

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Remarks by Helen Clark, Chair of UNDG and UNDP Administrator

ECOSOC – Dialogue with Executive Heads

New York, 16 July 2012

It is a pleasure to engage in this dialogue with other Executive Heads and Member States on strategic priorities and key operational issues for the UN development system in the next QCPR cycle.

In today's challenging global environment, an effective and results-oriented UN development system, which is responsive to country needs, is more important than ever.

The challenges we are confronted with are not minor: they include the urgent need to accelerate MDG achievement, advance sustainable development, tackle rising inequalities, and address the needs of countries in or recovering from crisis, to name but a few.

As well, our world is experiencing great economic and financial uncertainty, and some of the traditionally most reliable supporters of development are themselves faced with severe fiscal constraints.

Since the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR), we have seen:

- a fast changing geo-political and global economic landscape;
- the growing importance of a wider range of actors, both state and non-state, in development co-operation;
- more countries in crisis and/or transition; and
- important development progress, but also continuing challenges, including rising inequalities and damage to ecosystems.

The United Nations development system is uniquely placed to assist developing countries address the challenges they are confronted with and achieve the transformational change they seek. Indeed, the system has much to offer through:

- its universal presence in developing countries and its commitment to results;
- its legitimacy and convening power;
- the breadth and depth of its expertise;
- its normative responsibilities, including its commitment to human rights-based approaches and equity, including gender equality;
- its operational role in assisting programme countries to strengthen capacities to achieve the MDGs, overcome post-crisis and humanitarian challenges, and ensure smooth transition from emergency assistance to recovery and development;
- its capacity when well coordinated to support countries to tackle complex and cross-cutting issues; and
- its role as a key driver in the multilateral system for supporting equitable and sustainable human development.

The UN development system thus has a unique role to play in helping countries manage the interaction of global challenges and national development needs.

Progress made over past five years – some key milestones

The TCPR called for a coherent, effective and efficient UN. Fragmented approaches do not help countries tackle today's multi-faceted development challenges.

Since 2007 the UN development system has been making significant changes to meet the expectations of the TCPR resolution. There is growing evidence that this is improving our service to programme countries.

The Secretary-General's report on the QCPR notes a survey of programme country governments which found that close to 85 per cent of those governments believe that the United Nations development system has become more relevant to their countries' needs over the past four years.

The Secretary-General's report on the QCPR also confirmed that the UN Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF) has increased alignment of UN support with national development needs and priorities, and with global development goals.

The recently released Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One attested to the relevance of well coordinated UN support, particularly on cross-cutting issues. Innovations driven by those piloting the Delivering as One approach have been found by the governments of those countries to enhance their leadership and ownership of the development agenda.

Cost-savings are also being achieved in business practices, in particular in the areas of common procurement, ICT, common premises, and common services.

An independent review of the Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Co-ordinator System noted a shift in the culture of working and delivering results together, compared to that of only a few years ago.

While these findings are positive and encouraging, the UN Development Group is acutely aware of the need for continual improvement in the services it provides, and in its capacity to respond to emerging challenges and to the reinvigoration of the global development agenda following Rio+20 and beyond 2015.

Operational priorities for the next QCPR cycle

The Secretary-General's report on the QCPR urges the UN development system to ensure that it is strategically positioned to respond to evolving needs; to have an even stronger focus on results and accountability; and to reduce duplication and transaction costs.

The UNDG supports the full implementation of the Management and Accountability System. It accepts the need for greater focus on providing up-stream policy advice; building national capacity to take the lead on programming; and consolidating and simplifying reporting requirements. It considers that the QCPR needs to:

- affirm the need for a UN development system which is fit for purpose in the wide range of developing country contexts;
- ensure that the UN development system is well positioned to support country-level implementation of new development directions, including those emerging from Rio+20;
- support a forward-looking results orientation for the UN development system;
- ensure that the Resident Co-ordinator system is equipped with the necessary tools to provide effective country-level co-ordination, based on UN capacity in country and national demand;
- promote flexibility in and national ownership of common country programming and instruments;
- call for a long-term and predictable funding base for UN operational activities for development; and
- demand further progress on simplifying and harmonizing business practices within existing rules and regulations, while recognizing the considerable savings which could also be made within agencies, funds, and programmes.

Member states may also wish to give consideration to the views of the governments of the Delivering as One Countries on how that approach has strengthened their leadership and ownership, supported their work on cross-cutting challenges, and ensured higher quality programming with lower transaction costs for them.

The Outcome Document of the Fifth Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One in Tirana sets out their considered views on their pilot and self starter experiences, and on how the UN development system as a whole might move forward.

As Chair of the UNDG, let me reiterate that the UN development system stands ready to support Member States in any way it can throughout the QCPR process.

In addition, as UNDP Administrator I look forward to intensifying UNDP's efforts in the key areas of our work – crisis prevention and recovery, governance, poverty eradication, supporting governments to design integrated approaches to achieve sustainable development, and empowering women, in order to support implementation of the Rio+20 decisions and in preparation for the post-2015 development agenda.

Comprehensive and sustained reform efforts in the development system require support by Member States in the General Assembly and the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies, particularly on:

- streamlining governance procedures to reduce duplication and transaction costs around reporting and approval processes; and
- providing a long-term, predictable, and adequate funding base for UN operational activities for development and the RC system.

Last, let me note that following the request of ECOSOC last year, a review of the funding of the RC system has been undertaken. The outcome is expected to be presented to Member States in September. Some of the key messages emerging from the draft report are that:

- UNDG members should contribute to the costs of the RC system in recognition of the mutual benefits received and of the system's importance for effective programme delivery.
- The modalities agreed upon should be transparent and flexible.
- Adequate and predictable funding must be available for the leadership functions deemed essential for UN Country Teams to perform.
- Effective co-ordination is critical for increasing the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the UN development system.

Conclusion

I began with reference to the changing development environment and pressing global challenges. The UN development system must be fit for purpose to respond to these changes and challenges.

In my remarks today I have suggested where to focus in making the UN system more relevant, effective, and efficient.

Transforming the way we work is essential so that we are able to best support countries, including in translating the outcomes of Rio+20 into action and in achieving the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.