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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

**Substantive Session of 2005
Operational Activities Segment
General debate**

Statement

by

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Switzerland, at the outset, underlines its full support to the TCPR process. The triennial review not only has great value in offering the General Assembly the opportunity for an essential stock-taking and policy making exercise, but it also provides for a clear division of labour and responsibilities between the General Assembly, the ECOSOC and the various governing bodies of the operational entities of the UN system.

In this context, Switzerland welcomes the documents submitted to the Council, particularly the report on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/250 as well as the improved financial statistical report, and we thank the secretariat for having produced them.

After having carefully listened to the various panels organized during the first days of the segment, considering the high level of complexity associated with the further implementation of the reform of the operational system of the United Nations for development, Switzerland would like to focus on three key issues.

The Reform: A Multi-Speed Approach

Some voices seem to insist on the need for the reform, especially the harmonization and simplification, to encompass all the operational UN entities, stressing that a so-called “multi-speed approach” is to be avoided. Switzerland indeed agrees that the full range of competencies of all the specialized organizations should ideally be incorporated at field level in an integrated UN Country Team.

However the system is highly fragmented, both in terms of governance and in terms of operational approaches such as levels of decentralization, funding structures and modalities. This fragmentation mirrors the vested interests of line ministries of both donors and recipient governments.

Furthermore, approximately eighty percent of the ODA channelled through the UN organizations is currently channelled through the UNDG Executive Committee agencies, and this situation is unlikely to change in the next future.

The attempt to simultaneously advance the reform with all the UN operational entities leads to procrastination. Out of pragmatism and realism, Switzerland therefore firmly encourages the members of the UNDG Executive Committee to proceed without delay and to lead the way.

The UN Development Group was initially created by the Secretary General as a tool for reform and as a coordination mechanism for those operational entities which are placed under his direct purview. It should be fully valued as such, especially because of its very convincing record so far. It is indeed because its dynamic proved to be meaningful beyond its original institutional boundaries that the Development Group opened to all other UN agencies willing or interested.

Simultaneously, the Chief Executive Board also has the responsibility to advance the coherence of the overall UN operational system - an endeavour which, despite all good will, has not yet proven to be very successful. We thus call upon the Chief Executives to demonstrate a renewed sense of common purpose and unwavering commitment to the overall relevance of the UN system.

Practically it should imply that the CEB instructs its mid-level management representatives in the various working groups, would they be under the aegis of the CEB and its secretariat or under those of the UNDG, to participate proactively in the search for practical and viable

ways to enhance the coherence and the operational integration of the system, acknowledging the catalytic function of the UNDG, especially its Executive Committee.

The Authority of the Resident Coordinator

The TCPR negotiation was frequently complicated by the candid attempt of the member states to systematically give justice to the full extent of the UN operational system. It was also occasionally complicated by a forceful lobbying by representatives of some operational agencies. That is why the fundamental and essential need for the Resident Coordinator to be given full authority over the UN Country Team could not be formalized in the resolution 59/250.

This is highly regrettable. The UNDG Executive Committee agencies should correct this in the facts, and establish this authority among themselves while continuing to promote the coordination of all field-represented UN agencies under the Resident Coordinator system.

The Funding

The lack of consensus amongst donors on the paramount importance of core funding remains very problematic.

With regard to the Funds and Programs, only a sufficient level of core funding – in our view not yet achieved – will allow the Funds and Programs to rely on a consistent and top-quality in-house technical competence on the basis of which they could in turn improve the coherence and consistency of their operational activities. While the large amounts of supplementary resources entrusted to the Funds and Programs, both donors non-core contributions and recipient governments cost-sharing, can be considered as recognition of their professionalism, it unfortunately does not contribute to their core capacities, and in some cases even erodes them.

With regard to the Specialized Agencies, which play both a normative and operational role, the current limitation of their budgets and – within these – of the amounts allocated to technical assistance, condemns them to ceaseless and costly fund-raising efforts both centrally and at field level, which expose them to dispersion, fragmentation and inconsistency. This situation is a clear disincentive for them to contribute to a more coherent response to the needs of developing countries.

Technical Assistance vs. Capacity Building

Finally, Switzerland fully supports the call made in Resolution 59/250 for the UN operational system to focus on capacity building and institutional strengthening. However, there is usually a very long way from the provision of punctual technical assistance – as is most current practice – to real capacity building. The UN operational system should make further decisive steps to move from technical cooperation to capacity building.

In an even increasingly competitive environment, capacity building is indeed a niche for the UN operational activities for development. A fresh look should be given to this question, and options should be urgently defined as to how technical assistance is to be provided by the United Nations to contribute more efficiently to the strengthening of the capacities and the institutions of recipients.