Information Note 3

What does the term 'interoperability' mean [question tabled by the Group of 77]?

OP127ter

> *Request the funds and programmes and encourage the specialized agencies and other entities of the United Nations development system to ensure system-wide interoperability of enterprise resources planning systems (ERP) with the objective to provide an integrated platform for processing internal and external management information and supporting harmonized business processes and practices across the entire United Nations development system by 2016. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to request the CEB, including HLCM and the UNDG, to undertake a study to examine the feasibility of establishing interoperability among the existing ERP systems of the funds and programmes and report to the Executive Boards by the end of 2014.*

The existing agency-specific enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems include tailored solutions for programming, project management and budgeting, which are connected to business operations functions in procurement, human resources and finance. To enable UN-wide harmonization of business practices, inter-agency collaboration of ERP systems has been repeatedly recommended throughout the UN reform process. However, agencies continue to improve their existing individual ERP systems or undertake large investments in the development of new agency-specific ERP software.

The term system-wide **'interoperability'** of ERP systems refers to the establishment of common ICT solutions that would be connected to the ERP systems of individual agencies through interfaces, making it possible to transfer and update data without the creation of additional layers. In the absence of the implementation of a single UN system-wide ERP system, increasing harmonization of business practices require agency-specific ERP systems to connect to a common ICT infrastructure and communicate with common supplier databases, procurement portals for programme-related goods and services, and common interfaces for the development and management of joint programmes.

The above recommendation directly refers to the requirement to enable the further harmonization of business practices across the UN development system through providing an integrated platform for processing internal and external management information.