

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT FIRST INFORMAL MEETING OF MEMBER STATES  
ON SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE**

**Friday, 13 March 2009**

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Co-Chairs,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to open these Informal Consultations of the General Assembly on United Nations System-wide Coherence.

I congratulate Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain for being entrusted to lead this process. I very much look forward to working with them under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly.

I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Kavanagh of Ireland and Ambassador Mahiga of Tanzania. Their work and the resulting Assembly resolution have set the stage for the next phase of this work.

These consultations resume against a stark economic backdrop. Grim economic news is having major cascading effects on prospects for eradicating poverty and hunger, realizing the Millennium Development Goals and moving our world to a sustainable path of development.

There is great political support for addressing these global challenges. But the economic crisis is putting Member States under intense pressure. Revenue is being eroded, for individuals and governments alike.

I call on all governments to protect the hard-fought gains that have been made through national efforts and international cooperation. At this time of turbulence and need, we cannot fail the poorest and the most vulnerable.

And at times like these, when people turn to the United Nations for help, we must deliver. We must deliver real benefits that improve lives. And we ourselves must come together as a single family to further the international development agenda that we have helped to shape and that is a core part of our identity and global mission.

The current crisis poses serious risks to the continued growth of the funding base for the UN system's work for development. The system also suffers from internal contradictions and challenges.

Stronger coherence is essential. We need to be more efficient and more effective. These informal consultations can help forge common approaches and genuine programmatic cooperation across the system.

The scope of your consultations has been determined by General Assembly resolution 62/277 on system-wide coherence. Your work encompasses three clear but connected areas: gender, governance and finance. I will comment on each in turn.

As you know, advancing gender equality and empowering women is one of my top priorities.

Member States have made significant commitments to women in a variety of policy frameworks, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the CEDAW Convention, the 2005 Millennium Summit outcome and the MDGs.

Next year, we will commemorate fifteen years since the Beijing conference. We will also focus on gender equality during the high-level segment of ECOSOC.

To make the most of these events and to advance the UN's policy and programme work, I am committed to ensuring the best possible support.

At the moment, however, the UN gender architecture lacks a recognized driver. It is fragmented. It is inadequately funded, and insufficiently focused on country-driven demands. There are gaps between policies and implementation. Authority and accountability are weak.

Reforming our gender architecture is therefore critical if we are to deliver better on our mandated responsibilities. The United Nations must be equipped to provide Member States strong support tailored to their specific needs. This will enable Member States to fully mobilize women's creative and productive potential.

To implement this vision, we looked at two approaches

The first is to leave gender architecture as it is now while adding resources and improving interagency cooperation.

The second is to consolidate the four gender focused entities – the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW.

There are several institutional options for consolidation. These include a fund or programme similar to UNICEF or UNDP; a department of the Secretariat; or a composite entity, which would combine the features of both a fund and the department.

As requested by the General Assembly, the Secretariat prepared a paper that reflects the views of Member States, UN entities and civil society.

The paper has been submitted to the President of the General Assembly by the Deputy Secretary-General, on my behalf, for the Assembly's consideration.

It reflects a consensus among UN entities that the status quo would perpetuate the current weaknesses.

At the same time, it is recognized that a Department would not provide a robust field presence. And a Fund or Programme would not fully eliminate fragmentation, link normative and operational work, or exercise the level of authority needed to hold all entities accountable for performance.

Thus, the composite entity remains the most promising option.

The 63rd session of the General Assembly must take a decision on this critical issue. Much work has been done. Member States have reached important agreements. A solution is within our grasp.

Excellencies,

Let me turn now to the governance of operational activities for development.

We have come a long way in strengthening coherence in this area. We have done this through periodic reviews by the General Assembly, reforms of the Economic and Social Council, and making interagency bodies more inclusive. There have also been far-reaching moves toward coherence at the country-level, especially in the "delivering-as-one" pilot countries.

Nonetheless, it is generally felt that the present system of governance does not ensure policy consistency and coordination across the UN system. To strengthen it, we need to focus on five areas: transparency, policy coherence, coordination, funding and accountability.

As we undertake this work, let us agree that the following principles and elements should be part of any improved governance system:

First, it should be based on strong national ownership and leadership.

Second, it should provide a comprehensive and transparent overview.

Third, it should promote enhanced coordination.

Fourth, it should facilitate the participation of specialized and non-resident agencies.

And fifth, it should regularly assess the performance of operational activities for development of the UN system.

Excellencies,

Now I would like to say a few words about the third issue you will be focusing on in your deliberations: funding.

As we all know, the UN system uses complex funding mechanisms for operational activities for development. That complexity makes it difficult to promote efficiency, effectiveness and coherence at the country-level.

Strengthening the funding system should be underpinned by a number of objectives.

First, a strong commitment to core resources.

Second, predictability, stability and adequacy of voluntary funding flows.

Third, a simplification of the funding architecture.

Fourth, more equitable burden-sharing.

And fifth, a closer link between funding and objective measures of performance of the UN development system.

As you know, the Secretariat is preparing papers on funding and governance. That process has involved extensive inter-agency consultations. I intend to submit these papers to the President of the General Assembly as soon as they are ready.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Your consultations can go a long way toward revitalizing the role of the UN system in global development cooperation, and in advancing gender equality around the world. I attach great importance to the successful conclusion of these consultations before the end of the current legislative session of the Assembly. Toward that end, my colleagues and I stand ready to assist you in every possible way in this vital undertaking.

Thank you.