

UNITED NATIONS



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Statement by  
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TO THE ECOSOC COORDINATION SEGMENT  
Geneva, 13 July 2009

*Introduction of the Report of the Secretary-General to the  
2009 coordination segment on the theme:*

*“The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed goals and  
commitments in regard to sustainable development”*

Mr. Vice President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure of introducing the report of the Secretary-General (E/2009/56) on the theme of the 2009 coordination segment.

The report follows up on the 2008 Ministerial Declaration, “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development”, and sets out the role that the UN system can play in this regard.

Over the last two decades, considerable efforts have been made in implementing the global consensus on sustainable development, namely, toward a framework that balances and integrates economic, social and environmental objectives into national development strategies. This commitment is laid out in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Action. While progress has been achieved in several areas, significant challenges remain.

The recent series of crises have further underlined the need for an integrated strategy for reconciling multiple objectives with different time horizons. This provides an opportunity to re-examine past approaches from the perspective of sustainable development.

A clear message from the 2008 Ministerial Declaration is that a renewed, urgent and concerted international action – within a sustainable development framework – is needed to overcome current challenges.

Over the past two decades, the United Nations has consistently advanced sustainable development as its core framework. I would like to mention some of the recent steps taken by the UN system in promoting this approach.

The Commission for Sustainable Development has taken decisions on integrated policies in several key thematic areas—water, energy, habitats, agriculture, rural development, land, drought, and desertification. This year, it will start another two-year cycle, which includes waste, chemicals, mining, transportation, and sustainable consumption and production. These decisions, in turn, have led to follow-up mechanisms for monitoring of actions and outcomes. These include national information and monitoring reports, as well as coordination of actions of various UN Agencies.

On water resources, for example, the UN system has made considerable efforts to help countries in implementing a more integrated approach to development and management. In 2003, UN-Water was launched to coordinate all UN system activities in this area. This initiative has led to a positive spin-off effect on the coordination between local government agencies as well as between donors on funding and investment decisions.

UN system efforts have been critical in promoting sustainable agricultural and rural development models and practices that reconcile the objectives of agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods, sustainable management of natural resources, including forests, and food security. The UN system is increasingly embracing a multi-disciplinary approach to rural and agricultural development, which is now supported by a broad range of UN system activities. Such an approach is also likely to be more effective in responding to the risks of climate change and other threats, which affect a broad range of policy areas.

On energy, UN-Energy was launched in 2004 to coordinate the major initiatives undertaken by UN agencies in three areas: energy access, that is, access to modern energy services; renewable energy; and energy efficiency. This is a step towards a more coherent and integrated approach to energy, based on a sustainable development framework.

The recent initiatives by the Secretary-General and other UN efforts have contributed in promoting a more holistic approach to climate change – as an issue combining both environment and development. This has facilitated the involvement of a wide range of sectors, from finance to energy, transport, agriculture, forests and health. The recent CEB initiative on climate change aims to translate this approach into an action-oriented system-wide plan.

The integration of climate change responses into respective strategies has enabled countries to harness the co-benefits of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures for other sustainable development objectives. It has also helped to highlight the climate benefits of measures aimed, for example, at increasing energy security, ensuring sustainable forest management, implementing integrated water resource management, and strengthening disaster risk management.

However, despite progress in all these areas, much remains to be done – both in achieving the targets and in integrating the efforts of UN agencies, other donors and financial institutions, and national governments. Also, progress in mainstreaming the different programs into national sustainable development strategies is still modest. The system needs to develop greater institutional and policy coherence to overcome traditional sector-based approaches.

Finally, work is beginning only now to use the sustainable development framework as a means of providing more effective responses to the emerging challenges.

The report puts forward a number of recommendations to strengthen the UN system approach for promoting sustainable development. Broadly speaking, the report recommends that the sustainable development framework be mainstreamed in all UN system activities, including in such areas as urbanization, employment, social protection, access to basic social services and the empowerment of women. It also recommends that existing UN development assistance strategies designed to support national development efforts should take a sustainable development approach. This will help translate the sustainable development framework and approach into comprehensive and integrated UN system programmes and operations.

I trust that these recommendations will help Member States in providing further guidance to the UN system organizations in promoting the goal of sustainable development.

Thank you.

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