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United Nations System-wide Coherence: Governance

**Joint Statement by the UN General Assembly Co-Chairs
on System-wide Coherence**

**Concluding Statement
Delivered by**

H.E. Ambassador Paul Kavanagh

**Permanent Representative of Ireland
to the United Nations, New York**

at Informal Consultations in the General Assembly

Thursday, 17 April 2008

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of my Co-Chair, colleague and friend, Ambassador Augustine Mahiga - with whom I have been in touch during the afternoon - and on my own behalf I would thank the many delegations who have participated in today's open consultation on Governance in the context of System-wide Coherence.

As Egypt and others have stated, the issue of Governance is one of the most sensitive areas, because the proposals of the Panel were so far reaching. A number of member States have expressed the view that there should be increased coordination and collaboration involving the Bretton Woods Institutions and the UN development entities. Indeed, there is an existing consensus on the need for increased collaboration and coordination between the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions which was outlined in the TCPR Resolution of December last. Broader considerations have also been raised in this regard - going, it has to be said, in diverging directions. As delegations are aware, your Co-Chairs hope to meet with the leadership of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund at some stage in the coming weeks to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Member States have also voiced legitimate and pertinent concerns that any proposals for governance at the central level must avoid any kind of duplication and overlap which would add to complexity, incoherence and further fragmentation of the intergovernmental process. In this regard, we have heard many member States express caution in relation to the suggestion made in the Panel Report to establish a Sustainable Development Board and a Global Leaders Forum of ECOSOC. It will be necessary to reflect on these proposals in light of the already strengthened role of ECOSOC following the establishment of the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum.

Again, an appropriate balance would seem to be necessary to provide adequate intergovernmental oversight of development priorities and objectives while respecting the voluntary, nationally-led nature of the coherence process and the respective mandates of the Funds, Programmes and Agencies. Policy coherence has been underlined by a number of delegations this afternoon. This would seem to point

towards a continued strong role for ECOSOC as a forum for pulling together the full range of policy issues related to development. In addition the TCPR, in its existing or in a revised cycle, can clearly provide a basis for operational guidelines from the Assembly to the System.

Many member States underlined that the work that is going on at country level, work that is government-led and aligned with national priorities, must in no way be hindered by changes at central or headquarters level. We have heard this call many times at our consultations and we believe, also from what was said today, that it is of crucial importance. Any changes to the work at headquarters level should enhance the UN development system's ability to support the developing countries in implementing their national priorities and assuring greater effectiveness in the delivery of UN programmes. Any changes at headquarters level must also be flexible, so as to accord with the reality that 'No One Size Fits All'. We will need to ponder further how One Programmes approved in programme countries can be best disposed of at central level. We have heard ideas in this regard touching on both ECOSOC and the existing Boards.

Furthermore, it has also been emphasized that any changes at central level must not erode or damage the many and varied areas of expertise which the UN has developed and which are so central to its added value as a development partner. We all recognise that the role, functions and identity of the Specialised Agencies within the UN system are of great importance to those organizations, as well as to the broad membership. We look forward to discussing with their executive leadership the way in which those organisations are achieving the balance between safeguarding their own identity and capacities, while giving support to greater coherence and therefore greater effectiveness at country level as well as improving coordination at central level.

We have heard comments and questions in relation to the role of the Chief Executives Board (CEB). Specifically in relation to the harmonisation of business practices, we anticipate receiving, from the Secretary-General in mid-May, a full account of work which is ongoing under these auspices. The Co-Chairs take careful note of the need to be aware of, and respect, the competencies and mandates which exist in this area.

Harmonisation of Business Practices is, of course, a means to an end, and that end is to avoid unnecessary duplication or fragmentation and to improve support to national efforts to achieve a more coherent and a more effective development strategy.

We have heard today from a variety of member States that they wish to carry forward discussions relating to the recommendations of the High Level Panel Report on Gender. We have already indicated as Co-Chairs that we intend to hold open consultations on this subject in mid-May. We would hope that these discussions might focus in the first instance on the programmatic aspects of Gender; that is the activities being undertaken in the field including the gaps which these reveal in the support, either normative or operational, which is available at central level. This would be in keeping with our pragmatic approach, throughout these consultations. We will, as before, write to the membership in advance of these consultations in mid-May to suggest an appropriate orientation which may be of assistance to delegations in preparing themselves. It may be necessary to anticipate more than one consultation on Gender. At an appropriate moment we can already anticipate value in receiving elements for discussion from the Secretary General.

This morning we had a briefing session on the appropriate empowerment of Resident Coordinators and other country related governance issues. This afternoon we discussed, inter alia, how the intergovernmental process can be better attuned to supporting developing country governments in their coherence ambitions. These exchanges have given the Co-Chairs a sense of developments in the field and of views within the General Assembly on key issues that relate to governance. As indicated at the outset of today's consultations the Co-Chairs will seek to reflect developments on which we have been briefed and views heard from member States in their report for submission to the Assembly President after mid-June. It is obvious however that further intensive consultations with member States, in varying formats, would have to take place before our report is finalized and we have heard the views expressed once again today in that regard. Finally, I would like to express a note of appreciation for the helpful and constructive way in which delegations have approached the complex discussions this afternoon.

Thank you.