

Closing remarks
by the Vice President of ECOSOC H.E. Carlos Enrique García González
2014 Operational Activities for Development Segment
26 February 2014, New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now come to the end of the three days of extensive deliberations on the issues surrounding the UN Operational Activities for Development.

I must say that this has been a highly successful segment by every measure, and I am confident you have appreciated this new format which is more inclusive and enables a more interactive discussion.

I am very grateful to all of you – in particular those who made time to join us from other parts of the world, for your active engagement over the past three days. Your contributions and questions ensure that ECOSOC discussions and policy guidance are grounded in realities at all levels -- the realities of our changing world and of development cooperation.

From my perspective, our discussions have revealed much common ground.

I would like to highlight eight key messages emanating from your deliberations.

First, the dramatic changes in the development landscape over the past decade and a half since the MDGs clearly require all of us to be better fit for purpose – the UN system, governments of donor and programme countries, and governance bodies alike.

Second, the adoption of a unified and universal post-2015 agenda with focus on sustainable development and poverty alleviation will call for greater alignment of the work of individual UN entities to common strategic objectives. Such alignment should be based on national development plans and be guided by increased policy integration and operational coherence.

This will entail rethinking of business models and governance arrangements that would better align vertical and horizontal accountability..

Third, it is essential that the unfinished business of the MDGs be completed. This will, inter alia, require further support to enhance the capacity of programme countries to eradicate hunger, poverty, improve gender equality, health care and reduce maternal mortality.

Fourth, the UN system should also address the rising inequalities and high unemployment, especially among youth. These challenges can destabilize societies and should be handled with a sense of urgency.

Fifth, there is also need to reverse the recent decline in official development assistance and to strengthen the capacity of developing countries for domestic resources mobilization.

Sixth, the standard operating procedures for delivering-as-one countries are a flexible and effective approach, to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of the UN development system. Their value-added rest in a basic core set of elements which, with strong government ownership and these can lead to cost savings that can be redirected to programme activities. There is need to promote flexibility and innovation in the DAO approach. The effective functioning of the firewall of the resident coordinator system can also facilitate the participation of the specialized agencies and from their end, the specialized agencies need to further empower and decentralize authority to country representatives.

Seventh, in countries undergoing transition, relief *and* development should be pursued simultaneously, and not consecutively, with country teams and missions brought together on the agenda as well as physically. National actors should define the problems and their solutions, with participation of all stakeholders. A comprehensive response is needed that does not approach issues by categories or sectors, and that focuses on integration and not aggregation. It is particularly important to address the inflexibility of funding -- the issue is not more funding, but more flexible funding. Key to success are building national capacity for credible public financial management frameworks as well as donor behavior coherence.

Eight, multi-stakeholder partnerships, including issues-based alliances, can be an effective modality including for specialized agencies in mobilizing resources to address important interdisciplinary issues. This is conditional on clarity about the role of different partners, and on the partnership being guided by the principles and the mandates of the UN agencies. With the increasing influence of non-state stakeholders, particularly the private sector in such partnership arrangements, mechanisms are required to prevent undue influence of vested interests, so that national policy space, norms, standards and quality assurance can be adequately safeguarded. Policy coherence within governments and across governing bodies of UN agencies is critical for UN agencies to deliver as one.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have heard from the Executive Heads of funds, programmes and specialized agencies that the United Nations Development Group has committed itself to the full and timely implementation of the General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, or the QCPR. The new common UNDESA-UNDG QCPR Monitoring Framework which has strong system-wide ownership is a particularly important step in that direction.

Implementation is well under way towards a more coherent, effective and efficient UN development system.

As we advance towards a post-2015 unified and universal agenda with a focus on sustainable development and poverty alleviation, we have also heard of much common ground in terms of defining and tackling the challenges and opportunities ahead to become better fit-for-purpose.

This is a very good beginning for a dialogue to be pursued in the months ahead.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me extend my special thanks to the Government representatives, UN officials and partners who agreed to serve as panelists and moderators in this year's Operational Activities for Development Segment. I have been much impressed by your wealth of knowledge and ideas and heartened by your frankness. Thank you very much.

I also wish to thank Member States for their active and constructive engagement in the segment. I believe that our discussions will go a long way to contribute to the upcoming informal consultations on this year's ECOSOC resolution on operational activities.

I also wish to thank wholeheartedly the whole UN development system for their support, especially the secretariat led by Mr. Navid Hanif and Mrs. Jennifer de Laurentis and their teams for their invaluable assistance to the segment.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my honour to suspend this year's Operational Activities for Development Segment of the Economic and Social Council. The Council will close the segment upon the conclusion of the draft resolution.

I wish those travelling a safe journey back home.

Thank you.