2010 ECOSOC Substantive Session
Operational Activities Segment

Informal Summary of the General Debate
on Operational Activities for Development
12-13 July

Fifteen countries, including representation of three groupings (G77 and China, European Union and CANZ) delivered statements at the general debate. Member States expressed their appreciation for the reports submitted by the Secretariat to the Council and commended the high quality of discussions in the inter-active dialogue sessions organized for the segment under the leadership of H.E. ECOSOC Vice-Preisdent Ambassador Alexandru Cujba.

Member States remarked on the significance of this year's segment as a contribution to the substantive preparations for the September United Nations Summit on the review of the Millennium Development Goals. General Assembly resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence was welcomed as added guidance to operational activities for development and should also form part of the framework for the quadriennial comprehensive policy review on coherence issues (Russia, Japan). The creation of UN Women was widely welcomed as a key milestone in system-wide coherence and as a means to advance the achievement of the MDGs. Some Member States (CANZ) also considered the outcome statement from the Hanoi Tripartite Conference on "Delivering as One" as a source of guidance towards improved coherence at country-level.

Member States (G77/China) reiterated the fundamental characteristics of the support provided by the United Nations development system on operational activities for development - which is based upon the request of the programme countries according to their needs - are its neutrality, multilateralism, and grant nature. The principles of national ownership and leadership, and the importance of alignment with national development plans and priorities were seen to be critical. Capacity building and capacity development, as foundations to achieve long-term sustainable development, should be a priority for UN operational activities.

Member States shared the view that the UN system's development assistance has to be flexible and more adaptable and pragmatic, in light of the fast changing developments among programme countries and the aid environment, bearing in mind the "no one size fits all" principle. Recipient countries rejected conditionalities tied to development assistance (Cuba, India). The increased use of South-South and triangular cooperation, including through the catalytic role of UN regional commissions and among UN country teams, and mainstreaming this modality in UN development cooperation were encouraged (G77/China, Bangladesh, Israel, India, Cuba, Brazil).

In light of the multiple crises, some donor countries indicated that the steady growth pattern achieved up to 2009 in UN system funding may not be sustained (EU). At the same time, the role of enhanced ODA has become even more critical (Norway). Achieving the MDGs calls for improvements in the quality of financing (Norway), and continued assistance. A different approach is needed to interact with countries that have graduated to MIC status (G77/China, Indonesia, Belarus).

Member States (EU, India, Indonesia, Norway) affirmed that core funding remains the bedrock of operational activities for development, while recognizing that non-core resources constitute an important additional source with certain advantages. EU indicated that the complexity and fragmentation of the UN system is contributing to its high transactions and administrative costs. Some Member States (ROK) indicated that non-core resources can also be made more predictable, while others believed that Member States can shift non-core contributions to core contributions (Norway). One Member State underlined that the debate over the mix of core and non-core resources should be evidence-based (Japan).

Citing comparative record of donor commitments to ODA, the importance of expanding the donor base and promoting a more equitable burden sharing among contributing countries was highlighted (Norway, EU, Belarus). This could address predictability to some extent, and reduce over-reliance on a handful of donors. Further development of innovative funding mechanisms was also encouraged (Israel, India, Belarus). Member States encouraged the funds and programmes to look into the concept of a "critical mass" of funding defined in the context of the General Assembly discussion on system-wide coherence. Recipient countries called upon donor countries to fulfil their commitments to ODA contribution. (Bangladesh).

While adequacy of funding needs to be addressed, strengthening results-based management, ensuring accountability, efficiency and results reporting on the use of contributions are equally important (Norway, EU, Belarus). Attention was also drawn to the importance for development of trade and investment (Norway). Leakages through illegal capital flows are ten times higher than ODA and must be stopped.

Some Member States (Cuba) cautioned on the application of a standard model for the UN system's development cooperation in programme countries. It was stressed that programme countries should be able to select which organizations are most relevant to the needs of the country. While coordination and coherence are desirable, these should not dilute the distinct identity of UN organizations. The management of One Fund by one entity was seen as source of conflict of interest in the wider access to other UN development organizations.

The role of the resident coordinator system was seen as instrumental in bringing other, small and new, emerging contributors into the fold of development cooperation in countries where they do not have a large presence, including through South-South cooperation.

In response to the reports submitted by the Secretariat, a number of Member States noted the improvement in the coherence and coordination within the UN development system. Some Member States (Switzerland) suggested that future reporting includes the reasons for lack of progress and difficulties encountered in implementation of policy guidance. More cost-effective communications on UN country teams' results was encouraged. The development of the standard operational formal for reporting to Governments on progress on UNDAF results was welcomed. Further action was encouraged in strengthening national capacities; the assessment of risks and capacities of implementing partners including during the implementation phases especially in complex countries; and to step up efforts to improve support in countries affected by conflicts or natural disasters. Initiatives to strengthen UN system field capacities in monitoring and evaluation were welcomed. The importance of inter-institutional staff mobility to optimise existing capacities was highlighted. Information was requested on how many agencies have signed up to the inter-agency mobility agreement.

It was noted that the *Management and Accountability System for the UN resident coordinator system* needs to be fully understood amongst resident coordinators and members of UN country teams to guide their roles. The challenge to the capacities of the UNDG regional teams to deliver on their roles under the framework, and the limited use of the gender and women's empowerment scorecard among a few countries were also noted. (CANZ). The Secretariat was requested to continue to report on the *Management and Accountability System* in the context of the annual report on the RC system (Russian Federation), to improve on results analysis, and to assess support to capacity building and development, and South-South cooperation (China). The on-going work on the central repository of information, including information on all non-core contributions was encouraged (G77/China).

A number of Member States noted the positive developments coming from Delivering as One experiences and the increasing number of countries adopting the approach. (EU, Israel, Ukraine). Readiness to support further steps, including resolving issues at headquarters level was indicated (EU).