

Enhanced Resident Coordinator Offices – Explanatory Note –

1. Current status

UN resident coordinators are supported in country by Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs). There are currently 130 RCOs, comprising an average of 4 staffers, 1.7 of whom are paid from the UNDG Cost Sharing and others through in-kind contributions, secondments by UN entities and voluntary contributions mobilized by resident coordinators. The headcount in RCOs varies significantly across countries, with no common standard of what constitutes a “core capacity”.

UNDP manages RCOs on behalf of the wider UN development system, as part of the Management and Accountability System (MAS) arrangements agreed by the UNDG in 2008. RCOs operate as a UNDP business unit in country and are operationally governed by the same policies and procedures that apply to any other part of UNDP.

The work of RCOs is organized around the 10 Core Coordination Functions agreed by the UNDG for the RC System. These functions reflect RCO’s core roles and responsibilities in support of resident coordinators’ and UNCTs’ efforts to bring together the UN system and its partners to collaborate for shared results. Currently, these 10 Core Coordination Functions are as follows:

- 1) Strategic analysis and planning
- 2) Oversight of the UN country programming cycle
- 3) Representation of and support of UN Secretariat and UN agencies/NRAs
- 4) Support to national coordination systems and processes
- 5) Development and management of shared operational support services
- 6) Crisis management preparedness and response
- 7) External communication and advocacy
- 8) Human Rights and Development
- 9) Joint Resource mobilization and fund management
- 10) General UNCT oversight and coordination

RCO activities are financed through a mix of sources. The main sources of funding are UNDP’s backbone support to the RC System and the UNDG cost sharing funding. In addition, resident coordinators and UNCTs are able to mobilize additional resources to complement these funds. They do so globally through support from UN entities providing secondments and advisory capacity, or through local resource mobilization efforts with UNCT members, development partners or host governments. However, these additional resources mobilized locally are location-specific and not available to all RCOs.

2. SG’s proposals for a strengthened coordination function at country level

At the heart of the Secretary-General’s vision for a repositioned UNDS that effectively delivers on the 2030 Agenda is a push for a reinvigorated RC System with a UN resident coordinator that is impartial, independent and empowered in driving the UN’s SDG response in country. The Secretary General’s December 2017 report recognizes that this proposition will have to be backed by strengthened RCOs. As stated in the report:

“RCOs will need to be adequately staffed to ensure sufficient substantive capacities to lead UNCTs. Specific requirements will vary depending on needs and contexts. A review against the 2030 Agenda and based on inputs by current resident coordinators suggests the need for a minimum capacity of five substantive staff members in each RCO. This would include experts in coordination and strategic planning, economics, tailored policy support, results monitoring and evaluation, and strategic partnerships. The mix of international/national staff would be defined according to each country context, with a preference for national staff whenever possible.” (paragraph 65, page 17).

To augment this minimum core capacity, the Secretary-General proposes establishing an integrated communication structure in each country, by co-locating and merging country-level UN Information Centres (UNICs) with RCOs.

The report also sees RCOs hosting other system-wide capacities through the secondment of staff from UN entities, based on UNCT needs to deliver more integrated support to the 2030 Agenda. This could include for example policy expertise in specific sectors required to achieve UNDAF objectives.

Finally, the report envisions RCOs serving as the country-level hubs for system-wide partnership building and support to host governments to mobilize the means of implementation needed to achieve the SDGs. To this end, they would serve as a one-stop shop to facilitate UN partnerships, including with IFIs, businesses, civil society and other stakeholders. In doing so, RCOs would draw on the wide-array of networks by individual UNCT members and connect partners with relevant UNCT members, according to mandates and activity areas. A review of the UN Global Compact and its country presence is also ongoing to ensure that these critical private sector platforms can be better leveraged by RCOs as UNCTs step up their support to national partnership efforts.

To meet this ambition of a strengthened RCO that is able to effectively support an impartial, independent and empowered resident coordinator, the Secretary General’s December report proposes dedicating a portion of the \$255 million that is being requested for the new RC System to recruit one additional staff position per RCO – on average – hence ensuring a standard basic capacity of five substantive RCO Professionals per country

3. Implications of SG’s proposals for a strengthened RCO

Implementing the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General for a strengthened coordination function at the country level will require action in the following areas:

✓ **Enhanced RCO coordination functions and capacities**

The new roles given to resident coordinators in driving the UN’s country level delivery on the 2030 Agenda will require stepped up coordination support functions in areas such as strategic planning, economics, tailored policy support, results monitoring and evaluation, and strategic partnerships, matched by enhanced country-level capacities in these areas, capacities which would be located in RCOs. These additional staff capacities have been costed in the Secretary General’s proposal at \$65 million, that would be spent at country level for enhanced RCOs, and would be hired through the usual recruitment channels, following UN rules and regulations for staff recruitments.

✓ **Secondment and hosting arrangements**

RCO secondment and hosting arrangements with entities of the UN development system are viable options to full-fledged physical presence to ensure availability of relevant normative expertise required for UNDAF implementation. Decisions on how these arrangements are governed and managed will be

made within an RCO setting and signed off by the undg. Human Rights, Peace and Development and Gender Advisors will continue to be deployed according to existing mechanisms and will ensure the additional capacities required in RC Offices that are country-context specific and in line with UNDAF agreed objectives.

✓ **Coordination funds**

In addition to the \$255 million request from the Secretary General to Member States for the RC System, an amount which covers for staff positions, facilities and services costs, RCOs will require funds for general operating expenditures to fully perform the coordination functions expected from them. These funds - amounting to a total of \$35 million – are reflected in the Secretary General’s proposal to establish a Coordination Fund, referred to in the report as a discretionary integration fund. Aimed at enabling better coordination and incentivizing collaboration, these resources would focus on carrying out shared data and monitoring exercises, system-wide publications and events, and designing and evaluating UNDAFs.

Funding for this Coordination Fund would come from voluntary contributions or undg cost-shared resources, with sufficient flexibility in how these funds are managed in response to coordination and integration needs arising in UNCTs at the country level.

✓ **Integrating UNICs into RCOs**

The UN Department for Public Information (DPI) currently has 59 operational UN Information Centres (UNICs) covering 136 countries with 270 staff. Their contribution is often under-utilized and separate from UNCTs and they lack an adequate operating budget. undg communications officers are also few, approximately 55 world-wide. Merging UNICs with country level communication within RCOs, will create efficiencies, while also providing resident coordinators and UNCTs country level communications with the needed collective UN expertise behind this key function that is essential to support Agenda 2030 communications in country.