



2011 ECOSOC operational activities segment- Panel I

“2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the General assembly
– What are the expectations: Issues, process and outcome”

Thursday, 14 July, 3:30 - 6:00 pm

Concept Note

Background

In the fall of 2012, the United Nations General Assembly will conduct its Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the United Nations operational activities for development (QCPR). The review is the opportunity for Member States to guide the way the United Nations system works in all programme countries. It is based on an in-depth analysis of progress in implementing the reforms mandated by the last review in 2007¹ and of new trends and challenges. The main purpose of the review is to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of UN development system to support national development efforts to pursue their priorities and meet their needs in the context of the UN development agenda emerged from the Millennium Declaration and other global conferences and summits.

This year’s ECOSOC is expected to give specific directions for the preparation of the 2012 QCPR. The Council can thus draw the attention of Member States to progress and challenges in implementing the 2007 General Assembly guidance. It can also highlight how the evolving development cooperation landscape may affect the coherence and

¹ See General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR). In 2009, in resolution 63/232, the General Assembly decided to change the cycle of the comprehensive policy review from triennial to a quadrennial.

effectiveness of UN system operational activities for development and thereby their impact.

The UN system has launched a series of measures since 2007 to make its operational activities more relevant, efficient and effective. It has adopted a common set of priorities to implement the guidance of the General Assembly and accelerate the implementation of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the MDGs. A series of new tools have also been developed to simplify the preparation of UN Development Assistance Frameworks, strengthen the coordination of country-level activities by empowering UN resident coordinators, clarify the responsibilities and the accountabilities of UN system development cooperation actors at various levels as well as simplify and harmonize UN system business processes. More remains to be done, however. UN capacity development activities have to become more sustainable. Greater use needs to be made of national execution modalities and national systems. There remain questions about the funding and adequacy of UN system support to countries in situation of transition from relief to development. The prevalence of non core funding leads to fragmented activities and incoherencies and undermines the alignment of UN system's support to priorities set by Member States at national and international level. Those are all aspects to be addressed in the 2012 General Assembly review. Member States will need to look at such issues from a broad perspective: is the UN fully respectful of national ownership and leadership and of the principle of neutrality? How effective efficient and coherent are they? What is their impact and how can it be strengthened?

The review also needs to take into account a number of critical changes:

- 1) While the poorest countries continue to be the main recipients of UN development cooperation efforts, a growing number of countries have graduated to the middle income category. Many are beginning to broaden their development priorities, which include a continuing focus on the large number of people living in poverty, but also aspects such as environment sustainability, policy advice and governance. The relevance of UN development cooperation in these countries will depend on its ability to adapt and respond to these evolving needs.

2) Countries in conflict and post-conflict situations will continue to require the attention and support of the UN development system in the foreseeable future. Mobilizing the system's capacities – and sufficient resources - to address the needs of these countries, especially those in the transition phase from relief to development, is paramount for the UN development system.

3) Recent trends in funding UN operational activities show that the imbalance between core/regular resources and non-core/extrabudgetary resources in favor of non-core financing. It also poses the question of how to better align non-core resources with priorities established by Member States through UNDAFs or UN system strategic plans.

3) New development cooperation modalities, such as budget support and sector wide approaches, are gaining ground. While they are more conducive to country ownership and leadership, UN system organization are usually not able to channel their development assistance through these modalities. This may threaten their relevance but also hinder the ownership of its programmes by its national counterparts.

4) There is an ever growing emphasis on results-based management, transparency and accountability. Funding decisions of donor and programme countries are increasingly guided by the concern of demonstrating results. Performance and comparative advantage are becoming important criteria for resource allocation. This puts pressure on the UN system to define its comparative advantage. It also points to the difficulty of measuring, attributing and demonstrating results whereas United Nations operational activities aim to foster change and progress on the internationally agreed development goals which by necessity requires a long term horizon.

Objective of the panel

This panel discussion is intended to contribute to the reflection on the 2012 review of UN system operational activities by the General Assembly and to generate new ideas, new

proposals and new perspectives to deepen UN reform and address challenges for the next generation of UN system operational activities for development.

Suggested Questions

The following questions are intended to guide panelists in preparing their brief interventions:

- Do countries feel that they truly own and lead the programmes of the UN system?
- Has there been visible progress in making UN system's support to national development priorities more relevant, coordinated, effective and efficient? If so what may have contributed to this?
- What are the main challenges facing the UN development system at the country-level?
- What kinds of improvements are needed to maximize the country-level performance of the UN development system and its long term results? Is there need for a radical reform?
- What is the UN development system likely to look like in ten years?

Panelists

- Edward Sambuli, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of State Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, Kenya
- H.E. Thomas Gass, Ambassador of Switzerland to Nepal, facilitator of the 2007 TCPR
- Susan McDade, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Uruguay