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We are meeting, of course, at an important moment — the dawn of the Sustainable Development era. Never before have so many governments, so many groups, and so many people come together to demand action to create a better, more sustainable future for us all.

But the diplomatic success at the General Assembly last September was only a first step. Agreement must — and will — be matched by action. What matters now are results. Indeed, only that.

Results for the parents living in extreme poverty, trying to give their children the health and opportunity every child deserves. Results for the girl still denied a seat in the classroom — or the boy denied a vaccination. Results for the children trapped by conflict in Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Iraq, Yemen or elsewhere — or the children waiting for the next flood, tsunami or drought to strike their neighborhoods.
Because without reaching the children left behind by inequalities, poverty and humanitarian emergencies, we cannot, as a practical matter, reach the SDGs. Nor will we adequately prepare today’s generation of children to “sustain” development for future generations.

The new QCPR marks an important opportunity to summon capacities across the UN system to make progress on the SDGs and, most notably, to help those millions of children and their families being left behind in the march of progress.

To give poor children the health and education that can help them, as adults, compete on a more level playing field with the children of richer families — thus making their own lives better, and their societies richer in every sense of the word. And to do so together — across the UN family, and with partners in government, civil society and the private sector.

But we also meet at a time of increasing demands on our staff, as we contend with a world of spiraling emergencies — emergencies that continue to grow in scale and number. While our staff increases its efforts and donor resources for emergencies continue to increase, we are not able to keep up with the demands these emergencies place on us. Thus the need to be ever more efficient and work ever more closely with our partners, both within and beyond the UN system.
But as we build on the last QCPR, I urge that we avoid imposing on our already burdened staff new, expensive, burdensome bureaucratic layers. As we work to achieve results faster and more efficiently, we must not confuse co-ordination with conformity.

Like any good football team, we must all play our positions...pass the ball when necessary...and care more about a goal than who scored it...about results.

In short, if structural reform helps us do our jobs better, like the current QCPR, it should be supported. If it is “structural reform for the sake of structural reform,” rather than for results, it should not.

The new QCPR can help us meet three priorities in support of the 2030 Agenda: to achieve results for the most disadvantaged...to reflect our shared commitment to universality...and to support our ability to work together across sectors.

First, the new QCPR is an opportunity for the UN to help break the vicious, intergenerational cycle of inequality in which millions are trapped. When the poorest, most disadvantaged and hardest-to-reach children are denied education, health care, nutrition and protection, they cannot compete on a level playing field as richer children. Thus inequalities will only deepen.
Education is a good example. Today, 59 million children are out of school. Worse, an estimated 130 million children cannot read, write or do mathematics — despite reaching Grade 4. We’re condemning millions to a life of disadvantage, from the very start of their lives — simply because of where they live…who they are…their gender. Without education, without a fair start in life, they’ll face an unfair playing field as adults. These disadvantaged children will become disadvantaged adults.

Disaggregated data is essential to identifying and reaching the children denied services and care in every sector. UNICEF works closely with governments to conduct surveys to break down data by household wealth, geography, gender, ethnicity, language, age and many other key factors. Our MoRES system — Monitoring Results for Equity — is helping us monitor programmes and policies to identify and overcome barriers keeping the most marginalized children from the services they need. And we are working with our UN partners in countries like Malawi to jointly monitor results for equity. We will work to do more. With more partners.
Because there are also important opportunities to bring together the UN system as a whole on data collection — especially as we prepare to measure progress towards the SDGs. For example, UNICEF and WFP are co-leading the UN Data Innovation Lab initiative this year — a series of workshops to bring agencies together with academics and the private sector to share new ideas and innovations in data collection.

Second, the new QCPR is an opportunity to reflect our shared commitment to universality — supporting the most vulnerable people in every society. UNICEF’s universal mandate requires our support for the rights not only of the child denied schooling in Syria…but also the indigenous boy living on a reservation in Canada without access to clean water. Not only the girls forced into early marriage in Afghanistan…but also the children subject to abuse and bullying in this very city.

To support lives in every country, the UN must be ready to support governments in every country — especially as more developing countries make the journey from recipient to donor…from low-income countries, to middle or even high-income countries.
Our partnerships with governments continue to evolve. UNICEF is exploring a new policy to maintain our operational presence in upper-middle-income countries. This as an opportunity not only to continue the effective partnerships we’ve already built with countries over the decades…but to collaborate to find new ways of reaching every child in every society.

The 2016 QCPR can support our evolving partnerships with governments, and with civil society to help all governments — insofar as they wish it — to meet their commitments to the SDGs…and to their citizens. And also to help hold them, and all of us, to the promises made through Agenda 2030.

Third, the new QCPR can support integration across all of our efforts. Too often, our long-term development efforts, urgent humanitarian responses, and our efforts to combat climate change are kept apart — isolated in conceptual and operational boxes.

Separate funding appeals. Separate advocacy campaigns. Separate conferences. As if extreme poverty and inequalities were not linked directly to conflicts…as if climate change and disease, disasters and resource-scarcity all existed in different worlds.
In reality, when we educate a girl displaced by conflict, we’re not only helping her shape her mind…we’re helping her build her own future, and contribute to her family and society when she becomes an adult.

Education in the midst of humanitarian crisis is, inherently, also development. And education that includes good citizenship, as well as attention to disaster risks, is both peace-building and resilient development. For example, when our No Lost Generation campaign supports today’s children of Syria, it is also supporting the future of Syria — a future built by today’s children who, we hope, will one day reconcile and re-build.

In fact, our efforts to support today’s children in every context contribute to peace and security. Because ultimately, it will be today’s children who will decide the peace and security of tomorrow’s world.

Let me emphasize here an important, but not obvious, point: When our development and humanitarian efforts are seen as designed or conducted to serve political purposes, we will inevitably be greeted with suspicion if not opposition by some of those we seek to serve. Our ability to help build peace and security would thus, in practice, be undermined. So it’s vital that we pursue these efforts, always, in a non-political way — focusing on what really matters…results for children and their families.
And vital therefore that we not be tied together too tightly with the more political UN offices in the same organizational structures.

With this caveat, we must also continue to deepen our coherence. UN country teams are showing us what can be done. Results Groups are increasingly bringing together the respective expertise and programmatic strengths from across the system to achieve results.

From our work in Tanzania, where new HIV infections have been halved over the last five years, thanks to support for the government and co-ordination within the UN family. To Ethiopia, where our collaboration with UNHCR helped 140,000 South Sudanese women and children receive nutrition, medical care and protection. To the UN country team in Jordan, which is pulling together to address the unprecedented refugee crisis sparked by the Syrian conflict. Last year, UNICEF and UNHCR collaborated to reach over 15,000 Syrian refugee families in Jordan with cash grants. One parent described the cash grant as “…like I’ve been in a desert dying of thirst and someone offered me a cup of water.”

As these examples — and so many others — show, while we must improve our co-ordinating vehicles, there is no need to “reinvent their wheels.”
The current QCPR is already helping us simplify our programming to focus on common results…and aligning, for the first time, our global strategic plans. And the Standard Operating Procedures have shown that UN agencies can work more closely together, and with governments and other partners in practical ways, with light processes to achieve results.

But as we celebrate our successes, we must also address the practical challenges identified by our country offices. For example, several have pointed out the sometimes lengthy processes required to transfer funds. And others feel that a focus on procedures still tends, at times, to outweigh the necessary focus on results — at a time when Country Teams must focus their attention on supporting the SDG agenda.

So the co-ordination of our efforts continues to be a work in progress. The new QCPR is an opportunity to build on the progress we’re making together. And to do so at a crucial time in the history of the UN.

A new, strategic QCPR can help shape our programmes and our partnerships to reach these goals. With equity. With a commitment to reflect our universal mandate. And always with a dedication to co-ordination. In our processes. Through our work. And, always, for results. ***