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**Deputy Secretary-General's remarks on Day 2 of the
Economic and Social Council Operational Activities for
Development Segment**

New York, 22 May 2019

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you for the second day of the Operational Activities Segment.

In early May, I had the honour of briefing Member States informally on the repositioning of the development system and heard your preliminary perspectives on the regional dimension.

Today I look forward to another fruitful discussion on the way forward to reposition the regional assets of the UN development system to better service the 2030 Agenda.

Let me be clear from the outset: the regional review is a critical component of our overall efforts to reposition the United Nations development system.

There are two fundamental reasons:

First, stepping up the UN's regional response is key to helping countries achieve the 2030 Agenda.

After all, more than ever before, our greatest challenges transcend borders, such as climate, trade, health.

This makes regional and sub regional cooperation absolutely essential.

Second, we have an unmatched array of assets and policy capacity at the regional level, but we must do more to make sure those assets are optimally deployed.

Collectively, we need to step up, clarify our value added in each region – as a system – and ensure that regional assets are strengthened, made much more accessible and aimed toward supporting Member States achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Excellencies,

The Secretary-General has proposed five recommendations to ensure more effective collaboration among all UN entities at the regional level.

I am grateful to the leadership of regional commissions and other UN entities in regions for their engagement in this review, which helped identify these five areas where there is common ground to move forward.

First, the creation of a unified regional collaborative platform to integrate expertise scattered across UN entities in support of the SDGs.

The Platform will function as a unifying mechanism to harness regional assets and translate the outcomes of the Regional Sustainable Development Forums into concrete programmatic responses by regional entities.

The Platform will include a policy and an operational pillar, drawing on the respective mandates and strengths of regional economic and social commissions and other regional offices of the UN development system.

The Secretary-General is asking the Development Coordination Office to serve as a Secretariat of these Platforms, working collaboratively with regional economic commissions and other regional offices.

DCO would hope to provide independent leadership to support the work of the regional collaborative platforms, drawing systematically on the policy role of regional commissions and operational assets of other entities.

The Secretariat will be organized in a way that ensures we draw on existing structures, to boost region-specific understanding, take advantage of the full range of our regional assets, and provide for an inclusive and effective management of the regional collaborative platforms.

Second, the Secretary-General is offering ways to pool the policy expertise scattered across UN entities in the regions, for relevant policy support in countries, where needs that can be accessed easily and support deployed quickly for results.

This will include establishing ‘knowledge management hubs’, which will provide a portal for Member States and UN country teams to more easily access the broad menu of policy expertise available in each region.

Third, we will have greater transparency and better reporting of system-wide results at the regional level.

We believe that the proposals advanced by the Secretary-General are fully implementable and would provide much more visibility to what happens in the regions, and its linkages to our country offices.

Fourth, the Secretary-General has asked me to work with all UN development entities to identify areas where common back offices and co-location can enhance regional administrative functioning and leverage economies of scale.

The goal is not to seek efficiencies that take away or reduce capacities.

We want to maximize the impact of our investments and save resources that can be redeployed to priority sustainable development needs in each region.

Fifth, the Secretary-General will launch a region-by-region change management process to consolidate capacities around data, statistics and other analytical functions to reduce duplication and create synergies in our work.

It is essential that we proceed with a tailored approach in each region.

The regional review has looked at the specific characteristics of each region, as well as the commonalities across them.

The five areas of transformation that we have outlined would benefit all regions equally.

But implementation must be tailored and responsive to specific challenges and opportunities to deliver results for the 2030 Agenda.

With your feedback today and in the days that will follow, we intend to develop an individual implementation plan in each region to take forward the Secretary-General proposals.

Excellencies,

Previous reform efforts have often focused exclusively on the country level, without addressing structural impediments to a more effective regional response.

The diversity of our work across regions may have made the discussion elusive at times.

There are also natural anxieties and different perspectives across the membership that have sometimes made this effort especially challenging.

But I am convinced that the context is unique this time around.

Humanity's boldest agenda – the Sustainable Development Goals – cannot be achieved without a stronger regional response.

And we are now well advanced in a reform effort that has showed the world that the UN is both willing and ready to change.

Together, we have taken incredible steps to reposition the UN – and at incredible pace.

I know we can take this additional step forward, keeping the momentum and the ambition you have set for the system.

At the end of the day, we all share the same expectations for the regional level: more results for people and more value for money.

We have the assets, the leadership and the expertise to make it happen. We need political will at all levels to take it forward.

I welcome your feedback and count on your support to continue to deliver on the mandates entrusted to us by Member States.

I thank you.

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