

Draft Terms of Reference

**Preparations for 2012 Quadrennial comprehensive
policy review of the General Assembly**

Emerging issues in UN development operations

Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination
Department for Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations

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1. Introduction

The QCPR is the mechanism through which the General Assembly assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of UN operational activities for development and establishes system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN system in response to the evolving international development cooperation environment.

The 2012 QCPR will assess the implementation of policies established in GA resolutions 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review and 64/289 on system-wide coherence and ECOSOC resolution 2011/7, which provides guidance to the Secretary-General on analytical preparations for the 2012 QCPR.

The QCPR process also provides an important opportunity to Member States to engage in a dialogue on how to adapt UN operational activities to the changing global development cooperation landscape.

The SG facilitates the QCPR process by providing Member States with impartial, balanced and forward-looking analysis on the implementation of existing policies as well as with proposals to meet new and emerging challenges through several methods: firstly, survey of programme countries on UN operational activities for development, secondly, a series of analytical studies on selected issues, thirdly, a desk review of key documents in all substantive areas, and, fourthly, country visits to programme countries.

Analytical preparations for the 2012 QCPR will particularly focus on existing and emerging policy issues that require special attention by Member States.

Further broadening and strengthening of analysis on funding will be an important part of the 2012 QCPR preparations, including providing more disaggregated reporting on issues such as predictability of funding flows, breakdown of non-core funding by place of mobilization and cost recovery of non-core contributions to the UN development system.

The SG will also undertake in-depth analytical work in a number of other areas such as: UNDAF process, Resident Coordinator system, harmonization of business practices, results-based strategic planning and management, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as examining emerging policy issues such as sustainable development likely to impact the work of the UN development system in the 2013-2016 QCPR cycle. The analytical preparations will result in two reports of the SG on funding and the impact, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of UN operational activities for development respectively.

Other key analytical inputs to the 2012 QCPR will be the report of the independent evaluation of 'delivering-as-one' and a report commissioned by the SG on a comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of UN operational activities for development.

Stakeholder consultations will be an integral part of the 2012 QCPR process, beginning in October 2011 with briefings to Member States and entities of the UN development system on the overall approach of the SG to the analytical preparations.

A series of dialogues will be held with Member States, UN entities, UN inter-agency bodies, UN Resident Coordinators and country teams in the February to March 2012 period on the findings and

recommendations of different analytical studies as well as the survey of programme countries. Furthermore, a multi-stakeholder workshop on the opportunities and challenges facing UN operational activities in the broader international development cooperation environment is planned in the second half of 2012.

2. Background

When the UN was established in 1945, the organization was primarily envisaged as a peacebuilding and normative and standard-setting body. When it came to the original design of the organization, a functional approach, rather than a federalist one, was therefore seen as more responsive to the needs of Member States in different thematic or sectoral areas. The UN system consequently came to be organized around independent specialized agencies, whose relationship with ECOSOC was established by set of formal agreements. The relationship came to be contractual rather than hierarchical with new organizations, each with a distinct identity and not fitting a preconceived model, created as needs arose.¹ Accordingly, many of the “coherence” challenges which have since arisen can be traced back to the original design of the organization.

However, despite this original vision for the organization, its work has gradually shifted in the past sixty years towards operational activities for development, which by the year 2009 accounted for nearly two-thirds of all system-wide activities, with peacekeeping operations and the policy, advocacy and norm and standards-setting functions, including research, analytical and public information activities of the organization, accounting for the rest.² Despite this major shift on the demand side, the work of the UN system remains largely organized around functional lines.

It is generally acknowledged that the UN system has made a major contribution to economic and social development around the world throughout its history. The organization, for example, played a critical role in the decolonization process, helping more than hundred of today’s independent states establish themselves as free nations. The UN’s peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities have also helped to dramatically reduce the number and level of civil wars in the world, constituting undoubtedly one of the great accomplishments of the organization.³ And since the early 1990s, the UN system has played a pivotal role in promoting an agreement on and implementation of the global development agenda, which since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 has led to significant expansion of the organization’s operational activities for development.

¹ The term “specialized agencies” refers to those agencies mentioned in article 57 of the UN Charter that have been brought into relationship with the UN under agreements approved by the GA. They are commonly grouped together with a few autonomous bodies who are not de jure specialized agencies, but who work in close cooperation with a UN organization (e.g. International Trade Centre (ITC), International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation (ICGFI), International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) and World Trade Organization (WTO).

² See Report of the Secretary-General ‘Analysis of the funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations System in 2009’ (A/66/79).

³ *Human Security Report 2009/2010: The Causes of Peace and the Shrinking costs of War*, University of British Columbia 2010, available at <http://www.hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/20092010/overview.aspx>.

These contributions were not made by a static, unchanging UN. The organization, in fact, has reinvented itself several times in the past 60 years (see Table 1 for a brief summary of selected milestones in the evolution of the UN development system in the past sixty plus years).

This period has also seen a major change in the funding architecture of UN operational activities for development from a centralized approach between 1965 and the early 1990s, where UNDP functioned as a central fund charged with ensuring coordination and system-wide coherence, to a decentralized system, where the responsibility for resources mobilization rests with individual UN entities. An important consequence of this policy change has been a major growth in non-core contributions, which has accelerated the fragmentation of UN operational activities for development, while the beneficial impact has been significant increase in overall resources flows.

As highlighted above, the organization has regularly demonstrated the ability to adapt effectively to different priorities in a world that is frequently undergoing tumultuous changes. Contemporary challenges such as those relating to sustainable development, including sustainable economic growth and climate change, infectious pandemics, international trade, unemployment, knowledge generation and transfer, food and energy security, peace and security, MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, will continue to depend on this ability of the UN development system to reinvent itself in order to remain relevant in the changing international development environment.

It is probably fair to say that over the next 15 to 30 years, the UN development system can expect to be actively engaged with the challenge of sustainable development including sustainable economic growth and climate change. Current discussions on sustainable development-related issues suggest a moment of major importance in the evolution of the international development architecture.

For example, there are three important processes ongoing whose outcomes are likely to impact the future of the UN development system: (a) the UNFCCC Conference of Parties, (b) the Rio+20 Conference, and (c) the discussion on advancing the UN development agenda beyond 2015. Linked to these processes is the implementation of the post-Busan global partnership for effective development cooperation. Moreover, these three processes are expected to result in significant new financial commitments by governments and other actors for international cooperation for development. The Copenhagen Accord, for example, commits donor countries to mobilizing \$100 billion a year for poor nations by 2020. At the same time, many developed countries, are presently facing major economic and financial challenges, including large public debt and high unemployment rates.

The above suggests that the UN development system is once again at an inflection point in its history. While the UN development system should be in a position to make a vital contribution to closing the poverty, dignity and security gap, its ability to do so will depend on how Member States and the UN entities themselves respond to the emerging issues and global challenges.

Table 1

**UN operational activities for development
Evolution and selected milestones**

1945—UN system established based on a functional, rather than a federalist approach, whereby the relationship of specialized agencies with ECOSOC was defined through formal agreements, with new agencies created as needs arose;

1960s—Major growth in operational activities of UN system with establishment of many new entities, including WFP (1961), UNCTAD (1964), UNDP (1965, established to coordinate funding for technical assistance provided by other UN entities), and UNIDO (1967);

1969—“Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System (Jackson Report)” advocates for a strong UNDP in charge of a central management and accountability framework for the UN system;

1970s—Post of Director-General for Development and International Cooperation established in 1977 to address growing coordination deficit in UN development system. Post abolished in 1992;

1980s—Funding for operational activities for development becomes increasingly earmarked, and programme countries increasingly opt for national execution rather than direct execution by UN agencies;

1981—Post of UN Resident Coordinator established to address coordination deficit in the UN development system;

1990s—Centralized approach to funding through UNDP is gradually abandoned in early 1990s; major shift towards greater emphasis on programmatic cooperation and adoption of common approaches among UN entities;

1990s—The launch of a series of historic international conferences and summits on issues related to socio-economic development e.g. Children (1990), Education for All (1990), Sustainable Development (1992), Population and Development (1994), Advancement of Women (1995), Social Development (1995), Human Settlements (1996);

1995—UNDP transforms itself from a central fund to being primarily a substantive organization. Specialized agencies start mobilizing resources directly from donors, which contributes to rapid growth in non-core funding flows and fragmentation of UN operational activities for development;

1997—United Nations Development Group (UNDG) established with mandate to oversee functioning of UN development system. UNDAF and Common Country Assessments are also introduced, along with the post of Deputy Secretary-General and establishment of common UN houses, as means to promote enhanced programmatic coordination and coherence within the UN system;

2000s—A number of major international conferences and summit were convened in the early part of the new century (e.g. Millennium Summit, 2000; LDC Conference, 2001, Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002; Conferences on Financing for Development, 2002 and 2008; Summit on Information Society, 2003; World Summit, 2005; and Conference on World Food Security, 2008; MDG Summit, 2010; LDC Conference, 2011). The 2005 Millennium Summit stressed the need to strengthen management, field-level coordination and inter-agency coordination of UN operational activities;

2006—Secretary-General establishes High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence;

2007—Informal consultations of General Assembly on UN system-wide coherence start. These consultations were concluded in 2010 with the adoption of GA resolution 64/289; GA resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review is adopted;

2012—First-ever independent survey of programme country governments on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of UN operational activities for developments is conducted; GA conducts the first-ever quadrennial comprehensive policy review of UN operational activities for development.

3. Selected study questions

Below are selected questions to guide the analytical process:

1. Which emerging issues/global challenges are likely to significantly impact the future role of the UN development system in international cooperation for development?
2. What are the key drivers of change in (a) international development cooperation and (b) the UN development system?
3. How has the strategic positioning of the UN development system evolved in the past sixty years' vis-à-vis other state and non-state development actors? Which factors have made the UN development successful in positioning itself vis-à-vis the other development actors? Who are these actors and how are they redefining the landscape? Can the UN development system strengthen partnership with these actors?
4. Can the current funding system for UN operational activities for development characterized by heavy reliance on earmarked contributions be reconciled with the goals of policy coherence and strategic focus to address major development challenges?
5. How will the increasing number of emerging economies and their priorities impact the funding and objectives of UN operational activities for development in the future?
6. What kind of change in (a) strategic positioning, (b) operational effectiveness, (c) delivery of results and (d) accountability, is needed if the UN development system is to respond effectively to the emerging issues/ global challenges?
7. What is the role of the UN system in providing state-of-the-art development knowledge and acting as a broker or facilitator of North-South and South-South knowledge exchange, and how effective is the UN system in responding to this evolving role?
8. What are the most important shifts in the thematic areas, geographic focus, and modalities for delivery and what do they tell us about the changing role of the UN?
9. What are the UN development system's relative strengths in providing support to countries in transition from relief to development? How should UN's assistance evolve to better support those countries?
10. How can the normative and standard-setting role of the UN system be revitalized in a globalizing world? How to ensure that these norms are adhered to by the new actors in the area of development cooperation?
11. How is the growth in South-South and triangular cooperation and increase in the number of middle-income countries coupled with the expanding role of civil society and private sector

organizations and emerging economies likely to impact the future role of the UN development system in international cooperation for development? How can the UN development system leverage its comparative advantage in promoting South-South cooperation?

12. Is there need to rethink the governance of UN operational activities for development at both global and country level, e.g. when considering past, recent and likely changes in the funding architecture? Are such changes needed if the UN development system is to continue to experience satisfactory growth in resources flows?

4. Objective

The study is expected to provide a forward-looking analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing the UN development system in the evolving international development cooperation environment. The study is also expected to provide recommendations on how the UN development system could be strengthened in the next five-to-ten years in order to respond to the emerging issues and global challenges in the most effective manner.

5. Methodology

The preparation of this study will involve careful examination of earlier analysis and reform proposals on how to strengthen the role of the UN development system in international development cooperation architecture.

The study will also explore the use of analytical models developed by Michael Porter for strategy formulation.

Furthermore, the study will involve consultations with Member States and UN system colleagues and other stakeholders with interest in the long-term future of the UN development system.

Moreover, the study will utilize relevant findings of several other QCPR-related preparatory activities including the following:

1. A survey of programme countries on UN operational activities for development;
2. A financial/statistical analysis by DESA on the funding architecture of the UN development system, including concentration and fragmentation of operational activities for development at the country-level;
3. Desk review of documents in all QCPR-related areas;
4. Discussions on governance issues in the General Assembly and in Rio+20.

6. Key tasks

The study will entail the following tasks:

1. Prepare a brief inception note outlining the approach to the assignment;
2. Review relevant studies, analytical documentation and surveys on UN development operations;
3. Develop an analytical framework to advance understanding of how emerging issues and global challenges are likely to impact the relevance of the UN development system;
4. Consult with relevant experts within and outside the UN system on issues related to the study;
5. Participate in two multi-stakeholder round-table seminars to generate input and feedback on issues related to the study;
6. Finalize the report, which should include information on methodology and process;
7. Perform other tasks related to the development of this analytical study as requested by OESC.

7. Main deliverables

The consultant will be expected to produce the following deliverable:

1. Analytical report on emerging issues in UN development operations in a rapidly changing international development cooperation landscape.

8. Resources needed

9. Qualifications

The consultant is expected to possess the following qualifications:

- Excellent knowledge of UN development operations at the country, regional and global level;
- Strong analytical and drafting skills;
- Solid command and understanding of research methodologies;
- Advanced university degree in public administration, business administration, social sciences or related field.

10. Timeframe

The consultant is expected to commence work on 15 January 2012 and complete the assignment by 15 March 2012.

11. Performance success indicators

- A sound strategy, methodology and analytical framework developed for the study;
- The findings and recommendations of the study add significant value to analytical preparations for the 2012 QCPR of the GA.