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UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION
WITH COUNTRY-LEVEL PRACTITIONERS**

*Cairo, Egypt
20-21 June 2006*

BACKGROUND

The 2005 World Summit recognised that the United Nations system, because of its unique mandate, legitimacy and composition, could add value to the development process by, amongst other things, helping to generate political consensus and momentum around key objectives, acting as a broker in negotiations between development partners, enhancing mutual accountability, and supporting governments in the fulfilment of international commitments. It was also recognised that ambitious reforms would be necessary in order to enable the UN to fulfil this task effectively in a variety of different contexts. Most importantly, it was recognised that a repositioning of the UN system at country level, to enable it to respond more effectively to the challenges of the new development environment, would have to be accompanied by profound reforms of the coordination, planning, and management and oversight mechanisms. The responsibility to implement the ambitious reform package at country level rests with the UN Country Teams.

The aim of the present consultation is to identify the challenges faced at country level in the new aid environment and to propose ways in which the UN system could be reformed in order to be optimally equipped and positioned to respond to some of these challenges. The list of possible topics of discussion (see next page) takes into account issues that have been addressed in previous regional consultations, and which the panel would like to see addressed.

OBJECTIVES

- Enhanced understanding among Panel Members of the expected role of the UN at country level;
- Information on good practices as well as major challenges to UN's country level coherence;
- Enable panel members to integrate the views of practitioners into upcoming deliberations of the panel.

PARTICIPANTS

- Members of the SG's Panel on System-wide Coherence
- From select countries:
 - *Government officials in charge of planning and aid coordination*
 - *Resident Coordinators and UN Country Team members*
 - *Staff of bi- and multilateral donors*
- UN staff from regional offices

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

(to be addressed by country-level practitioners in three working groups on Day 1)

The UN's role at country level (*Group 1*)

- What is the current and potential value-added of UN Country Teams (or individual agencies), as compared to the rest of the development community?
 - What should the UN's role be with respect to IFIs? With respect to NGOs? Other stakeholders?
- Is there anything that makes the UN's role in your region different, compared to what has been said in previous consultations of the panel?
- How could the UN provide more effective support to national governments in the fulfillment of their global commitments (in areas such as the environment, gender etc.)?
- How should the UN support the preparation and implementation of sustainable national development strategies, particularly with a view to enhance national ownership and alignment?
- UN support to national planning processes (such as PRSPs), as well as new aid modalities (such as budget support and sector-wide approaches): does the UN have adequate expertise, capacity and credibility to fulfill its role in this environment?
- There has been a call for the UN to withdraw from implementation of projects and programmes under certain circumstances; what are the pro's and con's of such a suggestion (in different country contexts) and what would be the implications?

Towards *ONE* United Nations at country level

In most position papers and in previous consultations, it has been suggested to move towards “One UN” at country level, i.e. a UN with one programme, one budget etc. (the model is often referred to as “Three Ones” or “Four Ones”). It is important to develop a common understanding of the implications of such proposals, related opportunities and challenges, and the obstacles that would need to be overcome to make the “One UN” at country level happen. What elements should become “one”, and what would that mean in practical terms?

Participants are therefore encouraged to lay out what the different options of the “One UN” are, and share their views and recommendations with panel members. Discussions should address the country-level, but also look at implications for the agencies' regional

and Headquarters level, as well as implications for Member States (as members of agencies' governing bodies, programme countries, or the donor community). Preparations would be carried out by two working groups:

ONE UN – Policy and Programme Aspects (Group 2)

- **One Programme**
 - **One Budget** (also discussed by group 3 from a management point of view)
 - **One Leader** (also discussed by group 3)
 - **One ...**
- What lessons can be learned from the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process with regards to the development of a strategic UN programme?
 - How to make sure that the UN's programme is focused, building on complementarities between agencies, and prioritizing areas in which the UN has a comparative advantage?
 - How to make sure that funding and planning match? What is the role of the RC with regards to allocation of funds according to common priorities?
 - How to make sure that the UN programme draws efficiently upon the wealth of knowledge of specialized agencies (incl. those not present in the country)?
 - What would the impact of "One UN" be on the UN's capacity to address cross-cutting issues such as sustainable development, gender etc?
 - How to ensure accountability for results under one programme?

ONE UN - Management and Operational Aspects (Group 3)

- **One Budget**
 - **One Office / management / system of administrative services**
 - **One Leader / one Representative?**
 - **One Source of funding**
 - **One ...**
- What would be needed to have an effective leader of the UN at country level, with the necessary authority and corresponding accountability? What should be the relationship between such a leader and the different UN agencies?
 - What would be the implications for accountability and reporting structures?
 - How to ensure predictable funding of UN operations at country level, and reduce inter-agency competition for donor support?
 - How to get to a system of incentives to increase coherence of the UN at country level? What are the implications for country, regional and HQ level (incl. support functions)?

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