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Project RLA/86/002 - Support for the foreign services of
Latin America

Mid-term evaluation

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Project RLA/86/002 - Support for the foreign services of Latin America - Mid-term evaluation" (JIU/REP/88/4).

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ANNEX

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August 1988

PROJECT RLA/86/002 - SUPPORT FOR THE FOREIGN SERVICES OF
LATIN AMERICA

MID-TERM EVALUATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 42/218, the United Nations General Assembly invited the Joint Inspection Unit to undertake more ad hoc evaluations of programmes and activities.
2. The work-programme approved by the Unit in January 1988 included an item on the mid-term evaluation of one of the largest ongoing regional projects in Latin America (Support for foreign services - RLA/86/002), which has a UNDP input of approximately \$1.6 million.
3. This mid-term evaluation took into account, inter alia, the project document, the way in which the project is being executed, the reasons for the results achieved to date, and the input-output relationship, which is reflected here primarily in the United Nations investment in the project on the one hand, and in the opinions of participating Governments on the other hand.
4. After examining the project document and other documents, the Inspectors visited most of the participating countries, as well as the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the executing agency. The countries participating in the project are as follows: Peru (1986), Ecuador (1986), Costa Rica (1986); Honduras, Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Panama, Nicaragua, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Cuba (all since 1987); and Argentina (1988).
5. On the basis of the visits and on the basis of interviews both with senior foreign ministry officials and with participants in seminars, for the purpose of evaluating the effects of the project on work at the foreign ministry level, it was possible to determine the relationship between the scope of outputs and the results of inputs in the fulfilment of project objectives. In this connection, it was found that the present method of project execution is producing only a minor short-, medium- or long-term impact in relation to the amount already invested. Unless this method of execution is corrected, serious potential conflicts may develop. In this regard, see the comments on recommendation I (final paragraph) and on recommendation II.
6. After the inspection and the evaluation referred to above, the following recommendations were formulated:

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

I. The United Nations Development Programme, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Governments concerned should immediately undertake a review of project RLA/86/002, with the aim of bringing the method of execution into line with the competence of the regional economic commissions under the relevant General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolutions 32/197, 2687 (XXV), 2688 (XXV), 33/202 and 34/206;

II. In the course of the review of project RLA/86/002, consideration should be given to the possibility and advisability of maximum possible involvement by participating Governments during the time remaining for project execution;

III. Within the framework of project RLA/86/002, participating Governments and ECLAC should convene a meeting between academies or institutes working with the respective foreign ministries, for the purpose of considering the establishment of a network of such institutions, as well as direct-execution methods;

IV. Since the competence of the regional economic commissions to execute country projects is at issue, and, in particular, with a view to fulfilling one of the major objectives of all development programmes, i.e. self-reliance, all country projects in support of the foreign services should be executed by the respective Governments, which may request any backstopping they consider necessary. The country projects are appropriate inasmuch as they are tailored to the needs and priorities of each foreign ministry;

V. If the Governments decide to request a second phase upon the completion of the project, they should begin pre-programming with UNDP in good time, bearing in mind that they would be the ones responsible for executing the project. The relevant experience gained by UNDP from other regional programmes - especially the UNDP/UNESCO projects designated RLA/75/047, RLA/76/006 and RLA/78/024 - may be of immense significance.

III. COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATION I

7. The Inspectors believe that the project document must be considered in reference to the origin of the project, its objectives, sources of financing, management, personnel and the institutional relationship in the context of institutional networks.

8. The institutional framework of the project is clearly defined, for ECLAC is in charge of execution. This Commission may "in appropriate cases" enlist the co-operation of RIAL (Programme of Joint Studies on the International Relations of Latin America).

9. While the project document does not clearly set forth the project objectives, section II, concerning the justification and the main thrust of the project, lists the following levels of co-operation: (a) training of officials for the foreign service; (b) support for the improvement of the infrastructure of the foreign service, and the formulation of foreign policy; and (c) contributions (from within and outside the region) available at the highest level, through seminars and meetings between diplomats, academics and experts regarding items of special relevance to Latin America.

10. The Inspectors believe that the words "items of special relevance to Latin America" may refer either to items coming within the purview of the activities listed after the letters (a) and (b) above, or to items related to Latin America's economic policy, the specific domain of ECLAC as the executing agency.

11. Under no circumstances may the study, analysis and discussion of the international political relations of the countries of the region fall under project objectives. Such studies, analyses and discussions are the prerogative either of private academic institutions or of the political agencies of regional Governments.

12. Project objectives become totally distorted when ECLAC, in co-operation with RIAL, begins convening and holding meetings and publishing books on questions that do not come within the competence of the regional economic and social commissions as clearly defined in various General Assembly resolutions.

13. ECLAC may have been diverted towards this type of activity because the RIAL project, which was funded by UNDP between 1980 and 1986, fundamentally changed the objectives of the original project document. A project whose objective was the "promotion of a research programme on international economic relations" (RLA/80/019 and DP/Project/3648) became a "Programme of Joint Studies on the International Relations of Latin America", as it is entitled in the final project report. If the project initially came within the competence of ECLAC, in the final years the Commission was working on items that clearly lay outside its competence. The Inspectors do not understand how ECLAC, as an executing agency, and UNDP, as a funding agency, could have failed to notice that fundamental change.

14. There is no need to reiterate that the Governments requested UNDP in 1985 to provide them with technical co-operation in strengthening their international capabilities solely "in respect of international economic relations", a question which, we repeat, came within the competence of ECLAC.

15. The activities undertaken to date under project RLA/86/002 relate predominantly to the study of the international relations of Latin America. Such activities account for over one half of the project budget. This opinion of the Inspectors is also based on information provided in the ECLAC document entitled "Report of the work of the Commission since April 1986" (LC/G.1508 (SES.22/5 - 2 March 1988, pp. 52-54)). As for the "meetings, seminars and conferences held as part of the ECLAC/UNDP Project 'Support for the Foreign Services of the Countries of Latin America' (ASEAL-RIAL)", the title of subprogramme 16.2 (ii), about 15 meetings dealt with items concerning the international relations and foreign policy of the Latin American countries, while 11 dealt with items concerning human resources, infrastructure and support, in the strict sense of the word, for the foreign services. It should be added that in the publications which are wholly or partly financed by the project, RIAL fails to mention the project, UNDP or ECLAC. The fact that Governments have approved the project does not at all mean that they have approved its methods of execution, which came at a later stage and depend on the executing agency.

IV. COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATION II

16. Since the Inspectors have serious doubts as to whether the implementation of the aforementioned activities come within the competence of a regional economic commission, they consider it both advisable and necessary for the Governments participating in the project to be given a key role during the time remaining for project execution.

17. Although project RLA/86/002 is intended to support Latin American foreign services, its implicit goals, in common with those of all development projects, are to generate or increase self-reliance and promote effective horizontal co-operation among the participating States. Moreover, we must not forget that countries are particularly sensitive when it comes to the structure and functioning of their foreign services. One especially important question these days is the functional and working relationship between ministries of foreign affairs and other State agencies that are increasingly prominent in the international arena, e.g. ministries of finance, ministries of foreign trade and central banks. It is for the Governments themselves to consider and resolve such issues, which may take different forms in different countries.

18. Another extremely interesting institutional aspect of the foreign ministries has to do with their libraries and archives. It is regrettable that even in several of the most advanced countries of the region, such institutions have never been given priority. The Inspectors believe that this area should form the basis for the training of human resources. It also affords a suitable opportunity for horizontal co-operation among the countries of the region.

19. In the opinion of the Inspectors, only a partial review of the project was possible at the tripartite meeting held in December 1987, since only five out of a total of 16 countries, and six representatives of UNDP and ECLAC, participated.

20. There is no need for the Governments to ask ECLAC to reorganize project execution and give them a greater role; that must be done at the initiative of the executing agency itself.

V. COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATION III

21. In the opinion of the Inspectors, one practical mechanism which may be used is the convening by ECLAC and the participating Governments of a meeting between academies or institutes working with the various foreign ministries. The fundamental objectives of such a meeting would first be the establishment of a network of such institutions, if the Governments so agreed, and secondly the organization of a work-plan tailored to regional requirements.

22. The Inspectors consider that the experience gained from regional projects that are somewhat similar to the project before us may be of some significance. In this connection, they have in mind UNDP/UNESCO project RLA/75/047, regarding post-graduate training in biological sciences. Under the project, the Governments established a regional board of directors, which managed the project by formulating

policy and adopting annual work-plans. When UNDP financial support ended, the decision was made to continue activities by establishing the Latin American Network for Biological Sciences. In its report JIU/REP/80/10, the Joint Inspection Unit dealt with the question of assistance by the United Nations system to regional intercountry technical co-operation institutions, laying special emphasis on the strengthening of collective self-reliance and the increase in technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC), as exemplified in "horizontal co-operation". Section IV of that report covered a host of topics, ranging from the scope and objectives of the institutional network to sources of financing. The Inspectors take the view that it would be useful for the countries participating in the projects to consider establishing, even if it is in relation to a work-plan, an institution linking the institutes and academies of the foreign ministries.

VI. COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATION IV

23. The Inspectors believe that recommendation IV, which refers to country projects in support of the foreign services, is self-explanatory. Each foreign ministry has its own needs based on various factors. It is very difficult to meet such needs with a regional project. As the Inspectors see it, the best approach is the country-project approach. The foreign ministry officials consulted were virtually unanimous in supporting that approach. It is for the Governments to execute such country projects, and they may request any backstopping or advice they consider necessary. The Inspectors do not wish to discuss here the question whether the regional economic commissions are competent to execute country projects. Already in a previous report, the Joint Inspection Unit appeared to give an affirmative answer to that question. The Inspectors, however, doubt that the commissions have the necessary experience and expertise to advise Governments on how to modernize their foreign services. In short, they reiterate their belief that Governments must execute country projects directly. Governments may obtain any advice they need from agencies such as UNITAR or from agencies which have for years been concentrating on the question of human resources in the foreign services, such as UNCTAD and GATT itself.

24. It is worth noting that all the ongoing country projects are in the hands of the respective Governments.

25. At the moment the following have country projects in support of their foreign services: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. The Argentine project, entitled "Computerized system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public Worship", is being executed by that Ministry at a shared cost of approximately \$3.5 million. The Bolivian project, entitled "Strengthening of the negotiating capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public Worship", is being executed by that Ministry at a cost of approximately \$130,000 - also a shared cost. The Brazilian project deals with the "Strengthening of the Brazilian Co-operation Agency". It is being executed by the Agency on a cost-sharing basis, \$US 380,000 being provided by UNDP and 20 million cruzados by the Government. The Colombian project is entitled "Support for the research activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs". It is being executed by the Government on a cost-sharing basis, the UNDP input being

approximately \$43,000. The Guatemalan project, entitled "Support for the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs", is being executed by the Government at a cost of \$130,000. The Mexican project, entitled "Customization of the computerized information system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs", is being executed by that Ministry at a cost of \$140,000. The Peruvian project is entitled "Training in international relations with reference to the foreign service". It is being executed by the Ministry on a cost-sharing basis, the UNDP input amounting to \$300,000 and the Peruvian Government's contribution amounting to approximately 2.3 million intis. The Uruguayan project is entitled "Support for the Uruguayan Ministry of Foreign Affairs". It is being executed by the Ministry at a cost of \$15,000, and comes under the work-plan for project RLA/86/002. The Dominican project in support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is being executed by the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development at an approximate cost of \$270,000.

26. Lastly, the Inspectors are of the opinion that the present practice whereby ECLAC and UNDP transfer country indicative planning figures to regional projects, or conversely, regional indicative planning figures to country projects, may be contrary to the provisions adopted in that respect by the UNDP Governing Council itself. If the existing regulations are not clear enough on the subject, the Governing Council should take the necessary decisions so as to avoid contradictory interpretations.

VII. COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATION V

27. All the foreign ministries consulted had good things to say about the potential results of the project and about the results of certain meetings on topics of particular interest, such as computers. It is therefore possible that the Governments might decide to ask UNDP to extend the project into a second phase. If they do, then the Inspectors believe that the Governments themselves - by whatever methods or procedures they deem appropriate - should consider the merits of starting, in conjunction with UNDP and at the right time, pre-programming activities for the second phase.

28. During this second phase, government participation through the institutional network referred to in recommendation III above could be extremely valuable both with regard to pre-programming activities and with regard to programming proper.

29. A paper submitted at the consultative meeting with foreign ministry officials held in Montevideo in August 1986 contained a suggestion that is also found in the project document (annex III). In the opinion of the Inspectors, the paper summed up the potential objectives of a project in support of the foreign services. The paper identified three major areas:

- (a) Structure and functioning of Latin American foreign ministries:
- (i) computers as tools supporting diplomatic activity;
 - (ii) more rational use of national diplomatic staff in the home country;
 - (iii) modern technologies for compiling, analysing and processing data;
 - (iv) formulation and planning of foreign policy;

(b) Basic and advanced training of national and regional diplomatic staff: (i) international economic and financial negotiations; (ii) the mass media and diplomacy; (iii) management of critical situations; (iv) full use of the consular machinery; (v) use of modern technology in the teaching of foreign languages;

(c) Horizontal co-operation: (i) sharing of regional experiences in recruitment, admission, and basic and advanced training of diplomatic staff; (ii) preparation of basic and advanced training courses for Latin American diplomats.

30. It should be pointed out, simply by way of information, that since 1955 GATT has been offering an annual course in international negotiations. This is a four-month course which includes simulated negotiations and a workshop on negotiating techniques. It is attended by officials of ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of trade, central banks and other agencies. This year the course is in Spanish; every other year it is offered in Spanish and is attended by Latin American officials. Similarly, GATT holds national seminars at the request of Governments. Special attention is paid to the question of preparatory work undertaken before negotiations. Course expenses, and fellowship expenses in particular, are borne by UNDP. Over the past year, the seminars on negotiating techniques have been sponsored by the Swiss Government. It is estimated that to date the courses have been attended by 1,100 officials from developing countries, 300 of whom came from Latin America.

31. UNDP is also financing project RLA/82/912 (executed by UNCTAD), which provides for a major regional seminar on negotiating techniques, to be held in Latin America in 1988. In November 1986, UNITAR held a highly selective seminar, which had excellent working papers.

32. The Inspectors believe that it might also be useful to consider supplementing the education and training of diplomatic staff - as well as the staff of other government departments involved in activities abroad - with courses in the techniques of diplomatic negotiations proper. The experience gained in that respect within the United Nations, the specialized agencies, other world organizations and regional organizations could be extremely useful.

ANNEX

ESTIMATED BUDGET EXPENDITURE

Having examined the project budget, the Inspectors are of the opinion that more than \$900,000 was allocated for meetings, seminars and publications which are unrelated to project objectives and fall outside the competence of ECLAC. The items are as follows:

11.01	Expert in international relations and international co-operation (\$US 190,000)
11.03.04	Consultants (\$US 60,000)
13,15,16	Administrative support, travel expenses of experts, official and evaluation missions (\$US 290,000)
21.21:01,02	Sub-contract for research and publications
05,06,08	(\$US 170,000)
32:02	Subregional course on relations between Latin America and the United States (\$US 70,000)
32:08	Annual meeting - RIAL research centre (\$US 148,000)
32:10	Peace and development seminars (\$US 79,000)
32:11,12	Annual meeting of experts on analysis and planning of foreign policy - seminars (\$US 90,000).
