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First session of the ECOSOC dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United  
Nations development system  
ECOSOC Chamber  
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Your Excellency, Amb. María Emma Mejía Vélez  
Excellences,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this first session of the Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system, convened under the auspices of ECOSOC.

Today's session presents an opportunity for Member States to discuss their vision for the future role of the UN system and the implications of the emerging Post2015 Agenda.

More specifically, to discuss the mandates set out in ECOSOC resolution 2014/14, including the interlinkages between, and the alignment of:

- functions,
- funding practices,
- governance structures,
- capacity, and
- impact of the United Nations development system, partnership approaches and organizational arrangements.

That the world has changed dramatically since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration is clearly portrayed in the discussion paper prepared by Bruce Jenks and Bisrat Aklilu, who will present their findings shortly. Their paper presents an external, independent view: In broad strokes and thought provoking questions, it addresses the far-reaching implications of these changes for development cooperation, and the role and positioning of the UN development system.

Additionally, we will hear an update on the ongoing discussions on these questions from colleagues who play an important role in the coordination of the UN development system; first from Ms. Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, Chair of the Advisory Group to the UNDG,

and followed by the Vice-Chair of High Level Committee on Management (HLCM), Ms Jan Beagle, and finally from the Vice-Chair of the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), Ms. Jane Stewart.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under resolution 2014/14, you have recognized that the changes to the development landscape require a significant exercise of strategic repositioning that goes beyond the current focus of the 2012 QPCR on measures to improve operational efficiencies. A vision that provides the backbone of the preparations for the next QCPR, to be adopted in 2016.

Three times in its history, the UN development system has changed to adapt to new realities.

At the creation of the UN development system, it was envisioned that the world needed to unite against commonly perceived problems, and that these very needs would determine the form that international cooperation would take. Hence, the UN system structure was by design, functionalist and decentralized.

That was the first phase, if you will. The second phase saw vast new numbers of developing countries becoming members of the UN, and the challenge of nation building became the central focus of the UN's work in development. Thus, international development cooperation evolved into a mechanism for transferring capacity to newly emerging states.

Globalization and the end of the Cold War ushered in yet a new era for the UN's operational activities for development. The mission and rationale for development cooperation was redefined against these major changes, and backed by a series of global conferences culminating in the 2000 Millennium Summit. The emergence of a new common development agenda was crystallized in The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.

As we ready for the emergence of the post-2015 development agenda, it would be safe to say we are at the cusp of a fourth major change in the history of the UN development system.

Introspection and dialogue are the first steps.

To this end, the system must internalize the emerging Post2015 Agenda, the comprehensive work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and its aspirations of universality and sustainability, its intention to address inequalities in all areas and leaving no one behind, its strong anchoring in human rights and international standards, and the need for credible data and evidence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ECOSOC is the principal body for coordination within the UN system and beyond and for policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic and social development... it should promote reflection, debate and innovative thinking on development.

We therefore look forward to dialogues about the big picture, grounded in ECOSOC's work on data analysis and economic and social policy, and the perspective that the UN development system cannot be disconnected from the full UN system and a dialogue of how the "UN system", in its full capacity, can better support sustainable development

The United Nations is a unique organization. It must continue to build on its core strengths, namely, its universal presence, legitimacy, convening power, its depth and breadth of expertise. Last but not least is its ability to support Member States in translating the global norms and standards into national policy.

The recognition that collective responses are required to tackle emerging global challenges, creates extraordinary opportunities for the UN development system, particularly in linking the normative, standard-setting and operational dimensions of our work.

We look forward to a process of continued strategic reflection and dialogue on the future role of the UN development system. We are very keen to have the guidance by Member States on the content and process of the dialogue.

DESA stands ready to support this discussion, which is critical for the future of the United Nations.

Thank you.