

Executive Summary:

The SUNS project proposal, sponsored in 1989 by the South Commission and the Group of 77, was approved in October 1989 for a grant of \$120,000 from the PGTF for a period of one year.

For reasons beyond the control of the publishers of the SUNS (the Third World Network as subcontractors), the project documents could however be finalised and signed only by end of December 1990, and the project began formally from 1 February 1991 (though the distribution of the SUNS informally began in fact from 15 January 1991) and officially terminated on 31 January 1992.

Unofficially, the TWN has been continuing to make the SUNS available by fax to the Office of Chairman in New York even after the termination of the project. A copy of the SUNS is also being mailed to the Chair of the various G77 chapters. At New York, the office of the Chairman has been reproducing it and making copies available to interested delegations who pick it up. The SUNS was also printed on a wider scale and made available to delegations and interested NGOs at Prepcom-4 in March-April and proved of considerable assistance to the G77, as many delegations advised us.

The Third World Economics (the fortnightly of the Third World Network) began in September 1990 and was distributed free from then to G77 delegations in all the chapters and to the capitals directly till end of January 1992.

Judged by the comments of the chapters, conveyed in the meetings of the Chapter coordinators in 1991 March and 1992 April, the objectives of better and regular exchange of information among the chapters and closer cooperation among them was achieved.

All the chapters became fully aware of the principal North-South development negotiations: that in the Uruguay Round, the preparations for UNCTAD-VIII and UNCTAD-VIII itself, and the even more important and wideranging preparations and negotiations for the UNCED. During the UNCED process too, and in particular at Prepcom-3 and Prepcom-4, the availability of the SUNS proved particularly valuable to the G77 delegations, as also to the various NGOs (in the North and South) who have been supporting their cause and were able to use it in their lobbying campaigns.

The project indirectly also helped to put before the wider NGO community, in one form or another, the information and analysis and viewpoints of the South on these wide issues.

Many delegations and the G77 chapters have been pressing for the continuance of the project and the distribution as in 1991. But, without external financial support, this is beyond the means of the Third World Network. Perhaps some ways could be found (from the PGTF or other means) for subsidising the costs of distribution, while the delegations wishing to receive the information could contribute some small amounts for the 'information'. The Third World Network would be ready to do its share on this basis.

Given the nature of the G77 activities in various centres, availability of the SUNS in New York and Geneva on a daily basis is of some importance. For the other chapters, availability of the copies of the SUNS to the Chairman, and of the fortnightly to the individual missions would perhaps suffice.

(some ideas have been sketched in para 42)

Terminal Report on Project INT/89/K13/A/95/99 -
Information support to the Group of 77 Chapters -
South-North Development Monitor (SUNS)

1. The SUNS, the South-North Development Monitor (previously the Special United Nations Service) had been started in 1980 by the Swiss-based International Foundation for Development Alternatives as an information support for the G77 missions and was published till March 1989, when the Foundation found it impossible financially to continue it. Thereafter, at the instance of the South Commission and the G77 missions in Geneva, the Third World Network stepped in and took over the responsibility for continued publication, with the assistance and support of the Commission.
2. But since the Commission was soon due to wind up, and the need for continuing the SUNS was found imperative, the project proposal for funding the SUNS from the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund was initiated in 1989 by the South Commission, and was then taken up by the Group of 77 in Geneva. After consideration by the PGTF experts and the Intergovernmental Followup and Coordination Committee (IFCC) under the Caracas Programme of Action, and on their recommendation, the funding of \$ 120,000 for the project for one year was approved by the annual meeting of the G77 Foreign Ministers in October 1989.
3. The approved project envisaged the SUNS and its information being made available to all G77 members at the various chapters and to the ECDC focal points in the capitals of the G77 countries.
4. Since the direct physical distribution of the copies from Geneva would have involved expenditures about twice or thrice the amount of the PGTF grant (and thus not viable), the Chairman of the Advisory Board of the SUNS and the Third World Network (through its Geneva representative) entered into discussions with the various G77 chapters to find a more economic way of making the information available.
5. The G77 chapters showed great understanding. As a result, though it took considerable time, arrangements were evolved for making the copies of the SUNS available to the G77 chair in each of the chapters by fax and for them to make the information available to their members. In New York, the office of the Chairman, redistributed the copies of the SUNS by computer fax to the delegations, both for the delegations and the ECDC focal points in the capitals. The G24 chapter members in Washington were supplied copies directly by mail from Geneva.
6. Working out these arrangements, and on that basis drawing up the project documents and getting them approved took much longer time than had been envisaged - for reasons beyond the control of the G77 or the Third World Network.
7. The project documents were finally signed at end of December 1990, and the project began officially from 1 February 1991. However unofficially, it became effective from 15 January.
8. The project officially terminated on 31 January 1992.

9. Though not part of the contract, but in order to facilitate the work of the chapters, the publishers, Third World Network, Penang, began publishing a fortnightly '*Third World Economics*' from September 1990 and distributed it to the G77 delegations in the chapters and to the ECDC focal points at the capitals directly. The fortnightly included in it the analysis and important news coverage in the SUNS and other articles of interest to the developing countries and their negotiators.

10. The TWE was also intended for NGOs, North and South, and academic and research institutions in the South who might not afford the SUNS or might not need a daily flow of information, but would need access to 'different' information than available in the commercial media. It is being marketed in the South and the North. But like all new publications, it would need at least 3-5 years to become self-sufficient.

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11. The immediate objective of the project was:

- * Enhance the prospects of fulfilling the priorities placed by the Group of 77 on ECDC/TCDC activities.

- * Promote closer cooperation among the Group of 77 chapters through regular exchange of information.

- * Provide the seven chapters of the Group of 77 (as well as research institutions, NGOs, business sectors in G-77 countries) with relevant and timely information about international development cooperation and ECDC/TCDC activities of interest to all members through the publication of a daily news-bulletin.

12. Judged by the comments and views at the 1991 and 1992 meetings of the Coordinators of the G77 chapters, as well as informal comments and letters received from G77 delegates by the publishers, the objectives were achieved.

13. As the coordinator on institutional issues of the Geneva chapter of the G77 put it in his report to the 1992 coordination meeting of the chapters, in April in Geneva, "the coordination among the G77 chapters had improved considerably in 1991 and this could be attributed partly to the fact that the SUNS was distributed to all the chapters and activities in various chapters concerning issues of interest to developing countries could be appreciated by others... the maintenance of this source of information to all chapters is hence of high importance and we hope that appropriate financial solutions will be worked out in New York in order to ensure it"

14. In a communication dated 27 March, the Uganda Ambassador at Nairobi, who chaired the G77 chapter there in 1991 (and now has been reassigned to Kampala), Dr. Jotham Atwoki Kamanyire, said: "I am writing to express my thanks to you for sending me on a regular daily basis the SUNS magazine from which I have got a lot of useful information regarding South-North relations in various fields of

development. As Chairman of the G77 Nairobi Chapter, SUNS contributed a lot to the success of my work".

15. As for the objective of providing a more permanent financial basis for the SUNS, the publishers are confident of their ability to continue to provide it on a self-financing basis to those interested, either by subscribing to the SUNS or the fortnightly publication, the Third World Economics. They are however in no position to provide it free to the various chapters or its members, as in 1991 (when this was done with the PGTF support).

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16. It had been the intention, in launching the project, to make available to all the G77 chapters information from a Third World perspective of one of the most crucial economic negotiations then taking place in Geneva - the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations - and whose ambit was such that it touched on the activities of almost all UN organisations and their specialised agencies, and thus relevant to the work of the G77 chapters.

17. The Uruguay Round negotiations themselves collapsed at Brussels in December 1990 - something that had been foreseen in the reportage of the SUNS, but which came as a surprise to the northern transnational media (and those who had been following the event only through them). The negotiations were later 'resumed' in January 1991, but have not so far been concluded, and the prospects still uncertain.

18. However, as mentioned in paras 4-7 above, the project could officially begin only in February 1991, and for the major part of the negotiations in 1990, the G77 chapters elsewhere were handicapped by the lack of adequate information of help to them.

19. However, the distribution of the Third World Economics, referred to in paras 9-10 above, and which began in September 1990 without waiting for the formal approval of the project and the signature of the project documents, enabled the various chapters and missions to be informed, though with some lag, of these crucial negotiations towards the end. Several of the G77 missions in Geneva and in some of the other centres and capitals conveyed to the SUNS and the TWN or indirectly through their colleagues in Geneva, of how they got the Third World perspective through the TWE. There were also requests received from several capitals for additional copies.

20. By the time the project became effective, another even more crucial negotiations had begun: the preparatory processes for the UN Conference on Environment and Development, as also the parallel negotiations for conventions on climate change and biodiversity. These too engulf almost every aspect of North-South dialogue. Another subject was the preparations for the Eighth session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development. All these came during a period of rapid, even turbulent changes on the world scene.

21. The coverage of these issues and analysis from the perspective of the South in the SUNS proved to be of great value and interest to the G77 missions and chapters.

22. At the meeting of the Coordinators of the G77 chapters held in Geneva in March 1991, the representatives of all the chapters expressed their appreciation of the information and its value to them and expressed the hope that arrangements could be made for its continuance beyond the expiry of the PGTF project at the end of January 1992.

23. A number of individual missions, in New York, Nairobi and Geneva have informally conveyed to the Third World Network how useful the availability of the SUNS and its information had been to them in relation to the various UNCED-related negotiations.

24. Another evidence of the usefulness of the project and its information was the requests that the publishers got from time to time from several missions outside of Geneva and from some capitals seeking further information on news and analysis they had read in the SUNS and or their desire to continue to receive it even after moving back to their capitals or elsewhere on assignment.

25. During the meetings of the UNCED preparatory committees in Geneva in 1991, at the request of the G77 delegations and its chair, the Permanent Representative of Ghana, special arrangements were made in Geneva to make the copies also available to the visiting G77 delegations and to the NGOs. Given that most of the G77 delegations had only one or two members, the delegations and their counterparts found the SUNS invaluable to them in their work. Their colleagues in missions in New York were also able to follow the negotiations, overnight so to say, and provide feedbacks.

26. Many of the G77 delegations wanted modalities to be found by which the SUNS and its coverage and analysis of the development dialogue could continue to be made available to them.

27. Both during Prepcom-3 and Prepcom-4, the SUNS and TWN received many informal requests from individual delegations, as well as collectively, for assistance of a substantial character in developing positions and/or analytical information on the various issues across the broad spectrum of the Agenda-21 programmes. Within its limited capacity, the TWN and SUNS did try to meet the requests, and this was very much appreciated.

28. Given the terms of the original project grant (a one-year one-time grant as the PGTF experts had recommended), the G77 Chair in New York and a few key delegations as also the Third World Network explored various possibilities for continuing the scheme beyond 31 January 1992, but these did not succeed. In any event the fact that an IFCC meeting could not take place, meant that it was not possible to get the issue placed before them for their consideration and any suitable recommendation.

29. In the result, the project itself ended on January 31, 1992. As mentioned in the separate statement of accounts furnished to the office of the Chairman, in fact a little more was expended by the Third World Network on the project due to several unforeseen circumstances: the much higher than envisaged (in 1989 when the original proposals were made) inflation in Geneva and the increased communication charges of the Swiss PTT, and the larger number of

UNCED-related meetings and activities outside of Geneva. However, the UNCED process too brought a large number of active NGOs from the South and the North into the dialogue, who became acquainted with the SUNS, with some of them providing some support.

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30. In response to the appeals from several of the New York based delegations, even though the project came to an end on 31 January, the publishers, TWN, have been making available at their own cost, a copy of the SUNS daily by fax to the office of the Chairman in New York, where it is unofficially being reproduced and made available to delegations who go to the office to pick it up.

31. In March-April, during the final session of the UNCED Preparatory Committee in New York, the Third World Network also made special efforts to produce a SUNS daily in New York and make it available to delegations and the NGOs there. This was greatly appreciated by the G77 missions and the NGOs, and was of considerable help to the smaller G77 missions who did not have enough personnel to man all the meetings and keep track of what was going on in the various negotiations.

32. For the other G77 centres, while it has not been possible to provide them copies by fax as before, a copy is mailed to the G77 chair at each of the centres.

33. All this was done pending discussions to find ways and means of continuing to provide the SUNS to missions in New York.

34. The issue of continued availability of the SUNS came up again at the meeting of the G77 chapters in Geneva in April, when several of the chapters expressed their appreciation and hoped ways and means could be found to continue the arrangements.

35. The coordinator on institutional issues of the Geneva G77, in outlining the problems that were arising because of some of the changes in the functioning of the G77 (at UNCTAD-VIII and subsequently), pointed out that the coordination among the G77 chapters had improved considerably in 1991 and that this could be attributed partly to "the fact that the SUNS was distributed to all the chapters and activities in various chapters concerning issues of interest to developing countries could be appreciated by others." The maintenance of this source of information to all chapters was hence of high importance and he hoped that "appropriate financial solutions will be worked out in New York in order to ensure it"

36. The G77 Chairman noted in this connection the offer of the publishers to make the SUNS available at a low cost to those willing to contribute to the costs and hoped delegations would take advantage of it.

37. However the publishers, a Third World NGO with limited resources, have had to make clear that it would be possible to do so only on the basis of payments to cover the costs

38. The present unofficial arrangements by which copies of the SUNS are being faxed to New York and reproduced and made available free is being terminated with effect from June 5, and thereafter the SUNS is being made available only to those missions who have agreed to contribute to the costs of this operation.

39. The experience of the publishers over the one year of the working of the project and the daily contacts as it were with the chapters brought home the difficulties of the various chapters, with their rotating chairmanship, sometimes annually, sometimes quarterly, and the servicing of the work of the chapter out of the limited budgets of the missions concerned. It was often difficult even to get the names and addresses when the chair rotated.

40. In the absence of a G77 secretariat and/or a coordinating mechanism, the availability of alternative information that is not found in the normal commercial media atleast enables individual delegations and capitals to make their own judgements on the basis of better information.

41. But the collection and processing of the information and analysis involves considerable money, and the costs would have to be shared by users in any non-commercial effort of this type.

42. But over and above it are the problems of distribution of the information in the absence of an infrastructure. The existence of such an infrastructure in the office of the Chairman in New York made distribution (through computer fax) easy and cost-effective. However, there are no such infrastructures of the G77 available in other centres. The hardware involved, if a permanent office or locale could be found at each of the places, would not be high: the cost of a computer with a faxboard installed, and which would enable repeating the information virtually automatically locally for the cost of a telephone call. Third World Network, with its contacts at the NGO level in several of these places, could find such a locale - if the hardware and distribution costs would be met, and ways found for meeting other communication costs. Then those interested could make a small payment for the information.

Any such arrangement, would serve the wider purpose of mutual cooperation among the G77 and increase their effectiveness even under conditions of 'flexibility' in the functioning of the Group as envisaged in the Teheran declaration.

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