

Hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Rwanda

**Speech at the Operational Activities for Development Segment of
ECOSOC in NY.**

22nd – 24th February, 2016:

Your Excellency, Morgens Lykketoft President of the General Assembly;

Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs;

Your Excellency, Alejandro Palma Cerna, Vice President ECOSOC;

Excellencies here present;

Distinguished delegates;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Let me begin by thanking H.E Alejandro Palma Cerna, for the invitation to contribute to the discussions at the 2016 Operational Activities for Development Segment under the theme, “United Nations Development Systems, *getting ready for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda*”. I would also like to thank you for your continued leadership in the second phase of the ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I am confident that the outcome of these deliberations will contribute towards improved delivery of the UN development system at global, regional and country level working with member countries.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Overall Rwanda has all the Millennium Development Goals and in some cases exceeding the targets particularly those related to; gender, education, maternal and infant health. Important factors that have contributed towards this good performance include; strong national ownership and visionary leadership, institutionalization of a results-based management culture, nurturing of home-grown citizen-centered innovations, effective monitoring mechanisms, institutionalized accountability as well as strengthened institutional and individual capacities.

The UN development system has contributed in many ways towards the progress in realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The role and visibility of the UN was enhanced following the adoption of the “*Delivering as One*” approach in 2007. Rwanda was among the first 8 countries to pilot the approach. Following assessments conducted among pilot countries and other self-starters, we consistently emphasized the message of “no turning back” to business as usual. The most important thing however, is that we have been walking the talk.

Today our partnership with the United Nations has come a long way especially at the country level. Joint planning across agencies and with government has made the most progress. The United Nations Development Assistance Programme (UNDAP) is fully aligned with our own Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy. Numerous

measurable reforms are also being undertaken under the leadership and guidance of the One UN Steering Committee which I personally Chair to further improve delivery. These reforms include; the 'One Leader' and the 'One Voice' where the UN Resident Coordinator, speaks and engages with government on behalf of the other UN agencies. A business operation plan has been developed to focus on quantifiable measures to reduce operational costs and have more resources allocated to implementation.

We are making progress towards the physical establishment of 'One Office' with the government having allocated land for the construction of the 'One UN House'. Currently resources are being mobilized to begin works.

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In line with the forward looking theme, allow me to highlight a few areas that can improve relevance of the UN system going forward:

Many reforms are being implemented as I mentioned above to improve the workings of the UN system at the National level through the Delivering as One approach which has become the way of doing business. However, we have not yet seen the same level of coherence and joint working at the regional and global level. A deep assessment is needed to find more areas where the UN system can harmonize workings at the regional and global levels to support existing reforms. These could include; jointly mobilizing and pooling resources, human resource and capacity building, leveraging internal expertise and knowledge on critical issues such as malnutrition, disaster preparedness and management, climate change, peace and

security. These are global issues where lessons learned through the global network and presence of the UN can make a big difference.

Making a difference requires developing a common understanding of: the goals, the priorities and the implementation mechanisms across different institutions that make up the UN system. This shared understanding is needed across institutions contributing towards peace and security as well as development and humanitarian affairs especially when dealing with conflicts that span borders and affect entire regions and their populations.

A comprehensive approach encompassing development assistance humanitarian aid and peacekeeping must be developed. Rwanda is compelling evidence that without peace and security, there can be no development. As the Secretary-General of the UN Ban Ki Moon rightly put it *“We need to take united action now because peace will not happen without development, and development will not happen without peace”*. Therefore piecemeal solutions have never been sufficient. With the continued rise of extremist ideologies and conflicts around the world, the demand for comprehensive solutions has never been greater. I am optimistic that in the session on this topic tomorrow, we will be able to propose more practical recommendations for how this can be achieved.

When considering the attainment of the SDGs, new challenges will need to be addressed. An example is the slowdown in the global economy which is putting strains on development assistance, further highlighting the importance of finding more sustainable funding approaches. At global level for the UN system more emphasis is needed on joint planning and mobilization of resources across shared goals. More support should be

directed towards building capacity to increase trade and to attract investment across regions while increasing domestic resource mobilization.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

At country level; the use of the One UN Fund at National level facilitates the government working with the UN country team (UNCT) to prioritize needs for joint programming in the UNDP, which as I mentioned earlier is aligned with our National Development Plan and priorities. However, the replenishment of the 'One UN Fund' is negatively impacting delivery. Therefore, pooling resources would help address lack of funding for critical areas; reduce fragmentation and increase transparency and accountability. We believe this is a key measure to sustain relevance of the UN system at country level.

The UN country team has made significant progress in reducing the internal operational costs; however more needs to be done to reduce transaction costs through increased use of country systems. These are in line with development effectiveness principles and encompass; project management, financial management and procurement among others. Change at this level has to be initiated at the global level for it to be effective at national level.

Finally support to countries in domesticating the SDGs is critical to their success. The SDGs have ambitious targets but also necessitate reviewing implementation practices and measurement of indicators. We are closely working with the One UN country team to address needs and gaps we have initially identified. These include mass communication in local context to all stakeholders, reviewing our all national statistical framework to

capture new indicators, revising long term development strategies to integrate the SDGs among others. We believe harmonization and coordination of workings across UN agencies in supporting countries in the domestication exercise will further strengthen this exercise and facilitate sharing of best practices.

With these remarks I would like once again to thank the ECOSOC leadership for the invitation I thank you all for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.