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**ECOSOC Dialogue retreat on the longer-term positioning
of the UN Development System in the context of the post-
2015 development agenda**

Greentree Foundation, Manhasset, New York

29 May 2015

**President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Martin Sajdik,
Vice President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Maria Emma
Mejia Velez,
Ms. Lisa Orrenius of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues and friends,**

I am very pleased to join you today, not least given the very pleasant surroundings we find ourselves in here at the Greentree Estate. We should be sitting under a tree!

I thank the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation for organizing this important discussion. I also want to thank all of you in this room for making time for this retreat. It is important that we occasionally step away from the day-to-day cycle of meetings, negotiations and crises in the world in order to reflect on our overall direction for the UN.

And as you all know, now is a crucially important time for such reflections. We are on the final stretch of our collective effort to decide on a new sustainable development agenda, taking into account the three landmark agreements we hope to reach in the next six months in Addis Ababa, New York and Paris.

Together, these agreements must set us on a development path that respects the planet's ecological

limits, and at the same time ensures growing and shared prosperity today and for generations to come.

As we look beyond 2015 to the implementation of this ambitious new agenda, the role and positioning of the United Nations Development System will be key for success.

We know that implementing transformative development goals for post-2015 will demand more of the UN Development System than ever before. This is partly due to the ambition and scope of the new agenda. But it is also due to the new global landscape in which we find ourselves.

In a hyper-connected world, economic, environmental and health developments in one country can be felt across national borders and be amplified, with systemic effects for other countries. Generally, we will find that regional effects of developments in most areas will be much stronger than before. This underlies the importance of cooperation with regional organizations and the regional commissions in accordance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

In today's environment, change is rapid and very difficult to predict. The UN Development System has been

trying to adapt to change since its inception. But the current global context demands that it does so faster and more responsively than ever.

In short, we have to operate more quickly, more efficiently and more effectively in a world that is more turbulent, more unpredictable and changing more rapidly and fundamentally than ever before.

Friends and Colleagues,

It is clear from your discussions to date in the ECOSOC Dialogue that the United Nations Development System must, as a primary objective, be prepared and adapted to deliver on the substantial and crosscutting ambitions of the post-2015 agenda.

You have in this Dialogue made clear that the post-2015 agenda requires deeper reflection on the role of the UN Development System to respond to changing country priorities and needs. This wide-ranging agenda also calls for integrated action. This means moving away from a silo approach and identifying how the goals and targets are inter-related. We must also be clear about the implications that the goals and impacts have both for Member States and the UN System.

You have called for a higher degree of coherence and better coordination to ensure the speed, efficiency and effectiveness of the UN system's response. This is particularly needed in light of the various capacities and needs among emerging countries, current and future middle-income countries, less-developed countries, and countries facing crisis.

But you have also made clear that the Dialogue is not only about coherence and coordination. It is about the basic question of what the UN should do and not do. We need to carefully analyse where and how the UN Development System can bring the highest value and comparative advantages among the increasing number of development actors and drivers.

In sum, you have called for a "rebirth" of the UN Development System.

Such transformational change is a daunting prospect and task: it is understandable that some may doubt its feasibility. At the same time, the United Nations Development System has, on several occasions in the past, undertaken major changes to match the needs of the day.

Across the lifespan of the Millennium Development Goals, which I have followed, it has demonstrated the capacity to rise to the challenges set by Member States. It has been instrumental in supporting many countries to realize their development aspirations and achieve concrete progress on their MDGs.

So the system has adapted before. It can certainly do so again, even if the conditions today are more complex and demanding. In fact, we owe it to present and future generations to do so.

Such renewal will require visionary and practical leadership from all sides, from Member States, to civil society, the private sector and of course the UN System. We must not let the opportunity of the year 2015 to pass us by.

Friends and Colleagues,

At the outset, Member States should ask themselves what kind of UN Development System you and we need.

What kind of functions, funding, governance, organizational arrangements, and partnerships are needed to produce an integrated and effective response to the

post-2015 development agenda at all levels: local, national, regional and global levels?

What kind of arrangements are needed to ensure that the system is sufficiently robust and resilient in the face of growing systemic risks from an ever more interconnected and volatile world?

And how do we ensure that the UN Development System is able to support the alignment of, and relationship to, global, regional, national and local actors and interests in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?

I don't claim to have answers to these questions. But I will make a few observations on some key requirements for the future positioning of the UN development system as I see it.

First, I am convinced that in the post-2015 era, Member States will need an organizational model for the United Nations that makes the different entities much more organically linked to one another. If we are to implement an agenda that reflects the cross-cutting and mutually reinforcing nature of our development objectives, we must be able to work horizontally and transcend silos.

We all accept that we need peace and security to achieve development, and that we need development to have peace and security. Yet, as an example of the problems we face, there is sometimes unhelpful competition between humanitarian and development constituencies that the affected communities and international community cannot afford. Such competition risks distorting the financing of priority areas and the relationships between institutions. It can also give rise to duplication, overlap and redundancy.

The good news is that there has been important progress in breaking down silos. The debate started under the leadership of the Chief Executives Board and with the direct involvement of the United Nations Development Group, High-Level Committee for Programmes and High-Level Committee for Management. They expressed the commitment of the UN family to become ‘fit for purpose’ and to make the transition to the post-2015 agenda, focusing on five elements: universality, equality, human rights, integration and the data revolution.

The Delivering as One approach should help UN Country Teams to respond to the post-2015 challenges at the national level. The changes already initiated through

the new Standard Operating Procedures should now be extended beyond the existing group of countries.

In so doing, we must support, recognize and reward entities that reach out to coordinate and collaborate in new ways, both within and beyond the United Nations Development System.

Second, I am convinced that the specifics of each country situation and the pace of change mean that innovation and rapid learning are more important than ever. Countries are innovating in all aspects of public life, often powered by new technologies. At the same time, the demands for accountability continue to evolve. In light of this, innovation and rapid learning should not be seen as discretionary add-ons. They need to be treated as essential ingredients to speedy, efficient and effective operations. Indeed, they ought to be regarded as organic elements of organizational models.

This brings me to my third point, which is the need for predictable, flexible and sufficient funding of the programmes and activities of the United Nations development system. This is crucial if we are to maintain the integrity and the multilateral nature of the UN system.

The current funding architecture, with non-core resources increasingly outweighing core funding, should be reviewed and addressed.

Fourth, let me also say that the UN Development System should assess and rethink its functions based on the evolving needs of countries with different experiences of development. The needs of LDCs, conflict-affected countries, and middle income countries, are different and require different responses.

We know that one-size-fits-all approaches will not work. That is why there is every reason for the United Nations Development System to draw on South-South and Triangular forms of cooperation to complement existing forms of cooperation. Simply put, what can be more multilateral than a renewed Development System that embodies and applies ideas, experiences and resources from every point of the compass: North, South, East and West?

Finally, and above all, national ownership is key. In all that it does, the UN Development System must aim to be aligned to national plans and sustainable development strategies. The real strength of the new SDGs will be tested by the degree to which global objectives can be translated

to results on the ground. Here national and international efforts must come together in the common interest. International cooperation is in every country's national interest.

It is to such performance that this Dialogue is ultimately dedicated. In the end, we are obligated to meet the needs and aspirations of "We the peoples," whom we are ultimately to serve.

I thank the leadership of ECOSOC for conducting this important Dialogue. I thank you all for your attention and look forward to our continued, open, free-flowing and informal discussions in the Greentree spirit.