

## Management Response to the Terminal Evaluation of the Development Account COVID-19 Joint Project

*Project title and ID: “Global initiative towards post-COVID-19 resurgence of the MSME sector (2023W)” implemented by UNCTAD, DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA*

**Entity name: Development Account Programme Management Team**

### **Overall Remarks by Management**

The Development Account (DA) launched in June 2020 five short-term joint projects to support Member States in addressing the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to General Assembly resolution 74/270, adopted on 2 April 2020, calling for the UN system to mobilize a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial impact. These five projects aimed at providing immediate support to Member States over an approximately 2-year period, and were jointly implemented by a group of DA implementing entities who combined their technical expertise and proven capacities to support Governments at global, regional and national levels. The projects were designed to respond to the emergency situation evolving in each region, with planned outputs and budget requirements for the five projects developed in three phases.

The Development Account Programme Management Team (DA-PMT) welcomes the overall positive outcome and forward-looking approach of the evaluation report, which recognizes the value of the work undertaken by the project “Global initiatives towards post-COVID-19 resurgence of the MSME sector”, implemented by UNCTAD, DESA and the five regional commissions. The report highlights that the project responded to the needs of Governments and MSMEs, and improved the capacity of policymakers in designing and implementing policies supportive of MSMEs. It also found that “the phased approach, in particular, provided the opportunity to introduce activities not foreseen at an earlier stage”. The evaluation report found that collaboration between implementing entities and complementarities between the interventions delivered by each entity in response to regional priorities and capacities were limited. DA-PMT will incorporate the findings of the evaluation and Recommendation 3 to help enhance the effectiveness of future joint projects.

## Recommendation Action Plan

Recommendation	Management response <sup>1</sup>	Planned action	Responsible unit(s)	Target completion date
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b>  <b>The DA-PMT should develop a clear framework for assessing the costs and benefits of implementing a global or inter-regional project versus regional projects.</b> As a global crisis can affect regions and countries differently, global or joint projects should be developed only when there are clear benefits of joint implementation. <b>Thus, a global or inter-regional vs. regional response would not be a priori decision, but a result of a clear assessment.</b> A specific guideline or framework should be developed for this. Some of the assessment criteria could include the need or demand from member States for an integrated response; the range of common versus entity-specific activities and added value of complementary interventions (i.e. in terms of geographical coverage, reach of the target population, capacity, and/or coverage of multiple reinforcing technical areas, or networks and partnerships); capability to execute joint interventions (e.g. in terms of time, resources, logistics, and flexibility to pivot interventions without bureaucratic procedures); coordination costs (which increase with the number of participating UN entities); project inception modalities and governance and knowledge management requirements to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing; scaling and sustainability plans; expected results of spreading resources versus concentrating on fewer countries; and so forth. The time taken to conduct such assessments <b>will increase project coherence and effectiveness and facilitate the identification of the financial and human resources needed for project implementation.</b> The <b>network of DA Focal Points</b> is a key existing asset for this assessment.</p>	<p><b>Partially accepted.</b>            While the DA-PMT agrees that costs and benefits of global and inter-regional projects need to be reviewed, it is not clear if a clear assessment framework can be developed and implemented in a timely manner for this purpose. Some of these elements will be included in the new guidance on the design and implementation of joint projects.</p>	<p>Development of guidance on the design and implementation of joint projects as part of the concept note and prodoc guidelines. The guidance will include, among others, a requirement for the assessment of some of the elements identified in the recommendation in order to ensure that expected benefits of a global or inter-regional project are clearly identified and determined to justify the costs. (See also DA-PMT’s management response to the evaluation of the short-term COVID-19 joint project “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics” (2023X).)</p>	<p>DA-PMT</p>	<p>May 2025</p>

<sup>1</sup> Accepted, partially accepted, or rejected.