

**Elements of the discussion on
Strengthening governance of operational activities for development of the United
Nations system for enhanced system-wide coherence**

March, 2010

Main topics and elements raised by delegations during informal consultations of Working Group 1 (effective participation and decision-making in governing bodies) and Working Group 2 (functional coherence in governance and Secretariat support services).

1. Strengthening of Bureaus:

a) Enhancing the participation of bureaus in the substantive preparations for meetings of governing bodies

The current legislative framework on the roles and responsibilities of the General Assembly (GA), ECOSOC, Executive Boards (EBs) of funds and programmes and governing bodies of specialized agencies in governance of operational activities for development is generally felt to be sound. However, there is need to enhance coherence between the three tiers of the governance system, e.g. through greater interaction between Bureaus of governing bodies; revitalization of the joint meeting of boards; and improvements in the working methods of Bureaus.

Taking into account the particular characteristics of each organization, the Bureaus of governing bodies could particularly consider improvements in the following areas:

- a. Monitoring of agenda-setting, bearing in mind the need to achieve balance between managerial and technical responsibilities, the need to provide strategic and policy guidance, and the accountability EBs for the implementation of system-wide policies. The development of annual work plans, including organization of intersessional meetings of Bureaus, as appropriate, could be encouraged.
- b. Reviewing the quality of documentation with particular emphasis on the clarity of analysis and rationale of proposed decision(s).
- c. Strengthening the information sharing role of Regional Groups. Members of the Bureau could be invited to ensure that relevant information is distributed to their constituency. Information meetings before and during sessions of the EB's could be encouraged, as appropriate. Regional Groups could also be encouraged to share good practices in this area.
- d. Encouraging Bureaus, with the support of the Secretariat of ECOSOC, to develop "terms of reference" for Bureau members.
- e. Inviting Bureaus to report on progress in improving their functioning in the respective annual report.

2. Improving preparation for meetings of governing bodies:

- a) Strengthening Secretariat support services: Bureaus** could be invited to undertake/commission a functional review of Secretariat support services as means to improve the functioning of governing bodies. Secretariats could also be encouraged to

identify focal points for responding to requests/queries of Member States for information. The strengthening of Secretariat support services, however, should not divert resources from operational activities for development in programme countries.

- b) **Quality of documentation:** Guidance notes on meetings should be developed for Board Members, observers, chairpersons and the Secretariat. Board documents should follow a prescribed format, including brief description of the main issues to be considered. Policy statements could be reproduced in a compendium.
- c) **Draft decisions:** Documentation for meetings of EBs could include, in an annex, the required draft decision(s), including an explanatory note on the rationale for the proposed course of action. Notwithstanding the right of Member States to present draft decision(s) at any point in time, including during sessions of the EBs, the general principle could be to circulate such draft decisions well ahead of board meetings (e.g. two weeks). The Bureaus could also assess on a case-by-case basis, the need for undertaking informal consultations prior to the sessions of the EBs.

3. Strengthening participation of Member States:

- a) **Coordination at the national level:** Member States could be invited to consider ways to enhance policy coordination at the national level on issues relating to UN operational activities for development, which could include establishing cross-sectoral teams with the participation of officials representing Member States in the EBs.
- b) **Capacity building for participating Member States: The Secretariats of ECOSOC and Executive Boards of funds and programmes in cooperation with the Secretariats of governing bodies of relevant specialized agencies, if possible with the support of UNITAR, could be requested to prepare “advanced training courses” or workshops on UN operational activities for development in support of the participation of Member States in governing bodies. In depth analysis of the dynamics, functions and responsibilities of EBs, ECOSOC and other governing bodies should be provided to participants in such training courses.**
- c) **Financing of experts based in capitals:** To enhance the participation of national policy-makers from programme countries in ECOSOC and EBs of funds and programmes, funds should be provided to cover travel and per diem costs, including for pre-EB and pre-ECOSOC sessions, as appropriate (i.e. intersession bureaus’ meetings). In this regard, EBs could be requested to consider the following options:
 - a. Funding:
 - i. Establishment of a specific Trust Fund or use of existing Trust Funds.
 - ii. Financing through the regular budgets of the respective organization.
 - b. Prioritization: Depending on the availability of resources, each entity could explore mechanisms for prioritizing the participation of experts based in capitals, such as:
 - i. General use for all programme countries.
 - ii. Prioritizing a specific category of countries.
 - iii. Other mechanisms, such as ensuring equal regional participation.

A review of existing and past practices (e.g. ECOSOC Functional Commissions, or financing by country-based agencies and other organizations) could be undertaken.

Other ways of involving experts based in capitals in policy deliberations in governing bodies, such as video conferences, could also be explored, as an alternative to financing travel costs.

A time bound decision could be taken in this regard (e.g. 2 years), with continuity subject to assessment of results and impact.

Several delegations expressed concerns regarding the overall financial implications of these proposals, as well as of other elements discussed during the consultations.

4. Information for decision-making:

- a) **Compilation of legislative mandates of the three tiers of governance of the UN development system:** The UN Secretariat could be requested to undertake a compilation of all relevant legislative mandates pertaining to governance of the UN development system with a view to facilitating coherent decision-making in the three tiers of the governance system.
- b) **Comparative analysis of calendars, agendas, program of work of government bodies of the UN System for development:** the Secretary General could be requested to review the functional coherence of calendars, including for agenda setting and programmes of work, of the governing bodies of UN operational activities for development, in order to avoid colliding meetings and enhance coherence and coordination.
- c) **Field visits of members of EBs to programme countries.** EBs could consider ways to increase opportunities for board members to participate in field visits to programme countries, without diverting resources from development programmes at the country-level.
- d) **Creation of a central repository of information on United Nations operational activities for development:** Take note of the progress in the creation of a central repository of information on operational activities for development (A/RES/63/311, OP 16); expected to be launched in 2012. Member States could request that an update on the advances in the establishment of this mechanism be presented at the substantive session of ECOSOC in 2011.
- e) **Modalities for submission and approval of common country programmes on a voluntary basis:** Funds, programmes and agencies should support programme country governments which voluntarily decide to adopt common country programming as means for operationalizing the support of the UN system to national development effort. The four options proposed and the 'additional scenarios' outlined in paragraphs 30 and 31 in the Secretary-General's report as well as others¹ tabled by Member States during the

¹ Option 5- With a view to establishing modalities for the submission and approval of Common Country Programmes on a voluntary basis, the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards convenes a single session to allow for the consideration of CCP's to be followed by the posting of a revised CCP on the websites of the four agencies for approval of the agency-specific portion of the revised CCP by the relevant governing bodies on a non-objection basis;

Option 6- With a view to establishing modalities for the submission and approval of Common Country Programmes on a voluntary basis, the Operational Segment of ECOSOC convenes a single session to allow for the consideration of CCP's following which a Chair's summary of the discussion will be submitted to the relevant governing bodies as input prior to their approval of the agency-specific portion of the CCP;

meetings of the two working groups, for reviewing and approving common country programmes, submitted on a voluntary basis, will be further examined in the consultations in Cluster 4 on “delivering-as-one”.

- f) **Survey on the problematic at the country level:** Funds and programmes could be requested to conduct periodically “customer satisfaction surveys” for country programmes in order to identify key challenges faced by programme country governments and other national partners in dealing with the UN development system, with a view to informing policy-making by governing bodies. The results of such surveys should be published and made available to Member States and other constituents.
 - g) **Regular briefings to Member States and other constituents:** Funds, programmes and specialized agencies could be requested to conduct regular briefings to Member States and other constituents on progress in implementing strategic priorities of the respective entities, with particular focus on issues of concern to programme countries, including the implementation of system-wide policies.
 - h) **Strengthening substantive dialogue with CEB:** The CEB could be requested to regularly brief Member States on current and planned work priorities so as to allow for enhanced substantive dialogue on important system-wide strategies including through holding interactive sessions following their strategic meetings. Some delegations expressed their interest in having exchanges that go beyond briefing Member States *ex post* on decisions taken by the CEB, while others emphasised that the CEB Members have their own Governance structures, and that additional mechanisms of exchange shouldn't be overly cumbersome. There seems to be a general understanding that no additional intergovernmental decision making mechanisms are needed.
 - i) **Strategic notes of Executive Directors:** Executive Directors of funds, programmes and specialized agencies could be requested to include in their respective annual report information on measures undertaken to implement system-wide policies as well as other strategic priorities of the respective organization.
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