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**Secretary-General's High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence
in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment**

Consultation on the Resident Coordinator System

Vienna, 15 May 2006

- Issues Paper -

BACKGROUND

The 2005 World Summit recognised that the United Nations system, because of its universality, mandate and legitimacy, should strengthen its contributions towards economic and social development by, inter alia, helping to generate political consensus and momentum around key development objectives, facilitating discussion and cooperation between development partners, enhancing mutual accountability, and supporting governments in their efforts to fulfil commitments made in international fora, including national strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. It was also recognised that institutional reforms would be necessary in order to enable the UN to fulfil this task more effectively in a variety of different contexts.

In order to enable the UN system to respond more effectively to the challenges of the new development environment, the Summit Outcome Document also recognised that UN presence at country level needed to be repositioned. More profound reform measures are needed to improve coherence of action in planning and programming processes, and strengthen management and oversight mechanisms. The responsibility to implement the reform package at country level rests primarily with the UN Country Teams. A fundamental review of the RC System is therefore a key element in the work of the Panel.

The aim of the present consultation is to identify the challenges faced in coordinating UN system presence, activities and operations at country level and to discuss ways in which the RC System can be strengthened, and operational structures be streamlined, to better respond to the needs of countries in this new context.

OBJECTIVES

- To enhance understanding among Panel Members of the role and functioning of the RC System at country level, including challenges and good practices;
- To exchange views and develop a shared understanding of the requirements for a more effective RC System and its implications for arrangements at the Headquarters and regional levels;
- To examine how the normative, standard setting and analytical functions of the UN system can be better linked with country-level operational activities;
- To develop options and recommendations for a strengthened RC System, which would be put forward for discussion at upcoming deliberations of the Panel.

PARTICIPANTS

- Members of the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence
- Government officials from donor and programme countries
- Resident Coordinators and UN Country Team members
- UN Staff from Headquarters;
- Members of Regional Directors Teams.

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Coordinating the UN support to national priorities and plans

- UN common country programming process (CCA/UNDAF and Joint Programming), with a focus on the role, responsibilities and authorities of the RC and the RC unit
- How have existing tools, developed in previous reform efforts, helped UN Country Teams to reduce duplication, and to better align their efforts with national priorities and development frameworks?
- What is the RC's role vis-à-vis individual agencies' programming at country level?

RC relationship with UN Country Team and non-resident agencies

- How to involve non-resident agencies in country level processes, to ensure that the UN's extensive knowledge base and policy expertise is optimized?
- How can RCs exercise leadership for the UN Country Team? What are the constraints?
- What is the RC's special role vis-à-vis national governments and other development partners?
- How does resource mobilization and funds allocation affect the role of the RC?
- What lessons can be learned from the Cape Verde Joint Office Model? What other models can be envisaged?

The Resident Coordinators – management selection, assessment and support

- How is the RC System managed and administered? How does this impact on the functioning of the system? What are the strengths and challenges of the current arrangement?
- RCs: What is their experience and how are they selected? Statistics on RCs (agency, gender, North/South balance)
- The RC's "multiple hats"; What support is available to enable RCs to discharge their responsibilities, and how are they prepared for their functions? How is the work of "RC units" funded?
- What are the oversight mechanisms to evaluate the performance of UN Country Teams, and how is the performance of RCs assessed?

The way forward

- What issues need to be addressed and support provided to ensure that the coordination of the UN System at country-level is more coherent, effective and efficient, including in areas such as advocacy, increased alignment with national policies, reduced transaction costs, which ultimately results in improved performance and greater impact at country level?
- What changes at the Headquarters and regional levels could support improvements in the working of the RC System at country level?
