

Opening remarks

by

**Mr. Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General for
Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, DESA**

Operational Activities Segment

10:00 am, July 12, 2005

Mr. Vice-President:

Today is the third day of this operational activities segment, guided by GA resolution 59/250 on the “triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system.” The segment has focused predominantly on advancing the implementation of the resolution.

During the first two days of the segment, you have debated issues highly relevant to today’s session.

Last Friday, you participated in an interactive dialogue on operational reforms in the UN development system, to advance the pursuit of the internationally agreed development goals.

Yesterday morning’s panel addressed the funding of UN development cooperation and its modalities—a central theme in the debate on enhancing the performance of the UN development system and the effectiveness of its country-level operations.

In the afternoon, the Council engaged in a wide-ranging dialogue with the executive heads of the UN Funds and Programmes—one of the regular highlights of the Council’s annual sessions.

Throughout these two days, you have touched on many of the themes addressed in the reports of the Secretary-General before you today, as mandated by resolution 59/250.

My task this morning is formally to introduce the three reports that you, Mr. Vice-President, have listed in your introduction:

[listing not used]

- (i) the “Management process for the implementation of GA Resolution 59/250 on TCPR of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” (document E/2005/58);
- (ii) the report on “Funding options and modalities for financing operational activities for development of the United Nations” (document A/60/83-E/2005/72); and
- (iii) the report on “Comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 2003” (document A/60/74-E/2005/57).

I will not summarize their contents. The briefings that my colleagues have organized around these documents, and the segment’s informal consultations on its outcome, have both provided ample opportunities for you fully to access what these reports have sought to convey. I will therefore only make a few observations on the policy environment surrounding the three reports and highlight some key messages.

The outcome of last year’s TCPR was especially important. In the vision it set forth. And in the solid guidance it provided. The outcome addressed both policy and process in a balanced, complete, and yet focused way. It well illustrates precisely the type of inclusive, comprehensive leadership that the UN intergovernmental processes should exercise vis-à-vis the wider UN system.

Sometimes, in processes of this kind, parochial concerns end up obfuscating the larger picture. And process threatens to dominate policy. Or policy stated too generically veers too close to sheer rhetoric.

This was not the case for resolution 59/250. Two basic features of the resolution are serving to maximize its impact on the system. First, its balance and sensitivity to the system-wide setting in which the TCPR should situate itself. And second, its approach to the management of operational activities, not as an end in itself, but as a key dimension of the system's effort better to support countries in meeting the agreed development goals.

The system is responding, and is doing so in a concerted way. And, guided by the resolution, the further reforms that make up this response amount to more than mere efficiency exercises. Rather, they are geared to maximize actual results and to ensure that reforms at the level of UNDG and other parts of the system aim specifically to complement and reinforce each other.

The first report, on the management process for implementing the TCPR resolution, reviews the thrust of the resolution. It then seeks to set out, in a synthetic format, a framework for actions that the UN system is taking—or intends to take—in the next three years, to follow up on the provisions of the resolution. It specifies targets, benchmarks and time frames for implementation.

The initiatives that the plan contains are presented in outline. They have resulted, however, from an extensive process of consultations involving all of the system organizations active in development cooperation at the country level.

The consultations engaged in particular UNDG, as well as the High-level Committee on Programmes of the CEB. But they extended also to officials directly involved in development operations in the regional commissions and in individual UN Funds, Programmes and specialized agencies, at both their headquarters and in the field.

While the document presents the system's ongoing and proposed actions in relation to each provision of the resolution, the system's capacity to respond adequately and effectively to the demands of countries for development support will hinge on its ability to make significant progress in three areas that cut across several of the provisions of the resolution. I have in mind the resolution's calls for:

- 1) further integrating the system's activities with national plans and priorities, while, at the same time, enhancing system-wide coherence;
- 2) strengthening partnership with the recipient countries and striving to build more effective support to national capacity development, as a central goal of UN development cooperation; and
- 3) mobilizing all system capacities and finding ways to ensure that developing countries can benefit from the whole range of services and knowledge that UN organizations—whether or not present in the country—can offer to support national efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve economic growth and sustainable development.

Commitments to respond to these calls, and to strengthen the unity of the system's presence at the country level, are highlighted in the CEB "accountability" report—"One United Nations: Catalyst for Progress and Change"—which was presented during the Council's High-Level Segment and pursued during its Coordination Segment.

The initiatives outlined in the Management Process, some of which are further illustrated in the document produced by UNDG for its 2005-2007 Programme of Work (contained in CRP.1)—have, as their common denominator, a renewed effort to enhance the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the UN development system. At the same time, the system is keenly aware, and the TCPR resolution again emphasized, that a qualitative leap in performance depends critically on significant progress in assuring the adequacy—and enhancing the predictability, stability, and reliability—of funding for UN development cooperation.

I will not dwell on this point, which has been developed at length in many UN debates and was further discussed at yesterday's panel. Document E/2005/72 pursues one angle of this debate—the different modalities of financing on the table and how they affect, or may affect, these factors. Without going into the details of the report, let me highlight some of its central messages, stated or implied:

- First, modalities do matter. And matter a great deal.
- Second, there is no quick fix. No easy solution. Yet, solutions, real change, are essential. They must not only build on the elements of progress made thus far, but also go beyond them. And they must be pursued with a new sense of urgency.
- Third, political will in devising new solutions is of the essence. Donors' policies and practices are increasingly characterized by a great deal of imagination, and a renewed determination to innovate, in order to maximize results and impact. But they still focus largely on modalities of bilateral cooperation. The same drive and imagination do not yet sufficiently extend to the funding of multilateral cooperation through the UN system;
- Fourth, the system need not be a passive actor in this process. It can help in two crucial ways. It should actively explore ways to overcome the fragmentation inherent in its decentralized structures and to introduce new, more cogent, and more broadly-based approaches to programming—approaches that challenge the donor community, in turn, to devise new, more stable and more predictable modalities of funding. And, of course, the system should better project the results that development cooperation, through the UN system, is uniquely suited to advance.

Let me add a fifth point, only hinted at in the report. But to me, it is crucial. The present situation, in which voluntary contributions for financing UN system development cooperation are, for all practical purposes, determined only once all legal and negotiated obligations have been settled, is not, in my personal view, sustainable in the long term. Or it is, at least, inconsistent with the central role envisioned for the system—and the central responsibilities devolving to it—in advancing the UN development agenda. The outcome of the World Summit will, I hope, introduce new momentum for addressing this problematique. And the subsequent Assembly session, to which our report is also addressed, should serve to deepen the linkages between the modalities issues dealt with in the report and the imperative to establish the conditions for the system to play the role expected of it in helping to realize the Summit's outcome.

Mr. Vice-President,

Let me turn now to the third report, containing the comprehensive statistical data on UN operational activities for development requested in the TCPR resolution. While the statistical tables in the annex of the report follow the usual pattern, we have made an effort to present both contributions to, and expenditures by, the UN development system in a new format. The format provides a multi-year perspective and tries to highlight the significance of certain overall trends, particularly for data relating to contributions of "core" or regular resources. We hope that you will find this innovation in our statistical analysis helpful.

Also, this year, for the first time, we have introduced a comparative analysis of data relating to operational activities for the UN development system, on the one hand, and other forms of development cooperation, on the other. This aims to prepare the ground for the debate that the Council will have in 2006 on the whole problematique of funding for development cooperation, as envisaged in paragraph 23 of resolution 59/250.

My colleagues and I look forward to your comments, which we hope will provide further guidance on implementing the TCPR and on the course of actions outlined in the Management Process. We will make sure that your comments are duly conveyed to all actors within the system engaged in the implementation process.

A final word, Mr. Vice-President, which, I hope, you will not consider a breach of etiquette in the Secretariat's intervention here. It is a word of appreciation to the colleagues who have worked on these reports in the DESA Division charged with supporting ECOSOC. They are one of the smallest units in the Department and in the Secretariat as a whole. They are charged with all aspects of the preparation and follow-up to the TCPR. They are, I believe, one of the best values for money that the Secretariat has to offer. But the value they represent goes far beyond the quality of the reports that they produce. Not being directly engaged in operational work, they can—and do—offer an indispensable objectivity, without detriment to the system-wide engagement they are called upon to generate. The commitment and independence that they bring to this exercise are, I believe, true assets to the intergovernmental process and the UN system as a whole.