

2014 ECOSOC operational activities for development segment

Key messages emanating from deliberations

1) *Changes in the development landscape need a better ‘fit-for-purpose’ for the UN system, donor and programme countries and governance bodies*

- Changes in the development landscape since the adoption of the MDGs require all of the UN system, both donor and programme countries, and governance bodies to be more ‘fit-for-purpose’;
- The UN must rediscover the “spirit of adapting to change” by revitalizing its capacity-building role, increasing efficiencies, lowering transaction costs and reforming its operational activities funding system;
- The UN should not focus on implementation but rather on supporting the role of the State, with policy and technical advice;
- With more than 80 countries rolling out new UNDAFs in the next couple of years, this presents a very important opportunity to develop a strategic blueprint with a strong focus on supporting national results;
- The implementation of GA resolution 67/226 is essential for bolstering the UN system’s development work and system-wide coherence as a critical area of UN reform.
- This reform must be about substance, not process.
- While the implementation of the QCPR is voluntary to the UN specialized agencies, an increasing number of them are beginning to do so;
- Rethink business models and governance arrangements that would better align vertical and horizontal accountability;

2) *A unified and universal post-2015 agenda will require a reconsideration of the UN’s strategies and business models*

- The UN needs to adapt to the new development landscape by building on its core strengths, especially in the normative and standard-setting areas: its universal presence, legitimacy and quality of expertise;
- in that respect, the current and evolving business models of the UN Specialized Agencies should provide important experiences
- The UN development system needs to respond coherently by linking the normative, standard-setting and operational dimensions of its work and this would require new thinking and new approaches;
- the work of individual UN entities needs to be aligned to common strategic objectives. Such alignment should be based on national development plans and be guided by increased policy integration and operational coherence;
- UN agencies should lead transformative shifts, underlining the need for a holistic and integrated approach;
- persistent and/or rising inequalities between and within countries, exclusions and high unemployment threaten to reverse past development achievements, especially for young people;
- there is urgent need to reflect on data collection as a tool to better target the vulnerable and excluded groups and address inequality.

3) Policy integration, programme coherence and effectiveness will become even more critical in post-2015

- The standard operating procedures (SOPs) are a flexible and effective approach for the UN to streamline, coordinate and deliver as one. Their value-added rest in a set of basic core elements and in their potential for flexibility and innovation;
- The SOPs should be flexible enough to enable their adoption by all programme countries, including those who are not DaO countries;
- The importance of enhancing “Delivering as one” and speaking with one voice on multi-sectoral challenges will be increasingly essential;
- A key challenge for coherence is the ability to deliver strategic policy advice across sectoral divides and in line with normative standards and commitments;
- An effective resident coordinator firewall can facilitate the participation of the specialized agencies, who from their end, need to further empower and decentralize authority to country reps;
- Additional guidance linking to each pillar of the standard operating is being finalized for roll out in the next month or two;
- Soon to be developed is a monitoring and evaluation framework to track whether the DaO approach has contributed to greater relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and coherence;
- The definition of DaO could be made clearer to Governments before they commit to the process, since many are unclear as to how it would be to their benefit;
- The DaO initiative should move from a process-oriented model to a results-oriented one, especially in middle-income countries;
- Policy coherence within governments and across governing bodies of UN entities is critical for the UN to deliver as one.

4) Flexibility and coherence in funding are essential

- The UN should be inclusive in leveraging alternative resources, meaning to bring investors, bankers, energy sector companies and other private-sector players into the conversation.
- Domestic resource mobilization is another key area;
- There is not only the need for more funding, but also for more *flexible* funding to allow UN entities and partner countries to plan their programmes more effectively
- The necessity for coherence in donor behavior and the importance of building capacity for credible national public financial management framework were strongly emphasized;
- the structured dialogues mandated in the QCPR resolution on how to finance the development results agreed in the new strategic planning cycle of their respective UN entities, should take place in 2014.

5) *Relief and development efforts should be pursued simultaneously*

- Transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and development should be better managed. It is not necessarily accurate to describe such a process as a transition from relief to development. Rather, relief *and* development should take place concurrently rather than consecutively;
- A UN Response is needed that does not approach issues by sectors or categories, but one that focusses on integration [instead of aggregation];

6) *Multi-stakeholder partnerships and issue-based alliances are critical, and must be accompanied by mechanisms to safeguard national policy space, norms, standards and quality assurance*

- Threats to development are now much more complex and can no longer be addressed by a sectoral approaches.
- Issue-based alliances can be an effective modality in mobilizing resources, especially around cross-thematic areas, *if* there is clarity about the role of different partners and if the partnership is guided by the principles and mandates of UN entities;
- In view of the increasing influence of non-state stakeholders, particularly the private sector, mechanisms are required to prevent undue influence of vested interests, so that national policy space, norms, standards and quality assurance can be adequately safeguarded;