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Talking Points

Speaking event: ECOSOC High-level Operational Activities Segment
Dialogue w/ Executive Heads of UN Funds &
Programmes

**“Looking to the future of operational activities for
development of Funds and Programmes:
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats”**

Date and Time: 15 July 2011, Geneva

Introduction

Ambassador Gonzalo Gutierrez Reinol,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,

I am pleased to speak to the theme of this dialogue this morning. I am happy to speak from both sides of the aisle, having been a Minister of Health in Nigeria and now as the head of a UN agency.

- First of all, let me say that the United Nations system at the country level has made impressive strides in improving UN support to national development:
- We are making progress:
 - in the spirit and mode of Delivering as One;

- in the new generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs); and
 - in Common Country Programme Documents and more harmonized Results and Resources Frameworks.
- All of these have contributed to more coherent UN support and reduced transaction costs.
 - The UN continues to be a key actor both at global and country level.
 - According to feedback, countries generally feel that the UN's support has been useful, especially in the areas of technical assistance, advocacy, sharing lessons learned and best practices as well as fostering South-South cooperation.

Challenges

- But while we are making progress, we need to do better.
- Many countries are still behind in achieving the MDGs.
- More work needs to be done to support the strengthening of national capacities and national systems.

Population and Development

- Since UN support is based on national development strategies, those plans and strategies need to be derived from evidence based on sound analysis. This requires greater attention to population data and dynamics.
- Solid data and analysis are critical to effective development planning, policymaking and programming.

- At the center should be the development of human capital. We know that well-targeted investments in women and young people, for instance, are key to improving productivity, moving towards a green economy, eradicating poverty and paving the path for sustainable development.
- Yet, in many developing countries there are still wide gaps in the ability to gather and use data. As a result, budgetary allocations don't always reflect or address the realities on the ground. We see, for instance, that investments in women and youth, and in reproductive health, are not made to the extent that they are required.
- By working together as a UN system to support investments in women and young people, we can achieve greater effectiveness and stronger results.

UNFPA Commitment to UN Reform and Lessons Learnt

- At UNFPA, we have made it clear to our country offices and all staff that delivering as one and improving systemwide coherence are top priorities.
- This message is reinforced through practical support, training and performance incentives. Supporting UN reform is the responsibility of all UNFPA staff members individually and collectively.
- Preliminary results show that joint programming has:

- increased coherence in UN operations;
 - promoted a better division of labour;
 - ensured better alignment with national priorities;
 - reduced fragmentation and duplication, and
 - resulted in simpler and more harmonized business practices.
 - The transaction costs and other burden on governments and the UN system are also going down.
- A UN that can conceive its support within the comprehensive development challenge and not as individual champions of bits of the development agenda will be of greater value to the achievement of national development priorities. Business as usual has been shown not to be effective.
 - We also see, and this has become clear in our mid-term review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, that when agencies spread their resources too thinly with too much time spent on servicing small operations, there is very little space left to engage in policy dialogue. This also leads to inefficiencies and higher exposure to risk because staff are not able to monitor and manage so many projects!
 - While small scale projects have their place in testing new programmes and approaches, it is clear that the UN needs to focus on coordination and strengthening national capacity and systems.
 - At UNFPA we are fine-tuning our business model so we can approach future programming exercises with a clear objective of achieving impact down the road, not necessarily exclusively with our resources, but via well thought-out strategic partnerships.

Partnership

- Fortunately, we have examples of modalities and partnerships that are working. UNAIDS is such an example and so is the H4+ working in support of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health.
- The H4 Plus is very good example of how good partnership, led by programme countries, can deliver on the ground.
- We need to find ways to deepen these partnerships so they can contribute to national policy dialogue and planning.

Accountability

- Accountability and results orientation is critical. UNFPA, like other parts of the UN system, is continuously improving its evaluation, monitoring and oversight to strengthen evidence-based programming.
- [A key issue is how to ensure that the transition from emergency action to development is managed in a balanced way, and is well resourced.
- UNFPA is revising its humanitarian response strategy and also developing a strategy for working in fragile contexts together with the other agencies of the UN system.]

Closing

In summary, the UN needs to be more flexible and responsive, evidence-based and united in supporting a common approach to national development and strengthening national systems. And Member States need to champion a move away from a one-size-fits-all business model for the UN system.