

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**Opening remarks**

**by H.E. Alejandro Palma Cerna, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council**

**ECOSOC dialogue on  
the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system in the context  
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Workshop 7: *Interlinkages*  
ECOSOC Chamber  
13 June 2016**

Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to Workshop 7 of the ECOSOC Dialogue. The focus of this workshop is on the *interlinkages* between functions, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements, capacity and impact, and partnership approaches in the UN development system.

This workshop is an important milestone in the ECOSOC Dialogue as for the first time Member States have an opportunity to discuss interlinkages and alignment among the six focus areas mandated for analysis during the process.

At the outset of this workshop, I believe it is important to establish a common understanding in relation to the concepts of '*interlinkages*' and '*alignment*' when referring to the six ECOSOC Dialogue areas. The principle of alignment is being used to highlight the importance of recognizing functions as the critical driver by which to align funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements, capacity and impact and partnership approaches in the UN development system at all levels. The concept of interlinkages, on the other hand, is used in reference to the interconnections between these six areas.

If Member States agree that the work of the UN development system as a whole should be characterized by clear interlinkages and effective alignment among the six ECOSOC Dialogue areas, the questions that arise are how this objective can be achieved, and what would be the enabling factors that would make this possible.

For example, how do we ensure that the UN development system functions as one coherent whole that embodies the principle of "cohesion in diversity" put forward by the Independent Team of Advisors? This will require strengthening the horizontal leadership

and management capacities of the system, while, at the same time, enabling the value-added of the areas of specialization of individual entities. A well-managed UN development system would therefore need a clear decision-making authority, and the mechanisms and instruments to maximize the benefits of individual entity specialization within an effectively integrated system-wide action.

The first question we need to address this morning is therefore what system-wide capacities are required if the UN development system is to be able to shift seamlessly between individually specialized action towards integrated action through effective interlinkages and alignment among the six ECOSOC Dialogue areas?

The Independent Team of Advisers has put forward a number of ideas to strengthen the ability of the UN development system to achieve exactly that.

This includes the introduction of a *Global Strategic Framework* to harness system-wide interlinkages in knowledge development, policy analysis, norm-setting and operational functions of the UN development system, and enabling strengthened management, monitoring and reporting on results and on the allocation of institutional, human and financial resources. We would also welcome additional proposals that would serve the same objectives, to ensure that the Organization will effectively respond to the integration requirements of the 2030 Agenda

Dear colleagues,

The ITA paper also recognizes the need to significantly strengthen system-wide governance capacity. The team proposes to address existing deficits by establishing a Sustainable Development Board through the gradual merging of some existing agency-specific governing bodies, based on a clear roadmap. This Sustainable Development Board would also review and approve the Global Strategic Framework and administer a pooled fund to finance the UN resident coordinator system.

Some questions that we may wish to consider in that regard, beyond the benefits of simplifying the current governance system, are: how to ensure that such a Sustainable Development Board would be able to provide both agency-specific governance for those entities reporting to it as well as system-wide governance for the UN development system as a whole? Would the Sustainable Development need to become a fulltime governing body in the long run? Without any doubt these and other questions must have already crossed your minds.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would also like to draw your attention to ITA's analysis regarding internal linkages and external linkages. I would like to highlight three key messages that I have inferred from this analysis.

First, the UNDS cannot remain UN-centric any more. It has to exploit the potential of external linkages to its fullest.

Second, interlinkages across the three pillars require greater attention, if the system is to support stable and prosperous societies.

Thirdly, these interlinkages also reinforce ITA's message that the solutions proposed should be seen as one package. It is a single undertaking -- otherwise, the defined interlinkages will be undermined.

Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

ITA also proposes the designation of the current post of Deputy Secretary-General as *Deputy Secretary General for Sustainable Development*, with the responsibility for the leadership and management of the UN resident coordinator system; preparation of the Global Strategic Framework and budget; organization of negotiated pledging processes; and setting criteria for UN field presence, the UNDAF process and common services, among others.

At the heart of this proposal is one core critical question: can there be a system that delivers well integrated and coordinated results in a manner that minimizes duplication and competition without one official holding the ultimate responsibility with the corollary authority to lead and manage this function?

Almost every report of high-level panels and expert groups on reform of the UN development system in the past 40 years has called for strengthening of such a function at the central level, yet none has been as compelling as the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The pursuit of effective alignment and interlinkages across the six ECOSOC Dialogue areas will require some rethinking of the architecture, organizational and business models of the UN development system at global, regional and country levels.

Through the ongoing ECOSOC Dialogue process and the upcoming QCPR negotiations, we Member States, as governors of the system, have a critical duty and responsibility to discuss in detail how can this be most effectively achieved to maximize results on the ground.

I am confident that our deliberations will be conducted in the same constructive and collegial spirit as all the earlier ECOSOC Dialogue workshops and meetings, and I thank you for that.

Let me now first give the floor to the ITA co-chairs, Dr. Klaus Toepfer and Ambassador Juan Somavia to set the stage for our deliberations this morning.

Dr. Toepfer, you have the floor.