

Helen Clark: Remarks for 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

13 February 2012

Notes for Seminar on Preparations for the 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the UN's operational activities for development

New York

I thank our host, the Permanent Mission of Germany, and the organisers of today's event, the President of the General Assembly and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, for bringing us together to discuss the QCPR.

The UNDG is taking the QCPR very seriously. It is not an abstract exercise for us.

The QCPR is a big opportunity for the UN development system to receive an updated mandate for its work from the General Assembly, and indeed to reinvent itself.

Since the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of 2008, much has changed in the environment in which the UN development system speaks.

That TCPR resolution, at nineteen pages and 143 operative paragraphs is heavy. From the QCPR, the UNDG hopes for an outcome which is lighter, and, in the words of our position paper on the QCPR, "has a clearly defined, limited set of expected results ... [that focus] will enable clearer follow up by UN agencies and reduce reporting requirements."

Objectives for the QCPR

The QCPR should:

- o affirm the relevance of the UN development system
- o acknowledge the unique contribution we are able to make to development, and
- o I hope it will exhort us to overcome bureaucratic barriers to co-operation – where there is a will, there is a way.

The relevance and unique contribution of the UN development system

Our relevance and unique contribution relate to

- o our universal presence
- o our legitimacy as organisations in the world's premier multilateral institution
- o the convening power we have
- o the depth and breadth of expertise which resides in the UN development system
- o our ability to support countries to translate global norms and standards into national policy and practice
- o our ability drawing on all the diverse strengths of agencies, funds, and programmes to support governments to deal with the big cross cutting issues which cannot be dealt with by one sector of government or agency alone, such as
 - o the need for policy coherence across the sustainable development agenda
 - o climate change
 - o MDG achievement
 - o tackling HIV/AIDS

The changing policy environment

The context within which we operate is changing fast – in ways which both play to our strengths and challenge us to do better. I raise five key issues:

1. Many of our traditional donors have been hard hit by the global financial crisis and its aftermath. This has three main consequences for us.
 - (a) The range of countries covered by countries' bilateral programmes is shrinking. The UN development system, operating effectively and efficiently, should be a good multilateral option for continued delivery of ODA
 - (b) Traditional donors under fiscal pressure want to demonstrate the impact of their development investments. We in the AFPs have to meet those expectations with better planning, prioritisation, and delivery of what we do, and better reporting and communication of it.
 - (c) AFPs are feeling the funding pressures of reduced support, particularly for core funding, from traditional donors.
2. There are many more development actors. This represents both opportunities and challenges. Fragmentation of effort imposes burdens on programme countries. The way of the future therefore must be through collaboration and partnerships with
 - traditional donors
 - South-South partners
 - the private sector
 - mega philanthropic foundations

- NGOs, and
- civil society organisations.

The UN development system can bring its unique strengths to those partnerships.

3. To maximise our contribution to development, we in the UN development system need to be joined up in order to provide the integrated policy advice and solutions for which programme countries are looking.

The Delivering as One pilots and self-starters have led the way on this, and an evaluation of the pilots will be available by the time ECOSOC meets in July.

The Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Plan calls for a second generation of DAOs, focused on management for results, transparency, and accountability.

4. Many countries have crossed, or are about to cross, the threshold of middle-income status.

By some estimates, seventy per cent of the world's poor live in those countries. Obviously poverty, inequality, governance, and environmental and other challenges do not uniformly disappear with graduation.

Yet the UN development system struggles to fund its operations in these countries. This too needs attention in the QCPR.

5. Then there are the significant needs of countries in crisis and/or transition – of which there are rather a lot.

Ongoing war and conflict, uprisings against repressive regimes, the impact of major disasters from earthquakes to floods and droughts – these all compel our attention in the heat of the moment, but they also need our ongoing attention to the underlying development issues.

Other factors which will shape the QCPR

All these factors set the context for the QCPR. It should also be shaped by

1. Rio+20 – the outcome can be a driver of greater UN co-ordination and coherence to ensure that we can offer well integrated advice and support across the pillars of sustainable development.
2. The world's ambition to achieve the MDGs – the 2015 target reaches well into the time span for this QCPR period.
3. The need for flexibility in our mandates and operations to enable us to respond to emerging issues, including as the post-2015 agenda is shaped.
4. The outcomes from the Busan High Level Conference on Aid Effectiveness and the Development Co-operation Forum in July, which challenge all development partners to move from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, to build the capacity of national systems, and to build truly global development partnerships.

The UNDG looks forward to engaging with Member States throughout the QCPR process this year, and to an outcome which enhances the contribution we can make to development effectiveness.