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UNITED NATIONS



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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**

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION  
WITH COUNTRY-LEVEL PRACTITIONERS**

*Bridgetown, Barbados  
July 2006*

## **BACKGROUND**

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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**

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- 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 from Latin America into upcoming deliberations of the panel.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

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- Members of the SG's Panel on UN 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*)**

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- 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?
- What are the specific challenges and roles for the UN in Small Island Developing States and Middle Income Countries?
- 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 (*see "food for thought" that will be handed out at the meeting*)?
- 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.)?

### **UN Support to national priorities and plans (*Group 2*)**

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- What lessons can be learned from the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process with regards to the development of a strategic UN programme?
- 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?
- 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 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 make sure that funding and planning match? What is the role of the RC with regards to allocation of funds according to common priorities?

### **UN Presence at country level – “One UN” (*Group 3*)**

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- How to reduce duplication of efforts at country level, building on current coordination efforts through UN Country Teams?
- 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?
- How to ensure predictable funding of UN operations at country level, and reduce inter-agency competition for donor support?
- What good practices are in place to harmonize administrative and operational work among UN agencies (e.g., common services, UN Houses, financial reporting etc.), and what are obstacles to further rationalization in this area?
- 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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