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12 May 2008

System-Wide Coherence

Excellency,

You will recall from our most recent consultations on 17 April that the President of the General Assembly had invited the Secretary-General to address Member States on developments within the Chief Executive Board relevant to the proposals of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence on the Harmonisation of Business Practices across the UN Funds and Programmes and Specialised Agencies. We are pleased to be able to confirm that the Secretary-General will make a statement on the morning of 16 May to the General Assembly on a number of issues in the course of which he will share information on developments within the Chief Executive Board in relation to the Harmonisation of Business Practices.

In addition to this opportunity to learn of developments within the Chief Executive Board, the Co-Chairs propose to arrange for a further information session which would provide more detail on the work which is being undertaken. We would anticipate that this information session will take place in early June and we will confirm the date in the near future.

It will also be recalled that the co-Chairs, in response to requests from the Member States intended to arrange open consultations on the questions raised by the proposals of the High-Level Panel in relation to Gender. We are pleased to advise that these consultations will take place in the afternoon of 16 May. As indicated at the conclusion of the consultations held on 17 April, we would hope in the first instance that these discussions might focus 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. Attached is the relevant extract from the concluding remarks on 17 April.



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By way of further reference for both of these occasions please find attached the relevant extract from the Secretary-General's Report on the recommendations of the High Level Panel, as well as extracts from the report of the consultations held in 2007, both with regard to the Harmonisation of Business Practices, and Gender.

Yours sincerely,

Ambassador Augustine Mahiga
Permanent Representative of the
United Republic of Tanzania
to the United Nations

Ambassador Paul Kavanagh
Permanent Representative of Ireland
to the United Nations

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.

Extract from Co-Chair's conclusions, System-Wide Coherence consultations, 17 April 2008

Extract from Secretary-General's report on the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence, 5 April 2007

14. Progress is already being made with regard to the Panel's recommendation that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) undertake a review of its functioning, in the light of experience gained since its establishment five years ago, with a view to improving its performance and accountability for system-wide coherence. At the session of the CEB held during the fourth quarter of 2006, executive heads unanimously welcomed the broad thrust of the Panel's recommendations and were united in their desire to improve coherence and coordination and enact the necessary system-wide reforms. The Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Juan Somavia, and the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Pascal Lamy, have been entrusted with the task of leading the CEB review, seeking the full engagement of all executive heads. The intention is for the first session of the CEB, which I will chair, in April 2007, to consider a preliminary set of proposals for action to strengthen the effectiveness and relevance of that body as a responsive and transparent high-level mechanism under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, geared to advancing the overall coherence and impact of the United Nations system.

Extracts from 2007 Co-Chair's Report on consultations on System-Wide Coherence

4) Gender

All Member States of the UN recognize the importance of gender equality as a crosscutting issue in all the main areas of work of the UN including peace and security, development, environment and humanitarian assistance. Member States also recognize the urgent need to bridge the gap between policy and implementation, to mainstream gender throughout the UN system, to have greater coherence across the board in all agencies dealing with gender issues, to avoid duplication of work and to strengthen operational activities. This issue has also received great attention by interested representatives of civil society, both concerning the normative and operational dimensions. It is clear that while some delegations support the HLP's recommendation to establish a new gender architecture and the proposal to establish a post of Under-Secretary General in this context, others to varying degrees and on the basis of both substantive and procedural reasoning, either do not support the creation of a new body or favor further discussions before any decision is made.

While there is clearly enthusiasm among some Member States for creating a new gender architecture, views expressed by others during the informal consultations illustrate the concerns that will need to be faced in moving forward. Based on the briefing delivered by the Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro and as further expanded in her concept paper 6, we recommend that the PGA organize further informal consultations during the 62nd session to allow for more thorough discussion among Member States of the HLP's recommendations with a view to taking concrete action.

6 For further details see for example the briefing given by DSG Migiro and the concept paper (<http://www.un.org/ga/president/61/follow-up/system-wide-coherence.shtml>).

8) Business practices

Through the consultations and the multiple contacts the co-Chairs had with representatives of the different UN entities which compose the UN system, we gained a better understanding of the process of increasing fragmentation that has characterized the UN system over the more than sixty years of its history. Under the strategic leadership of the CEB and on the basis of strong commitment by the principals of the UN entities involved, a great number of areas of work have been identified and concrete work in specific areas launched.

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It is our understanding that significant progress has already been achieved on system wide harmonization of business practices with a view to implementing some of the recommendations in the HLP report. In addition some of these recommendations have

been considered or are being considered by the General Assembly, 5th Committee and in the context of the TCPR. The CEB as well as the UN Secretariat and all other relevant stakeholders are currently implementing those decisions already adopted at the inter-governmental level, as well as those that do not require inter-governmental decisions. We look forward to their early completion and implementation. Relevant bodies should remain seized. We would suggest organizing during the next session of the GA, a further stock taking briefing by the CEB, most preferably after its 2007 fall session. The aim of such a briefing would be to assess progress made in the implementation of these recommendations..