

ECOSOC Coordination Segment, 5 July 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Summary of

The Panel discussion on „Achieving the internationally agreed development goals: improving the way the United Nations system works“

Chairperson: H.E. Mr. Ali Hachani, Vice President of the Economic and Social Council

Moderator: Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Panelists: Mr. Eduardo Doryan, Special Representative to the United Nations, World Bank; Mr. Jean-Jacques Graisse, Senior Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme; Mr. Peter Mertens, Coordinator with the United Nations and other intergovernmental agencies, World Health Organization; Mr. Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme; Mr. Patrice Robineau, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe; and Mr. Frans Roselaer, Director, Department of Partnership and Development Cooperation, International Labor Organization

The panel discussion was opened by **H.E Mr. Ali Hachani, Vice-President of ECOSOC**. He stressed that the Panel provided an opportunity to hear about progress made by UN system organizations in integrating the MDGs into their programmes and operations; learn more about collaborative efforts within the UN system; and consider ways in which coordination within the UN system organizations could be improved, including through more coordinated policy guidance from their governing bodies.

Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, noted that over the last 15 years the international community was able to agree on a broad development agenda. The outcomes of the UN conferences and summits of the 1990s and 2000s had provided a clear set of goals. The Millennium Declaration had set clear time bound goals and targets; the Monterrey Consensus had given the means to achieving those goals and targets; and the Johannesburg Programmes of Action had provided the policy framework to do so. The challenge ahead now is implementation. The report recently prepared by the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) entitled: *“One United Nations – Catalyst for Progress and Change: How the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the UN system works”*, was an important account of recent efforts and progress made by the UN system organizations to align their work with the MDGs. The MDGs have become the benchmarks against which to measure the effectiveness of not only the system’s efforts but also those of the international community at large. Mr. Civili also pointed out the need to strengthen the monitoring capacity of the UN system to measure implementation and the need to enhance policy coherence and coordination within the UN system to carry out its mandates, including through enhanced coherence and coordination among the governing bodies of UN system organizations, as stressed by the Secretary-General, in his report entitled *“In larger freedom: development, security and human rights for all”*

Mr. Eduardo Doryan, Special Representative to the United Nations, World Bank, also stressed that the last five years have helped in uniting the international community behind common time-bound goals and targets; they have brought agreement on the means necessary to achieve those goals and on the policies to do so. The UN system organizations had started embedding these goals in their own work, while relations between them have become more demand driven rather than competitive and supply driven. He noted that global issues have prompted collective action and global programmes for the provision of global public goods. No organization owns completely an agenda item. At the same time there is wide-spread recognition of the importance of country driven processes centred on national priorities. In the future this is likely to lead to greater emphasis on capacity building and budget support and more integrated and country driven programmes. Stronger networks, respectful of the diversity of the system, will need to be established to increase the system’s connectiveness and relevance.

Mr. Roselaer, Director, Department of Partnership and Development Cooperation, International Labour Organisation, agreed with the need for stronger networks and linkages among UN system organizations. Child labour is a good example of issues that needs to be approached more comprehensively. ILO, which is assisting Member States to implement the convention on child labour

is working closely with UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank and other country programmes to address this issue. The employment network is another example of UN agencies working together to address poverty and employment in a comprehensive fashion. The main challenge is to capitalize on knowledge and expertise existing within the system to integrate sectoral policies and activities with national priorities.

Mr. Patrice Robineau, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, speaking on behalf of the UN regional commissions, stressed the important role regional commissions played in the follow up to global conferences. The regional approach helps translating internationally agreed goals and targets into concrete policies. This is obvious in the case of transboundary issues -such as transportation, environment, management of natural resources, and HIV/AIDS. This approach promotes research, share of good practices, and statistics. By bringing together countries from the same region, regional commissions also stimulate policy dialogue at the regional and national levels to find common solutions to common challenges. They provide technical assistance and promote follow up activities to international norm and monitor their implementation. They can also facilitate greater cooperation among agencies through intersectoral approaches towards the achievement of international goals and targets, thus transforming the diversity and complexity of the UN system into its strength. This approach is facilitated by the Resident Coordinator at the country level, by the regional commissions at the regional level, and by ECOSOC at the global level. Challenges are to ensure greater cooperation between the regional commissions and UNDP, at the national level, and ECOSOC and its functional commissions, at the global level. Regional policy frameworks formulated through regional debate would facilitate the integration of the regional dimension in country level activities, as suggested by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Jean-Jacques Graisse, Senior Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme, emphasized that coordination and reform efforts should be focused on ensuring that the UN system supports the achievement of the international development goals effectively. UN system's coordination efforts should be assessed against those goals. The MDGs have changed the way the UN works. Coordination is not an end in itself. Agencies work together to transform the goals into operational activities, as indicated in the CEB report. Such operations reflect new common priorities and policies adopted by the system. HIV/AIDS is an example of the new way of working of the system both at the regional and national level. Transitional frameworks in post conflict/crisis countries are another example of inter-agency collaboration of this kind. These examples show that the UN can be an important player in providing direct assistance, which should remain its main role.

Mr. Peter Mertens, Coordinator with the United Nations and other intergovernmental agencies, World Health Organisation, pointed out that the interrelatedness of the MDGs indicates that their achievement can only be obtained through collective, collaborative and integrated efforts, based on the principles of national ownership and alignment with national programmes and priorities. For instance, achieving the health goal will require not only taking into account progress towards the MDGs but also to look at other issues, such as the growing crisis of human resources, which are directly related to health, as highlighted in the report "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities" (E/2005/56). UN system country programmes should reflect both international goals and national priorities and strategies. Complementary and multisectoral, integrated and nationally owned approaches for the achievement of these goals will enhance the effectiveness of the system. The potential of global collaboration is obvious (i.e. Tsunami example). UN reform and promoting the integrated follow up to international goals should go hand in hand, guided by the same intergovernmental process. The link between CEB and UNDG should be strengthened by ECOSOC, while a development cooperation forum could provide a platform for closer cooperation and regional commissions should be part of this platform.

Mr. Mourad Wahba, Director of UN Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, pointed out that the CEB report was initially intended as an accountability report on the response of the system to the Millennium Declaration. The preparation of the report itself indicated how difficult it is for the system organizations to look at themselves as a system. The exercise has led to a better understanding of constraints and opportunities in this regard. In this context, it is important to remember the purpose of coordination, which is to provide services at reduced costs and deal with cross-cutting issues. The valued added of coordination would thus be embracing the diversity of the

system- ranging from agencies with a normative, policy or operational orientation, with a global, regional or national focus and structure- and transforming this diversity and complexity into strength. The main challenge for the future is to link the various dimension of development, conflict prevention, democracy and human rights. Another challenge is to define how operational agencies can better work together with policy and normative agencies as a one UN. The link between CEB and UNDG in this regard is still work in progress although progress was made in areas of poverty and gender, crime prevention, drug trafficking, and environment, which led to greater operational cooperation through UNDG and UNDAF.

The UNIDO representative also stressed the importance of coordination and collective action within the system to achieve the MDGs. Economic growth is a key factor for development and there is a strong need to enhance the UN system contribution in this area. Bearing this in mind, UNIDO put forward a system-wide proposal entitled “Enhancing the contribution of the UN system in the field of economic development to achieve the MDGs”, which would establish a voluntary mechanism for coordinated action towards the achievement of the MDGs. The mechanism should facilitate the rationalization of efforts within the system, promote further specialization around core competencies of the organizations concerned, strengthen synergies and enhance the system’s collective contribution to economic development. He pointed out that HLCP had unanimously supported the proposal and established an open-ended task force to pursue it. The first meeting took place on 3 June 2005 and identified the areas for inter-agency cooperation and agreed on the leading agency for each area.

Comments and questions from delegations:

The representative of the **UK (EU)** noted that ECOSOC should play an important role in conference follow-up, while CEB should continue to provide coordination guidance to the system and support the implementation of the goals in line with the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) resolutions. Clarifying the relation between CEB and UNDG was of particular importance in this regard. Another important question was how to strengthen regional cooperation, including through harmonization of regional offices. The delegate of **Italy** stressed the need to consider not only coordination but also integration of UN system activities as proposed by the Secretary-General in “In large Freedom” report and highlighted that some UN activities already point in that direction. This might entail reducing the number of organizations. He also added that there is a need for the UN system to have a strong image at the field level, which should revolve around the Resident Coordinator (RC). Thus, it is particularly important to clarify possible conflict of interest between the RC and Resident Representative (RR) role and strengthen the role of RC as the representative of the UN system as a whole. The representative of **Jamaica (G-77)** (in response to Italy) underscored that while integration might be necessary to foster a common approach, it should not happen at the expense of each agency’s own mandate. On the role of the RC as the supreme coordinator, she suggested the need to consider the role of regional commissions as well. She also highlighted that addressing the challenges ahead should focus on enhancing policy coordination and reducing competition among agencies for funding. An effective communication system between entities to share experience and knowledge should also be a priority. **Egypt’s** delegate observed the tendency of UNDP to open regional hubs and wondered about their impact in terms of UN system coordination. **Ireland’s** representative also pointed to the relation between RC and RR and the possibility in some cases to have a country director for UNDP. On the idea of joint meetings of the governing boards of the various agencies, she stressed the fact that although this is a good idea in principle, in practice it hasn’t worked effectively. The representative of **South Africa** highlighted that decisions concerning greater coordination within the system need to go through Member States capitals, which goes to show that coordination is a two-way street.

Mr. Civili: responding to the UK, stressed that the follow up to the TCPR is high on the CEB and HLCP agenda. One important dimension is to ensure that all system agencies contribute to country level support. Both UNDG and the regional commissions are active and essential participants in the CEB. On aspects of coordination and integration, he noted that UNDG and CEB have been reinforcing each other around the need to follow up on global conferences in a comprehensive manner. ECOSOC and CEB are on the same wavelength regarding the context of such follow up. On the role of the RC, Mr. Civili noted that CEB had recently focused on this issue. The need to strengthen the RC

coordination role at the country level emerged as a priority. On the issue of competition within the system, he stressed that the problem lays also in the funding mechanism of the UN system. On the joint meetings of the governing boards, Mr. Civili agreed on the difficulty of putting the idea in practice. However, much would depend on how ECOSOC decides to organize itself for the follow up and monitoring of the MDGs and other goals. A division by themes, for instance, would determine how and who should be involved from the functional commissions. **Mr. Wahba**, on the idea of UNDP country director, suggested that in some cases a country director for UNDP affairs might be a necessary addition. For instance, in the case of countries where there is a SRSG, which means that the RC performs also the role of Deputy SRSG and thus could not be the UNDP RR as well. In most cases, however, the RC carries out both functions effectively. He highlighted that this also allows the RC to continue to have access to UNDP resources to perform the coordination function. On regional commissions, Mr. Wahba pointed out that the regional commissions have a policy mandate while the responsibilities of UNDP regional offices is to collect and disseminate experiences in the region. **Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Director of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, DESA**, stressed the importance to align the system with specific outcomes that can then become themes for policy dialogue in ECOOSC. This is in line with the Secretary-General's proposals. This year offers a unique opportunity to move forward in this direction. Although the MDGs should remain the core goals, there are many cross-cutting themes such as gender, human rights, employment, which link to the peace and security agenda, and raise important policy questions. The role of the Council and of CEB should be to ensure accountability of the system, of the Member States and of the international community at large in the pursuit of the international goals, while key mechanisms could be put in place to bring together all these actors to monitor implementation or provide policy guidance.