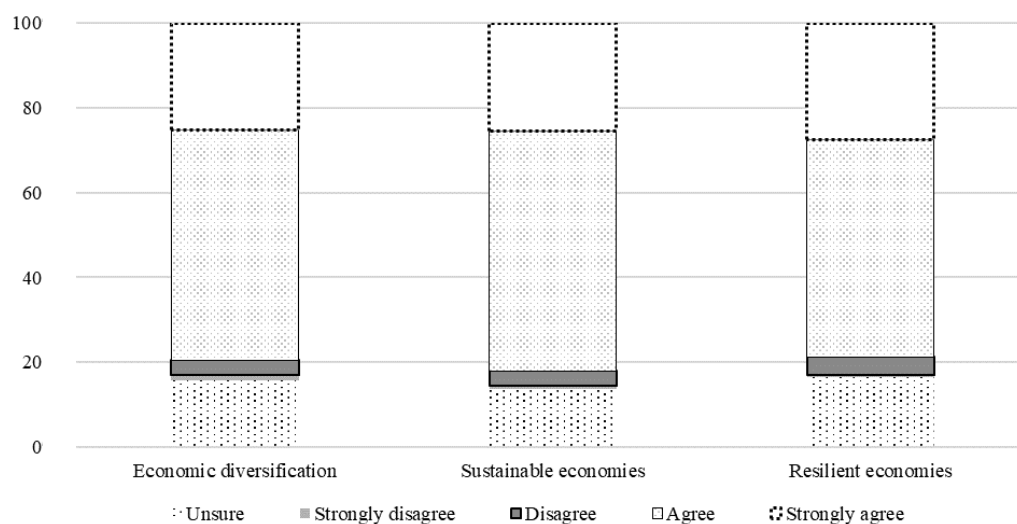
14. Around 80 per cent of member States and external stakeholders surveyed agreed that SP3 have positively contributed towards SP3 targeted impacts¹ (figure 6). Moreover, these positive results are consistent across stakeholder cohorts and economic groupings (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figures 28–30).

¹ As defined by the Bridgetown Covenant and proposed programme budget:

- Enable economic diversification.
- Enable sustainable and resilient economies.
- Enable the multilateral transformations needed to create a more inclusive, resilient, sustainable and prosperous world.

Figure 6
“To what extent do you agree that subprogramme 3 positively contributed towards international trade and commodities enabling...”

(Percentage)



Source: Evaluation survey.

15. While UNCTAD does not seek to change national-level policies and procedures directly, the evaluation noted many examples of policy and procedural changes initiated based on SP3 activities. For example, Angola and Uzbekistan revised their trade in services related policies; Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica adopted national ocean economy and trade strategies; and Indonesia launched an NTMs database. Similarly, several interviewees highlighted that SP3 outputs (for example, global trade updates) influence national-level decision-making and support member State accession to WTO, for example, Timor-Leste. This is unsurprising given that SP3 delivered 399 new policy recommendations at the country level during the period (see table 3). SP3 also provided influential inputs into high-visibility, rapidly changing crises, for example, inputs to the Black Sea Initiative and the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

16. In relation to the targeted impact of SP3 to “enable the multilateral transformations needed”,² transformation 4 of the Bridgetown Covenant states that “multilateralism based on the Charter of the United Nations... remains paramount... UNCTAD should enhance its contribution to the work of the United Nations General Assembly”. To this end, SP3 provided regular inputs to the General Assembly, including to the United Nations Secretary-General reports entitled “World commodity trends and prospects” (A/78/231) and “International trade and development 2023” (A/78/230). Stakeholder interviewees and document review offered further evidence of SP3 supporting multilateral transformations, including:

(a) Transformational work on NTMs, which is at the vanguard. International organisations and national governments have adopted SP3 classifications.

(b) Contributions to the Trade House Pavilion, at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which communicated the role trade can play in response to climate change. Stakeholders suggested SP3 could achieve even greater impact by increasing engagement with Group of 77 negotiators.

(c) Contributions to the programme for Angola, which was part of one of the United Nations Secretary-General’s 12 high impact initiatives at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

² See footnote 1.

4. What are the main enabling and limiting factors that contribute to the achievement of results?

17. The main factors enabling the achievement of SP3 results have been the expertise and diligence of DITC staff. Their specialized knowledge and commitment ensured the delivery of high-quality outputs. The unique mandate of DITC to support developing countries in enhancing their participation in the multilateral trading system was another important enabler. Additional enablers include DITC efforts to align with initiatives of the United Nations Secretary-General, an increase in the number of informal DITC briefings before key meetings and DITC ensuring that coherent themes permeate key SP3 outputs and reports. Member States also appreciated that branches invited member States to provide inputs, including country-level priorities, to meeting background notes, for example, through an SP3 survey on the creative economy. Survey results show stakeholder perceptions of DITC consultations with member State missions have improved since the 2015 SP3 evaluation (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 31). Interviewees noted these efforts have boosted member State mission engagement, which is an important catalyst for SP3 impacts.

18. While SP3 made improvements vis-à-vis communications and engagement, it remains the main factor limiting SP3 results. A communications and engagement strategy would holistically remedy the recurring limiting factors noted by this evaluation, which included:

(a) No mapping or prioritization of SP3 target audiences/stakeholders, their priorities, nor the desired SP3 “user journey”.³

(b) No centralized “customer relationship management” system, resulting in fragmented communication efforts. Each branch has separate contact lists, as do other divisions and the UNCTAD offices in Addis Ababa and New York.

(c) Member State representatives in United Nations missions and in country have time constraints and so are not always abreast of SP3 work. Some representatives are expert in areas other than economics and, consequently, unable to recognize potential value addition within SP3 outputs. Member State staff frequently rotate and do not necessarily receive a comprehensive handover. Therefore, SP3 should provide tailored communications.

19. Intergovernmental meetings are a linchpin, connecting SP3 activities, and are vital catalysts for impact. However, the current structure and implementation of the intergovernmental machinery appeared at times to jeopardize stakeholder engagement, and in turn SP3 potential impacts. With the exception of the intergovernmental groups of experts on competition and consumer protection, many stakeholders thought meetings too long, too frequent and sometimes poorly attended, or experiencing a substantial drop in attendance after day one. Meeting formats were perceived as mechanical, and there was appetite from several internal and external interviewees for more informal dialogue, and less time committed to reviewing publications. SP3 have sought to remedy this by organizing a trade policy dialogue platform, but this adds another meeting (albeit informal) to the SP3 schedule. It was not clear that “agreed conclusions” were action-oriented, nor action-catalysing. There were also concerns over the reversion to in-person only meetings, which will limit the participation of less well-resourced countries.

20. The absence of an officially appointed director for DITC also hampered longer-term strategic operational planning, but the efforts of the acting director(s) were well-recognized as being a successful counterweight to this (see also paragraph 33, on efficiency).

³ A user journey is the experiences a person has when interacting with something, typically software.

5. To what extent are sustainability measures in place, and what further actions are needed to ensure the sustainability of results?

21. As with previous subprogramme evaluations, sustainability remained a key challenge for SP3, primarily due to the lack of resources for follow-up activities. This limited SP3 capacity to engage in longer-term projects. Reliance on extrabudgetary funding also exposed prominent activities, such as TRAINS, to sustainability risks. Some stakeholders proposed DITC undertake more resource mobilization to secure additional extrabudgetary resources, whereas others proposed DITC rebalance resources to focus on activities that are highest priority and likely to have longer-lasting results. Indeed, several interviewees suggested DITC undertake too many small, short-term activities. The evaluation team note that resource mobilization, prioritization and resource reallocation are not mutually exclusive propositions.

22. There were concerns expressed that UNCTAD intergovernmental meetings handled by SP3 may be structurally unsustainable if member State missions do not have sufficient human resources to fully engage. Several interviewees also suggested DITC clarify the pathways through which meeting outcomes are utilized and results, achieved. This would enhance the perceived value and sustainability of decisions and actions coming from intergovernmental processes.

23. SP3 can secure sustainable change and, often, SP3 outputs and outcomes have contributed to policy-related changes, which can be long-term in nature. However, SP3 do not regularly monitor these types of changes over the long term and do not undertake impact assessments.

24. Despite the above challenges, the evaluation noted good practices to boost sustainability, for example:

(a) Aligning SP3 with broader United Nations priorities, such as critical energy transition minerals, enhanced sustainability by integrating into the larger United Nations framework.

(b) Utilizing local experts for service policy reviews ensured SP3 embedded reviews in the national context, with reviewers also being local champions of the reviews.

(c) Contributing to longer-term projects, such as Train for Trade in Angola, which aligned with the National Smooth Transition Strategy, promoted sustainability through alignment with the national development plan.

6. To what extent has subprogramme 3 mainstreamed United Nations cross-cutting issues, that is, gender equality, environmental sustainability and disability inclusion?

25. SP3 is considered at the forefront of integrating gender equality and trade, thanks to the SP3 trade, gender and development programme. One external stakeholder noted “this subprogramme has done groundbreaking work on gender and trade”. The 2021 evaluation of the trade, gender and development programme found it to be effective, efficient and relevant, recognizing that “the TGD [trade, gender and development programme] portfolio has established UNCTAD as a main promoter of the [trade-gender] nexus”. The trade, gender and development programme also participate in an informal working group on gender with WTO. Over 80 per cent of DITC staff agree that DITC sufficiently mainstream gender into the work of SP3 (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 35). However, several interviewees noted that gender is not sufficiently mainstreamed beyond gender-specific programmes, and gender analyses are not consistently performed at planning stages. The 2021 evaluation of the trade, gender and development programme recommended that more UNCTAD staff members undertake the programme’s gender training to ensure staff competence.

26. Around half of DITC staff agree that SP3 sufficiently mainstream disability inclusion (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 35). However, interviews with internal and external stakeholders suggested insufficient mainstreaming, as corroborated by desk review. This said, stakeholders appreciated that DITC coordinated the launch of the *Inclusive Trade and Persons with Disabilities* report,⁴ with a panel of esteemed speakers, including the UNCTAD Secretary-General. Moreover, the UNCTAD Secretary-General launched an inter-agency working group on disability in trade with the International Labour Organization, International Trade Centre (ITC) and WTO, where SP3 staff will represent UNCTAD. Several interviewees encouraged SP3 to pursue so-called “low-hanging fruits”, such as work on NTMs and Harmonized System codes for assistive technologies and medicines, encouraging South–South trade in assistive technologies and medicines, involving organizations of persons with disabilities in meetings and engaging with the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through its multi-partner trust fund.

27. DITC have prominently and substantially mainstreamed environmental sustainability into work, recently crafting SP3 activities and reporting around the theme of critical energy transition minerals. Moreover, the DITC Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch facilitate the osmosis of environmental and sustainability issues throughout SP3. Some stakeholders raised concerns about the environmental impacts of SP3 staff travelling overseas to be involved in short events. Finally, there is limited mainstreaming of other vulnerable and minority groups, with disaggregated data often not collected, nor sufficiently included in planning documents.

B. Efficiency and cost effectiveness

1. How efficiently have resources been used to achieve subprogramme 3 outcomes?

28. As with other United Nations entities, UNCTAD does not use time sheets, therefore the evaluation team could not calculate input–output ratios for specific activities/outputs. Instead, table 4 provides an overview of quantitative outputs and staff resources attained, by SP3 expenditures, and TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 7, provides a comparison of expenditures and staffing across subprogrammes.

Table 4
Overview of expenditures, staffing and outputs

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Expenditures</i>	2023	2022	2021	2020
Posts	15,642	13,952	13,417	13,673
Consultants	119	93	90	82
Travel	102	50	8	8
Other	16	39	56	13
Regular budget	15,879	14,134	13,571	13,777
Extrabudgetary	3,089	2,964	3,143	2,227
Development Account	434	546	436	183
Grand total	19,402	17,644	17,150	16,187
	<i>Staffing (number of posts)</i>			
Professional and higher	60	60	60	60
General service	22	22	22	22
Distribution of professional posts:				
D-2	1	1	1	1
D-1	5	5	5	5

⁴ Finland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023, Helsinki.

<i>Expenditures</i>	2023	2022	2021	2020
P-5	12	12	12	12
P-4	15	15	15	15
P-3	20	20	20	20
P-2	7	7	7	7
	<i>Number of outputs</i>			
Parliamentary documentation	20	20	18	15
Technical cooperation projects	27	23	22	27
Seminars/workshops/trainings	240	211	171	124
Publications	32	42	38	30
Technical materials	12	13	13	15

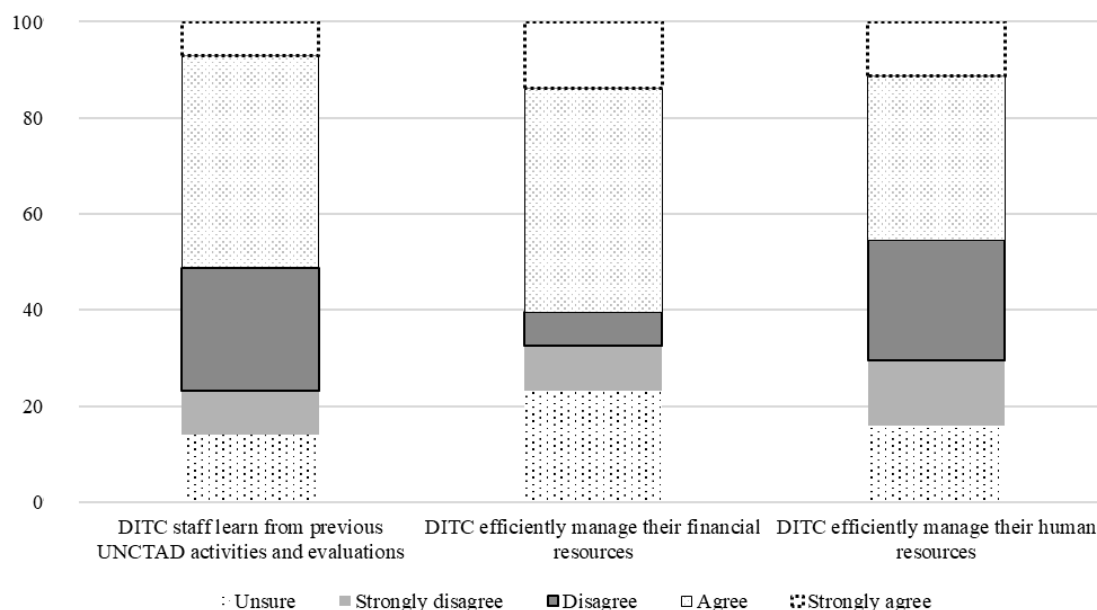
Source: UNCTAD Budget and Project Finance Section, proposed programme budgets 2020–2024.

29. Review of proposed programme budgets provided evidence of efficiency, with DITC producing more than the planned SP3 outputs in each year (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 3). Case studies of SP3 activities demonstrated efficient implementation. For example, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy was well organized, with session timings managed. Meetings reaped rewards of compounding relationships and institutional knowledge thanks to a consistent community. DITC are pursuing efficiency gains for TRAINS by using innovative artificial intelligence tools to gather NTM data, though there is scope to better leverage United Nations regional commissions and country teams for NTM data collection. Contributions to the Trade House Pavilion at the Conference of the Parties demonstrated exceptional leverage of SP3 resources, as SP3 contributed less than 5 per cent of the event’s total cost (approximately \$1 million), excluding SP3 staff time, and DITC efficiently coordinated UNCTAD-wide contributions. Moreover, the processes and memorandums of understanding established for the Conference of the Parties will realize efficiency gains in future. Intergovernmental groups of experts and multi-year expert meetings efficiently used hybrid meetings, and there was strong demand for hybrid meetings to continue.

30. Figure 7 shows, however, that less than half of DITC staff agreed that DITC efficiently managed human resources, and only 60 per cent agreed that DITC efficiently managed financial resources. Interviewees explained some concerns related to matters beyond DITC control, such as fragmented and duplicative systems for planning, reporting and travel requests. However, staff – and, importantly, member States – were unsure whether SP3 are making cost-effective⁵ use of SP3 resources. Many stakeholders suggested SP3 are undertaking too many small activities. DITC do not estimate SP3 demands on the time of member State missions. This is an important consideration because (a) member State time is effectively an in-kind contribution to SP3 resources and (b) an estimate may facilitate DITC prioritization and rebalancing of certain activities, i.e. if SP3 outputs exceed available member State capacity in some areas, DITC could rebalance to increase outputs in other areas.

⁵ Cost-effectiveness being: “Are the right things being done?”. Efficiency being: “Are things being done right?”.

Figure 7
“To what extent do you agree that DITC have processes that ensure...”
 (Percentage)



Source: Evaluation survey.

2. What are the main factors enabling and limiting the efficient delivery of subprogramme 3?

31. The main factors enabling and limiting efficient delivering of SP3 are both, paradoxically, rooted in DITC not having an officially appointed director since 2020. It is worth emphasizing that DITC were without an officially appointed director for over 80 per cent of the evaluation period. Moreover, the last officially appointed director was in position for under two years. DITC were instead led by two branch chiefs as joint acting directors, from mid-2020 to early 2022, and then by an individual acting director.

32. Given this context, the performance of the two DITC acting directors was key in ensuring delivery of SP3. Stakeholders emphasised their successful collaboration should not be taken for granted because such joint working arrangements are not always successful. The joint acting directors provided DITC with consistency and direction throughout several global crises. They introduced weekly branch chief meetings, increasing trust, communication and synergies. From 2022, DITC further benefited from having a single, consistent acting director, who led efficiency initiatives, which indeed also bolstered effectiveness and quality, including:

(a) Rationalizing and reducing the planned number of publications by 50 per cent, establishing a schedule for publications, and spreading publications across the year, rather than releasing them in the final quarter.

(b) Honing, by the director’s office, the DITC process for internal review of publications.

(c) Developing, together with branch chiefs, thematic priorities around which DITC crafted key SP3 outputs and reports, thus simplifying planning and reporting.

(d) Remedying, together with branch chiefs and senior leadership, staff underperformance issues that had been a significant drag on the efficiency of certain teams.

(e) Supporting the use of IT tools, such as SharePoint, and compiling a directory of external speakers and consultants.

(f) Engaging with member States ahead of intergovernmental meetings, bolstering the efficiency of consensus-building.

33. Similarly, branch chiefs were considered a key factor enabling efficiency, with stakeholders noting branch chiefs as collaborative and emphasizing that collaboration not be taken for granted. Branch chiefs also introduced mechanisms to boost staff engagement, itself a driver of efficiency. For example, the Commodities Branch began to host regular branch meetings with rotational leadership among staff of all grades.

34. However, without an officially appointed director, DITC/SP3 have lacked certain strategic activities that could increase efficiency (and effectiveness). For example, DITC/SP3 lack:

(a) A long-term strategic plan to operationalize the high-level proposed programme budget strategic objectives.

(b) A people, human resources and management strategy. Numerous DITC staff members noted that recruitment processes had been hindered (for example, the Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch lacked a branch chief for much of the evaluation period), that managers lacked management training and skills, and that new joiners lacked robust inductions. There is low staff turnover and a lack of “fresh eyes”, with only 7 of 82 DITC posts at entry level (P-2).

(c) An advocate for resource allocation and strategic prominence.

(d) Consistent presence at high-level events within the international trade community; this would reap efficiency gains from relationship building and partnerships.

35. DITC staff also indicated they do not learn from past activities, with only 50 per cent of DITC survey respondents agreeing DITC have processes to ensure staff learn from previous activities (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 33).

3. To what extent do available subprogramme 3 resources reflect a realistic assessment of its needs to deliver on its mandates?

36. Many stakeholders, internal and external, noted that SP3 resources seemed limited given the breadth of its mandate. This was also expressed by member States,⁶ and reflected by a backlog in technical cooperation requests. While the posts of other divisions were bolstered in January 2023, SP3 did not receive additional posts.⁷ Among staff, there was a sense that all branches could use more staff, but none were overstaffed. However, as noted above, insufficient data exist to assess whether SP3 are making cost-effective and efficient use of existing resources.

4. To what extent has subprogramme 3 achieved synergies and complementarities between subprogrammes?

37. SP3 stakeholders considered DITC transparent and collaborative, with numerous examples of interdivisional/subprogramme collaboration. For example, DITC organized UNCTAD-wide inputs into the Trade House Pavilion at the Conference of the Parties, collaborate with the DTL trade facilitation platform in relation to NTMs and are present at the UNCTAD World Investment Forum, organized by DIAE (subprogramme 2). DITC are also involved in numerous interdivisional technical cooperation projects.

38. Internal and external stakeholders recognized an increase in collaboration since the arrival of the new Secretary-General, who introduced new mechanisms to encourage collaboration, for example, an annual retreat of division directors. Other mechanisms included interdivisional committees on priority topics, a centralized statistics team and UNCTAD-wide townhall meetings.

39. While the seeds of collaboration are planted, the results are yet to be fully reaped: approximately 50 per cent of DITC staff disagree or are unsure whether DITC sufficiently

⁶ For example, see TD/B/WP/306, para. 21, and TD/B/WP/314, para. 12.

⁷ TD/B/WP/321, para. 30.

coordinate with other divisions (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 33). Interviewees noted that collaboration is ad hoc and that DITC should not force collaboration, but rather create synergies from more processes for interdivisional learning or co-delivery; for example, SP3 learning from national productive capacities gap assessments of subprogramme 5 or better leveraging the UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa, in Addis Ababa. Several interviewees noted that DITC can be delivering a project at the country level, yet be unaware that another division is simultaneously delivering to that country. The evaluation team reviewed a pilot version of an UNCTAD project management portal, which should remedy the latter issue.

40. Some external stakeholders viewed the flagship *Trade and Development Report*, of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies (subprogramme 1), as the most prominent example of the lack of interdivisional collaboration. During the evaluation period, stakeholders noted that DITC inputs were not fully integrated into *Trade and Development Reports*. In addition, several interviewees separately noted occasions where publications from different divisions had contrary messages or non-matching data. More than one interviewee noted that interdivisional consultations were requested with short timelines, if at all. These weaknesses will likely be remedied by a suite of improvements introduced by the Secretary-General, including an external blind peer review process, a strengthened publications committee chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and more rigorous reviews of all strategic and flagship publications, pre-session and policy papers by the Office of the Secretary-General. As a good practice, within SP3, DITC now require branches to submit a screening questionnaire to the director's office before branches begin to draft publications, and the director's office also reviews all draft publications.

41. Interdivisional mandates appear to overlap somewhat; for example, the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (subprogramme 5) and DITC, on trade preferences, and the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies (subprogramme 1) and DITC, on trade, environment and climate. One interviewee explained this is well-intentioned, "generated by different people identifying different solutions for the same problem". However, it is likely optimal to have coherent UNCTAD solutions, offering coherent, unique added value, in response to coherently prioritized problems. More than one interviewee noted these may be a structural issue beyond the control of SP3 and likely require structural changes to resolve.

5. To what extent has subprogramme 3 leveraged partnerships with United Nations or non-United Nations system entities?

42. Over 80 per cent of staff surveyed agreed DITC sufficiently collaborate and engage with United Nations agencies, international organizations and trade organizations/associations (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 34). Interviews and desk review substantiated this, noting that DITC:

(a) Invited heads of trade divisions of United Nations regional commissions to SP3 meetings and collaborated with regional commissions on the "Initiative on model provisions for trade in times of crisis".⁸

(b) Contributed to inter-agency mechanisms, such as the Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, Agricultural Market Information System and the Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

(c) Engaged with events of the General Assembly and the Second Committee, most recently at the General Assembly's informal interactive dialogue on commodity markets.⁹

(d) Submitted statements to WTO committees, partnered with WTO and ITC on the Trade House Pavilion at the Conference of the Parties, and partnered with WTO, ITC

⁸ See <https://www.unescap.org/projects/imp>.

⁹ See A/RES/78/138, para. 37, and <https://unctad.org/meeting/un-general-assembly-informal-interactive-dialogue-commodity-markets>.

and the World Bank on the World Integrated Trade Solution and the Global Trade Helpdesk.

43. However, DITC could better leverage the tools, data and networks of United Nations regional commissions and resident coordinator system and the United Nations economist network. SP3 could better engage with New York-based entities, including the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General of the United Nations. There was appetite on the part of several interviewees for DITC, WTO and ITC to build on the success and relationships achieved in recent years, for example, through work on NTMs and the Trade House Pavilion at the Conference of the Parties.

44. Less than half of DITC staff agreed that DITC sufficiently engage with non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and private sector organizations (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 34), and external interviewees also noted insufficient participation of civil society organizations in SP3 events and no dedicated SP3 platform for civil society organizations. SP3 successfully leveraged an external partnership with the International Chamber of Commerce and, in turn, its membership network of businesses to fund SP3 work on the Trade House Pavilion at the Conference of the Parties.

C. Strategic relevance and conceptual clarity

1. How is the subprogramme 3 mandate understood and perceived by stakeholders, including unique value added?

45. Stakeholders most commonly perceived the SP3 mandate as being particularly broad. Stakeholders perceived DITC as being transparent and collaborative, offering balanced perspectives on pertinent issues, whilst prioritizing the needs of developing countries. Each branch was recognized several times by stakeholders as offering unique added value, with work on competition and consumer protection perceived as being most unique across the United Nations system. Stakeholders noted that other United Nations entities work on SP3 topics but considered SP3 as offering unique perspectives. For example, several entities work on NTMs, but SP3 are perceived as leaders in the field, offering unique depth and breadth of data. More broadly, comments from one external interviewee captured stakeholder opinions: “Yes, [the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations] FAO do commodities, [the United Nations Environment Programme] UNEP do environment and WTO have Aid for Trade, but none offer the open space for dialogue [whereas UNCTAD and SP3 do]”. Other common perceptions succinctly summarized by external interviewees included:

(a) “They [SP3] have the mandate to favour developing countries”, “the unique asset is the trust of member States” and “they remind the world that trade is a tool for development”; i.e. unlike other entities, UNCTAD are able to prioritize and purvey the needs and voices of developing countries in relation to trade and development.

(b) “When the United Nations speaks about trade, it [SP3/DITC] should be the one that holds the pen”; i.e. DITC/SP3 are uniquely well positioned and well qualified to speak globally about trade for development.

46. However, the broad SP3 mandate resulted in several stakeholders being unable to immediately recall what SP3 substantively delivered, often noting the lack of a flagship report, unlike other subprogrammes (but there was no appetite for an additional UNCTAD flagship report). Several stakeholders presumed that SP3 were responsible for trade-related content in the flagship *Trade and Development Report*. This led to misperceptions and misattributions that depreciated the above-mentioned SP3 asset of member State trust. On the other hand, some stakeholders were aware that SP3 contributions to the *Trade and Development Report* were not substantially integrated and viewed this negatively. Among these interviewees, there was consensus that SP3 should, as one interviewee suggested, “be the ‘T’ in the ‘TDR’ [*Trade and Development Report*]”. Going further, several interviewees suggested that UNCTAD streamline to a single flagship report, with each subprogramme contributing a chapter(s) and collaborating on other chapters.

47. Many stakeholders appreciated recent DITC efforts to shepherd its mandate by having thematic topics permeate key SP3 outputs and reports, such as critical energy transition minerals. However, stakeholders considered this a useful “golden thread” rather than an “elevator pitch” of a unique SP3 offering, that is, it communicates “DITC delivering towards ABC” rather than “we are DITC, and we deliver ABC”.

48. There was a general consensus that DITC/SP3 are at a pivotal moment and have an opportunity to craft a renewed vision for SP3, in consultation with member States and in alignment with member State priorities, while ensuring UNCTAD-wide coherence.

2. To what extent are the objectives and activities of subprogramme 3 geared towards the Bridgetown Covenant transformations, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant international commitments?

49. SP3 objectives and activities are clearly geared towards UNCTAD mandates, including the Nairobi Maafikiano and the Bridgetown Covenant, and the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, SP3 made climate and environment more prominent, and reorganized the Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy Branch into a branch focused on trading systems, services and the creative economy. The proposed programme budget for SP3 directly links to legislative mandates and the transformations of the Bridgetown Covenant. Moreover, the newly introduced SP3 results framework directly links to the Bridgetown Covenant and Sustainable Development Goal indicators and subindicators.

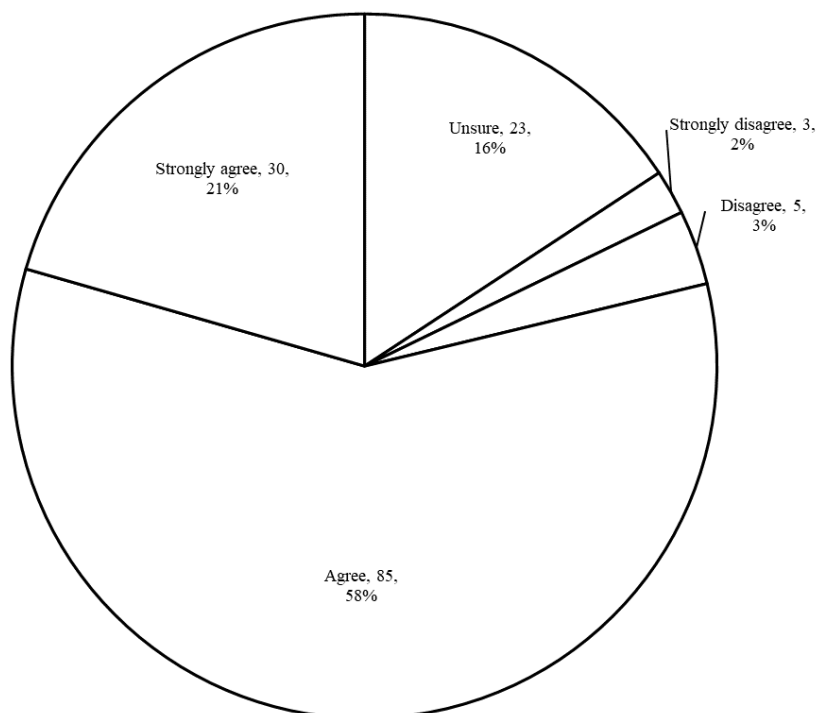
50. The fourth transformation of the Bridgetown Covenant requires “transforming multilateralism” and reaffirms member State commitment to the “open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, rules-based, multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization” (para. 94). Many stakeholders recognized SP3 being geared towards WTO, for example, through its collaboration on the World Integrated Trade Solution and the Global Trade Helpdesk; work on trade institution building in preparation for WTO accession;¹⁰ and inputs to WTO committees. Several stakeholders expressed appetite for SP3 to track WTO proceedings more closely, provide more support to developing countries, and be prominent at WTO ministerial conferences. However, stakeholders also recognize that the mandate of SP3 is broader than WTO and that UNCTAD is importantly separate, uniquely offering a collaborative and catalytic space for dialogue and consensus-building.

3. To what extent are the objectives and activities of subprogramme 3 aligned to country and regional needs and priorities?

51. Figure 8 shows that approximately 80 per cent of member States and external stakeholders survey respondents agreed that SP3 are aligned and relevant to country and regional needs and priorities, though agreement is slightly weaker among country and regional respondents (TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 5, figure 22).

¹⁰ TD/B/WP/326, para. 48.

Figure 8
To what extent do you agree that subprogramme 3 is aligned to UNCTAD member State needs?



Source: Evaluation survey.

52. Relevance to country and regional needs was substantiated by document review and interviews, with several interviewees appreciating, as summed up by one member State, that “SP3 have not avoided difficult topics”. There was significant recognition for the relevance and timeliness of recent SP3 work on critical energy transition minerals and the creative economy. Technical cooperation is demand driven, ensuring its relevance, and the backlog of technical cooperation requests indicates relevance. SP3 remained relevant in response to crises, for example, working on a rapid assessment related to the war in Ukraine,¹¹ contribution to the Black Sea Initiative¹² and adapting capacity-building and meetings during COVID-19.¹³

53. Several interviewees expressed concerns that SP3 undertake activities that are not optimally relevant to member States’ highest priority needs. Relatedly, there is a risk that SP3 are unable to optimize relevance to LDCs because LDCs may lack resources to fully engage in intergovernmental meetings and/or requests for technical cooperation, the two key DITC mechanisms to identify member State needs. There is scope to optimize DITC understanding of member State needs by better leveraging United Nations regional commissions and country teams, and the UNCTAD the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes (subprogramme 5) and UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa. There were suggestions DITC could boost SP3 relevance by increasing member State involvement in planning, data analysis or peer review phases, for example, through working groups. However, this evaluation found SP3 had invited inputs from member States, but often received limited engagement due to member State resource constraints.

¹¹ UNCTAD, 2022, [The impact on trade and development of the war in Ukraine](#).

¹² See <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative>.

¹³ As recognized at sessions of the Working Party; see, for example, [TD/B/WP/312](#), para. 19.

V. Conclusions

54. **Effectiveness.** There is substantial evidence of SP3 being effective in achieving its targeted outputs and outcomes, including data collected under the new UNCTAD-wide results framework. The evaluation survey of external SP3 stakeholders collected 4,000 ratings on the “usefulness” of 32 different SP3 activities and outputs. Of these 4,000 ratings, 97 per cent rated SP3 activities/outputs as useful, with 76 per cent rating SP3 activities/outputs as “indispensable” or “very useful”. While SP3 initially lacked detailed RBM data, relying primarily on quantitative output data, the adoption of the new UNCTAD-wide results framework in 2023 represented a significant improvement in monitoring SP3 results.

55. **Impacts and sustainability.** SP3 have achieved results towards targeted impacts, both at the global and national levels. There is evidence that SP3 outputs influence national-level decision-makers and contribute to national-level policy changes that facilitate economic diversification and more sustainable and resilient economies. There is evidence that SP3 provide influential inputs into the multilateral trading system at WTO and the multilateral system at large, including at the General Assembly. Strategic operational planning was hampered by the lack of an officially appointed director of DITC, but the efforts of the acting director(s) were well-recognized as a successful counterweight. Monitoring and ensuring the long-term sustainability of SP3 outcomes and impacts remained a key challenge, due primarily to a lack of dedicated financial resources. Changes to which SP3 have contributed can be longer term in nature (namely, policy), but DITC do themselves a disservice by not regularly monitoring these nor undertaking regular impact assessments. The SP3 contribution to the intergovernmental machinery may be structurally unsustainable if member State missions do not have sufficient human resources to fully engage.

56. **Mainstreaming of United Nations cross-cutting issues.** Stakeholders recognize SP3 to be at the forefront of integrating gender equality and trade, thanks to the SP3 trade, gender and development programme. However, SP3 do not sufficiently mainstream gender beyond gender-specific programmes, and gender analyses are not consistently performed. Similarly, the rights of persons with disabilities and indigenous populations are not sufficiently mainstreamed, but SP3 began to undertake work on disability mainstreaming, including organizing a panel discussion and engaging in an inter-agency working group on disability in trade.

57. **Efficiency.** DITC made efficiency gains, including streamlining the number of publications by 50 per cent. SP3 delivered more than planned by proposed programme budgets, and case studies indicated numerous good practices. However, it is not clear that SP3 are ensuring cost-effective use of resources, and UNCTAD do not have effective means for the analysis of input/output ratios. There is scope for DITC to better learn from previous SP3 activities.

58. **Partnerships and synergies.** DITC are transparent and collaborative, and there are numerous examples of interdivisional/subprogramme collaborations. Internal and external stakeholders perceive a step up in internal collaboration, though there is scope to better systematize collaboration, rather than rely on ad hoc undertakings. The *Trade and Development Report*, led by the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies (subprogramme 1), is perceived as a prominent display of silo working, with stakeholders noting DITC inputs were not fully integrated. The evaluation team understand UNCTAD will soon establish specific processes to ensure collaborative crafting of future reports. DITC have effectively engaged in partnerships to deliver SP3, though DITC could better leverage partnerships with United Nations regional commissions and country teams.

59. **Relevance.** SP3 are rooted in UNCTAD mandates, including the Nairobi Maafikiano and the Bridgetown Covenant, and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is relevant to individual transformations in the Bridgetown Covenant and relevant to WTO proceedings. However, there is appetite for SP3 to provide more support to developing countries in relation to WTO proceedings and be more prominent at WTO ministerial meetings. SP3 are highly relevant to member State needs, but there is a risk that SP3 are not

optimally relevant to LDCs because LDC may lack resources to fully engage in intergovernmental meetings and/or request technical cooperation.

60. **Conceptual and strategic clarity.** SP3 are uniquely positioned to purvey the voices of developing countries in relation to international trade and development. SP3 undertake a broad range of work but found recent success by organizing their work around thematic topics. However, stakeholders considered this a this a useful “golden thread” rather than an “elevator pitch”, i.e. it communicates “DITC delivering towards ABC” rather than “we are DITC, and we deliver ABC”.

VI. Recommendations

61. DITC should further embed RBM across SP3 activities/outputs. DITC should:

(a) Develop standardized planning tools that include prompts to develop RBM indicators, review lessons from previous activities and allocate roles and responsibilities for monitoring of results.

(b) Establish SP3-specific and activity/output indicators, not limited to UNCTAD-wide indicators (see TD/B/WP(88)/CRP.1, annex 2, for examples).

(c) Undertake impact assessments to recognize the longer-term results of SP3.

62. DITC should adopt communications as an unofficial “fourth pillar” and develop a division-level communications strategy, in collaboration with the communications team of the Office of the Secretary-General. DITC should:

(a) Define and prioritize their target stakeholders, map the priorities of these stakeholders and how they engage with SP3 activities/outputs and craft “user journeys” for high-priority stakeholders.

(b) Undertake communications landscape analyses when planning activities/outputs; this would allow reflections on whether the target audience is a cost-effective use of SP3 resources as well as facilitate tailored communications.

(c) Engage more frequently with member State representatives from LDCs, both to disseminate outputs and invite inputs.

(d) Continue and increase informal consultations with member States, particularly before key meetings.

(e) Consolidate the various DITC contact lists and use a database to collect and monitor all communications.

63. DITC should develop a long-term strategic operational plan. The time frame and/or milestones of the plan should be linked to UNCTAD ministerial conferences, United Nations conferences on LDCs and the Sustainable Development Goals. This should include:

(a) A people management approach, including long-term resource planning and comprehensive inductions for new joiners.

(b) A resource mobilization approach, ensuring coherence with other subprogrammes and UNCTAD-wide strategies.

(c) A partnerships approach and increased engagement with United Nations regional commissions and country teams.

64. DITC and UNCTAD should pursue evolutions to intergovernmental meetings, as recommended by the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: “The Conference should review, in the light of experience, the effectiveness and further evolution of institutional arrangements”.¹⁴ There could be less frequent and shorter meetings, with more informal dialogue, and less focus on reviewing publications.

¹⁴ United Nations, *Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Final Act and Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 64, II.B. 11), Second Part, section V, para. 78 (g).

DITC should monitor and publish the life cycle of meeting outcomes to demonstrate to stakeholders the impacts achieved within the multilateral system (and beyond).

65. DITC should undertake a prioritization exercise to ensure cost-effective allocation of SP3 resources. To facilitate this exercise, DITC could more fully record costs against outputs and, in turn, outputs to outcome indicators, and estimate the expected SP3 demands on the time of member State representatives.

66. DITC should more fully mainstream cross-cutting issues, including encouraging DITC staff to undertake gender analysis training, involving organizations of persons with disabilities in meetings and collecting disaggregated demographic data for activities.
