

Summary of Key UNDG Proposals for a More Strategic and Dynamic QCPR Policy Response to an Ambitious and Transformative 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious agenda for change. It is transformative, universal, rights-based and integrated, and its implementation calls for a similarly transformative and truly collective engagement by all stakeholders – governments, parliaments, the scientific and academic community, civil society, the private sector, the international community as well as the UN system.

Supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a strategic QCPR that both empowers and repositions the UN development system (UNDS) to maximize its impact, especially at the country level. The UNDG puts forward the following proposals in this spirit.

I. UNDG Proposals Relating to UNDS Functions – What Should the UNDS do?

Building on the recently adopted CEB Common Principles, the 2030 Agenda requires the UN Development System (UNDS) to:

Diversity

- Harness its unique diversity and maximize the different types of sustainable development knowledge, experience and thematic capacity present within different UN entities including in the context of preventing and resolving crises, sustaining peace and building resilience.

Human Rights-based and People-Centred

- Pursue a strong human rights-based and people-centered focus so as to truly “leave no one behind” and focus on the most vulnerable and excluded people in society.

Normative

- Place stronger focus on the UN’s unique normative and standard setting role including by drawing on the long standing experience of Specialized Agencies.

Universality

- Address the universal nature of Agenda 2030 by providing support tailored to specific country needs and covering developed and developing countries.

Functions of the UNDS

The functions of the UNDS must be aligned to the transformative, rights based, universal and inter-linked 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Results must remain the driving force in support to national governments and stakeholders, drawing on the diversity, normative standards and comparative advantages of the UNDS. Going forward, the UNDS will need to concentrate its efforts on those functions where the UNDS can add most value, building on the collective strengths it has developed over the last 70 years, including:

- providing integrated normative support to establish, implement, monitor and report on norms and standards;
- providing integrated evidence-based policy advice including ‘thought leadership’ and analysis, often working across governments and societies on critical cross-cutting issues;
- assisting in comprehensive data collection and root cause analysis and providing support to SDG reporting in both developed and developing countries, as requested;
- maximizing the UN system’s convening role by bringing together stakeholders from across different constituencies;

- leveraging partnerships and resources for the SDGs; and
- delivering critical capacity development support at national and subnational level and providing effective service delivery and operational support, particularly in humanitarian crises and least developed/lower income countries.

II. UNDG Proposals Relating to UNDS Form - How Will the UNDS Pursue These Functions jointly?

As form must follow function, the UNDS is committed to deliver together on the above functions through more integrated and interconnected approaches as summarized by the following proposals:

Integrated Planning and Analysis across the UN Charter Pillars

The complexities inherent in the SDG agenda require integrated planning across the humanitarian, peacebuilding, human rights and development pillars.

- The UNDG proposes to replace the current UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) with UN Sustainable Development Frameworks (UNSDF), to capture the core content and context of Agenda 2030. Based on the principle of moving towards ‘One Country, One UN Framework’ the UN’s work in development, humanitarian, human rights, conflict prevention and peace building will share, to the extent possible, root cause analysis, early warning, risk assessment and management, and results monitoring.
- UNSDFs will be aligned to national SDG frameworks/national Sustainable Development Plans, support national efforts to fulfil treaty obligations, and be endorsed and monitored at country level by National Steering Committees. UNSDFs will fully leverage the expertise of non-resident agencies with related accountabilities clearly defined. UNSDFs will maintain flexibility, allowing for rapid response to crises and humanitarian action. Existing planning toolkits for integrated missions will be drawn upon during the planning stage.
- The current Common Country Assessment (CCA) methodology will be augmented to an enhanced “CCA Plus” methodology, which also includes the perspectives of the Humanitarian Country Team, and includes human rights, political, environmental, inequality and vulnerability analysis, as well as overall and sector specific assessments for operational planning in case of sudden onset of disasters.

Leaving No One Behind - Building a System-wide Data Strategy

UNDS will harness the potential of the ‘data revolution’, as a complement to traditional data collection, to better identify and address the needs of those left behind, and to effectively monitor SDG implementation and provide more evidence-based policy advice.

- The UNDG proposes to position the UNDS at the forefront of people-driven and disaggregated data, providing access to worldwide data to, and by, all populations, including vulnerable groups, refugees and displaced persons, and covering all geographic locations.
- To this effect, the UNDG intends to develop a system-wide strategy and implementation framework for collectively using technology for real-time monitoring, joint programming and enhanced accountability, including how best to develop national ‘data related’ capacities. Such a strategy will build on the best existing data tools, will develop new instruments and data sources and ensure the full engagement of UN and non-UN actors.

Transformative Empowered Leadership

Strong and visionary leadership and enhanced national ownership will be vital in the 2030 era.

- Both the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and the UN Country Team (UNCT) need to be empowered to fully carry out their respective functions and responsibilities per their mandated roles. The RC, exercising impartial and inclusive team leadership, should be able to leverage the expertise of all resident and non-resident agencies to contribute to the UN system's shared results, to support effective UNSDF implementation, and to be resourced with adequate capacities and sustainable funding.
- Levels of delegated authority to field representatives should be enhanced where appropriate to allow for effective and collective UNCT strategic positioning vis-à-vis national needs and priorities; Heads of Agency to lead UNCT results groups to drive implementation, monitoring and reporting of shared UN system results.
- Priority will need to be given to developing transformative UN leaders at all levels who can handle the increasing complexity of an integrated agenda, can work effectively "across the Charter" and can strongly promote the norms, standards, and values the United Nations stands for. This requires a leadership system and oversight that is grounded in field-based realities, and is able to provide differentiated but well-coordinated leadership across development, human rights, peace and humanitarian responses in complex country situations.
- The selection process for UN Resident Coordinators must reflect the highest performance and ethical standards and continue to focus on ensuring gender, regional and agency diversity. The mutual accountability framework of the UN Resident Coordinator system, including the functional firewall, needs to be fully implemented.

Modern, Efficient, Joined-Up Operations

The SDGs also demand closer operational integration, resulting in more efficient and cost effective UN system support. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for UN Country Teams already provide a clear framework for harmonizing business practices across UN entities in the spirit of 'Operating as One'.

- The UNDG, in collaboration with the HLCM, intends to drive further harmonization and simplification of business models through the system-wide dissemination of best practice, mutual recognition of each entity's best business practices and leveraging access to Agencies' institutional infrastructure through continuing adoption of compatible conceptual, contractual and procedural frameworks in different functions (e.g. a common Forex platform, joint global and local banking contracts, common HR recruitment framework, legal and audit etc.).
- Existing risk management controls that prevent or limit effective service delivery, by curtailing UN entities from accessing each other's institutional infrastructure and information, should be further harmonized, where feasible.

Robust, Coherent and Innovative Financing

For the UNDS to most effectively support the 2030 Agenda, predictable, sustainable, flexible and multi-year funding is a prerequisite.

- Globally, priority will be placed on moving towards sustainable, predictable multi-year funding models where a broad range of partners co-invest in agencies' Strategic Plans, fully aligned with the SDG targets relevant for each Agency.
- At the country level, UNCTs need to shift from a funding strategy to an integrated financing strategy which identifies all SDG-related financial needs to be supported by the UNDS and

identifies appropriate financial instruments. Such a shift will require not only behaviour change but the development of new staff skills and capacities, including in partnership development, as well as an enhanced understanding of innovative sources of financing.

- To ensure more sustainable funding, agency core funds, assessed funding or negotiated pledges will need to be raised to a level where the UNDS can effectively deliver the core normative and integrated operational functions demanded at country level, including the RC system, policy support, capacity development, and the UN's knowledge, leveraging and convening roles.
- More emphasis also needs to be placed on pooled funding at global, regional, country and thematic levels to help complement agency funding and help incentivize integrated programmatic approaches; new types of funding instruments will need to be embraced.

Joint Results Reporting and Highest Standards of Transparency and Public Accountability

Current reporting obligations divert time and finite capacities from a focus on results and better ways to deal with reporting obligations will need to be found.

- The UNDG proposes that a common donor/UN template be introduced and used for results reporting to all donors contributing to UN agencies for SDG implementation. Such a common UNCT donor results report would replace individual reports to donors and would be supported by an annex on agency results and an online real-time information system.
- All UNDG entities commit to aligning with IATI standards and to reaching the highest international standards of transparency of data and information shared in the public domain underpinned by joint and system-wide analytics, monitoring and assessments. Aligning with IATI standards will not only enhance transparency around the spending of entrusted financial resources but also create more public accountability for the work of UN entities.

Maximizing Headquarters, Regional and Country Synergies

Delivering the 2030 Agenda will require much closer coordination, collaboration and programmatic integration between headquarters, regional and country levels.

- At headquarters level, the UNDG HQ Plan of Action, which outlines the measures needed to remove bottlenecks in rolling-out the Standard Operation Procedures (SoPs) and which were identified by the UNDG in collaboration with the HLCM, will be fully implemented.
- At regional level, priority will be placed on building on the agreed division of responsibilities between Regional Commissions, Regional UNDG Teams and UNCTs with a view to maximizing synergies between regional and country level efforts by the UNDS regarding support to implementation of the SDGs.
- To create more coherence among UN entities and ease the monitoring of SDG implementation, the UNDG proposes to align and coordinate the different configurations of 'regions' that currently exist across different UN entities. Political, financial and practical constraints will be taken into careful consideration in doing so.

Governance Arrangements

The SDGs and the 2030 agenda at its core carries a people-centred and partnerships-based approach which also needs to be reflected in UN entities' governance structures.

- The UNDG proposes that UN entities develop more inclusive governance models and create more space for the participation of non-UN actors in UN entity planning and action. Recognizing that no one-size fits all, existing good practices within the UNDS need to be built upon.

Partnership Arrangements

In supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda, dynamic partnership approaches will be fundamental to support delivery of the SDGs.

- The UNDG proposes that shared standards and criteria for partnership are developed to guide UN entities' multi-stakeholder partnerships mechanisms. Such should be based on relevant norms and principles, the review and lessons from existing global partnership platforms, and best practice on accountability and legal frameworks, transparency and managing for results.
- New partnership instruments will be explored that fully engage and mobilize the private sector, philanthropy and civil society, adhering to the UN's core values, the rule of law and using best practice and instruments from across each entity's legal and partnership arrangements. The strategic partnership frameworks with the World Bank and the EU are to be reviewed and streamlined to enable joint funding approaches.

Coherence between UNDS Strategic Plans and QCPR as a Strategic Framework

The QCPR is an opportunity to set out the strategic direction and define the role the UNDS can play in the SDG era.

- The UNDG thus proposes the QCPR be transformed into a high-level system-wide strategic framework for the UNDS as a whole focusing on outcomes rather than processes and systems. Strategic and operational sections of the resolution should be integrated.
- To facilitate system-wide coherence and transparency, all UNDG member entities commit to regular reporting to their governing bodies on their implementation of the QCPR, according to their respective formats.