ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the post-2015 development agenda

Background Note

Workshop 1 - Functions

Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination
Department for Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations

13 April 2015

1.   Introduction

In ECOSOC resolution 2014/14, the Council decided to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system[1] in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, including the interlinkages between alignment of functions, capacity and impact, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements and partnership approaches. The ECOSOC Dialogue process will consist of both formal and informal sessions over an 18-month period, with the outcome of these deliberations serving as key input to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the General Assembly of operational activities of the UN system in 2016.

The primary objective of this background note is to examine the evolving nature of the functions of the UN development system as a whole, as well as the likely implications of the post-2015 development agenda and other major drivers of change thereon. The note also aims to add value to the ECOSOC Dialogue process by undertaking an initial analysis (see Table 1) of the interlinkages between the alignment of functions and the five other areas, with particular focus on their coherence and consistency. It is expected that these interlinkages will be further explored in subsequent papers on these issues prepared for the ECOSOC Dialogue.

'Functions' are defined as the specific tasks, responsibilities, actions and activities undertaken by the UN development system, including at the global, regional and country level, and in accordance with system-wide and agency mandates – in other words, "what the UN development system does". In this paper, the term 'functions' is used to describe the totality of the contribution of UN development system to development efforts. Mandates are defined as the instructions issued to the UN development system and or/specific agencies by Member States and/or governing bodies that authorize the responsibilities and actions taken. The entities that compose the UN development system are shown in Box 1.

2.   Responding to change: continuous evolution of functions

Since the early days, the functions of the UN development system have undergone several transformations in response to continuously evolving mandates, agency-specific and system-wide reforms, as well as major drivers of change in the broader development environment.

---

[1]   The term 'UN development system' has appeared regularly in General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions since 1995, but has never been formally defined at the intergovernmental level.[1] Member States have instead relied on a definition developed in the context of the annual reporting of the Secretary-General, where the term 'UN development system' is considered to include the 34 UN entities that receive contributions for operational activities for development.

'Operational activities for development' of the United Nations system are activities that UN entities carry out with the promotion of development as the primary objective. These activities cover both longer-term development-related activities as well as those with a shorter-term humanitarian assistance focus. Operational activities include a portion of the assessed budgets of specialized agencies. The specialized agencies, in consultation with the OECD/DAC, have adopted coefficients to measure the share of assessed contributions considered to be for operational activities for development.[1] In the case of some specialized agencies, these coefficients are significant, e.g. with regard to FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNIDO and WHO. These coefficients are as follows: FAO: 51 per cent; IAEA: 33 per cent; ICAO: 0 per cent; ILO: 60 per cent; IMO: 0 per cent; ITU: 18 per cent; UNESCO: 60 per cent; UNIDO: 100 per cent; UNWTO: 0 per cent; UPU: 16 per cent; WHO: 76 per cent; WIPO: 3 per cent; WMO: 4 per cent.

Table 1 provides an analytical framework to examine the relationship between the key drivers of change and the strategic transformations that have taken place over time in each of the six areas that are the focus of the ECOSOC Dialogue: functions, capacity and impact, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements and partnership approaches. The information contained in Table 1 shows that the functions of the UN development system as well as the other five areas, have regularly been subject to major change in the past 60+ years in response to evolving mandates and significant events in the broader environment.

Three specific time periods are examined to demonstrate the impact of the major drivers of change on the evolution of the functions of the UN development system during the last 60+ years: (a) the early years (1945-50s), (b) the era of decolonization and the Cold War (1960-80s), (c) the global conferences and Millennium Development Goals (1990s-2015). For each period, the key drivers of change in the broader development environment and the primary functions of the UN development system are examined. In a subsequent note to be prepared for an ECOSOC Dialogue retreat in May, the coherence and consistency of interlinkages between the alignment of functions and the other five areas will be further explored.

(a) The early years (1945-50s)

It was not envisaged at the outset that the UN would become a major actor in development cooperation in developing countries. However, by the late 1940s, the concept of development assistance had begun to attract greater attention within the UN system, culminating in the adoption of a 1949 General Assembly resolution authorizing the establishment of the Extended Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA), to assist the poorer countries.

The primary function of the UN system in early years was to provide technical assistance to developing countries, mostly in the form of transfer of knowledge and skills to promote industrialization. A key motive was to accelerate economic convergence between developed and developing countries. This was to be achieved through support measures such as advising governments, training of human resources in-country and abroad, and the provision of facilities for knowledge-sharing.

In 1958, the UN General Assembly agreed to broaden the scope of UN technical assistance to include large-scale pre-investment surveys and feasibility studies on major national development projects that would lay the groundwork for subsequent investment of capital. These surveys and studies involved much greater financial outlay than the kind of technical assistance then being undertaken, and the Assembly decided to set-up a new institution that would run along lines similar to EPTA. Thus the Special Fund was established to act as a multilateral channel for voluntary contributions for the work of various UN agencies.[2]

In these early years, the technical assistance priorities of programme countries were determined by the specialized agencies of the UN system, which also executed the respective country cooperation programmes.

---

[2]   The Special Fund began operations in 1959; within 3 years, 86 governments had pledged over $110 million.

(b) The era of decolonization and Cold War (1960s-80s)

The success of assistance programmes in post-war Europe spearheaded by the Marshall Plan fuelled the belief among many policy-makers that the UN system could have an important role to play in advancing socio-economic development in the newly independent states during the decolonization period, which ultimately affected more than 100 developing countries. As a result, the UN development system became an important partner in the provision of support to these states. During the Cold War era, the UN development system was also considered to be a neutral platform for providing technical assistance to developing countries.

By the end of the 1960s, a wide range of UN bodies such as specialized agencies, funds, programmes, regional commissions and Secretariat entities were engaged in operational activities for development. [3]

The overarching function of the UN development system in this period was to support the realization of national development plans and strategies in the newly emerging states. These states faced complex socio-economic development needs, including in the areas of human resources development and state building. It was felt particularly important to strengthen the capacity of the newly emerging states for national development planning, institution building, human resources development and science and technology. The Special Fund which had been established in 1958 also contributed to the above objective by providing support for pre-investment studies in developing countries. The key sectors of UN support emerging in the 1960s were increasingly the following: food and agriculture, trade, health, population growth, natural resource development, the housing sector, transport and communications and the promotion of social and economic rights.[4] During this period, a series of international norms and standards were developed under UN auspices, providing the legal framework for technical support by the Organization in the above areas.

This era also marked a major change in the definition of country priorities for development assistance. Previously, the specialized agencies had performed that role, but governments in the newly emerging states now demanded to set technical assistance priorities themselves.

In 1965, EPTA and the Special Fund were merged in a new organization, UNDP, which became operational the following year.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, also established the environment as an important global development priority. The Stockholm Conference brought the issues of pollution, depletion of natural resources and impoverishment because of lack of access to arable land on the global agenda. The establishment of UNEP was another major outcome of the Stockholm Conference, which not only raised the profile of the environment as a global policy area but also strengthened this dimension as an important function of the UN development system.

---

[3]   Among the new entities was UNCTAD, established in 1964, to discuss issues related to international trade, an institutional development which subsequently led to the creation of the Group of 77 (today, the Group has 131 members).

[4]   The UN and Development: from aid to cooperation, Olav Stokke, United Nations Intellectual History Project Series.

(c) Global conferences and Millennium Development Goals (1990s-2015)

The 1990s marked a significant departure for the UN system following the end of the Cold War. A series of major UN conferences and summits (e.g. Children, Education and LDCs Conferences in 1990; Earth Summit in 1992; Cairo (Population) and Barbados (SIDS) Conferences in 1994; Copenhagen (Social Development) and Beijing (Women) Conferences in 1995; and Food and Human Settlements Conferences in 1996) helped establish a new global development vision, culminating in the Millennium Declaration in 2000, which laid the foundation for the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals two years later. Another important milestone was the 2005 World Summit where world leaders reaffirmed that development is a central goal in itself and that sustainable development constitutes an important overarching framework for UN activities.

The functions of most UN entities, as a result, expanded considerably during this period in response to new normative mandates and commitments, as well as other drivers of change in the broader development environment. The role of many UN entities was redefined in this period, e.g. UNFPA[5], UN-Habitat and WFP, and most recently, WHO, and new entities were established, such as UNAIDS in 1994, in response to the magnitude of the global AIDS pandemic and the need for multi-sector partnerships and coordinated approach among UN organizations[6] in this effort, and UN-Women in 2010, to consolidate and strengthen action on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The MDGs also became a key driver of growth in operational activities of the UN system in the beginning of the new century.

The functions of the UN development system, accordingly, underwent a transformation in the 1990s and first decade of the new century in response to the new global mandates and drivers of change. The end of the Cold War also led to significant increase in intrastate conflicts, which created high demand for support by the UN development system in the areas of conflict prevention, post-conflict recovery and humanitarian assistance. At the same time, the UN development system was increasingly requested to assist in mitigating the impact of natural disasters, including recovery and resilience-building. Humanitarian assistance, as a result, accounted for 34 per cent of total operational activities of the UN system in 2013.

The MDGs also changed the nature of demand for operational activities, with the focus shifting to issues related to human progress in developing countries through specific action to address poverty eradication, social development, health, education, gender equality and women's empowerment, and to a lesser extent, environmental protection. Human rights mainstreaming in development (and peacekeeping) activities also became an important priority in response to an expanding normative framework in this area since the 1960s. There was, furthermore,

---

[5]   For example, changes in UNFPA's functions and governing structures have been triggered by changes in funding; in the external environment – including response to HIV/AIDS and the adoption of the MDGs; by normative changes – most notably 1994 ICPD, which established a universal normative role for the agency; and by major UN reform processes. WFP is another example of such adaptation to change. In the 1990s, WFP, through internal reform, developed strong capacity for handling logistics in humanitarian emergencies, which became a comparative advantage of the Organization in such country contexts. WHO has also recently been engaged in a major reform process including programmatic, governance and managerial reforms, to improve health outcomes, increase coherence in global health and deliver organizational excellence.

[6]   Established in 1994 through ECOSOC resolution 1994/24, UNAIDS is the only co-sponsored, joint programme of the United Nations, with a governance structure incorporating Member States, co-sponsor organizations and non-state actors. Formally launched with six UN co-sponsored organizations and a secretariat in 1996, the UNAIDS Programme has since expanded to include additional five UN system entities, bringing the total to 11.

significant increase in demand for strengthening of government capacity in programme countries in the areas of governance and public administration, including for planning, data and monitoring and evaluation, in response to new drivers of change in the broader development environment.

Contributions for operational activities for development also became increasingly directly linked to the achievement of the MDGs and there was a major increase in funding for humanitarian assistance and post-conflict recovery in transition countries. The funding base also saw the beginning of growing diversification with multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector becoming an increasingly important source of financing.

3.   Lessons learned and the way forward

The work of the United Nations for development in developing countries now spans a time period covering almost 70 years. As we learn from the past and move ahead, it is critical to note the following:

1. The functions of the UN development system have undergone several transformations in the past 60+ years in response to new normative mandates, agency-specific and system-wide reforms, more diverse development needs of programme countries, continuously evolving understanding of the concept of development, and major changes in the broader development environment;

2. Many UN development system entities have demonstrated strong ability to continuously reposition themselves in response to new normative mandates and key drivers of change. As a result, the UN development system, over time, became the largest multilateral partner of OECD/DAC countries;[7]

3. The post-2015 sustainable development agenda that will replace the Millennium Development Goals will require significant joint effort by the whole international community, including the UN development system. The transformative approach of a universal, unified and integrated post-2015 development agenda, with a strong focus on poverty eradication, human rights, inequality, economic growth, peaceful societies, environmental sustainability and effective institutions, must determine the future functions of the UN development system;

4. The functions of the UN development system must be based on the Organization's comparative advantage as an overarching principle. They must also be primarily driven by "purpose", not "fitness" alone, i.e. the overall strategic positioning and relevance of the UN development system to support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda;

---

[7]   The UN development system has for a long time been the largest multilateral partner of OECD/DAC countries when both core and non-core funding is counted. This changed, however, in 2013, when the European Commission became the largest multilateral partner of DAC countries.

5. As the concept of development becomes more multidimensional in the post-2015 era, functions will increasingly need to be delivered in a coordinated and integrated manner, i.e. in combination rather than individually, or one at a time. Core UN pillars (poverty eradication and sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, human rights, peace and security), must therefore be mutually reinforcing, rather than siloed;

6. Functions should drive the selection of funding modalities. It is also important that the emerging functions of the UN development system in the post-2015 era be fundable and adequately resourced in order for the Organization to have maximum development impact;

7. The term 'operational activities for development' has never been formally defined at the intergovernmental or inter-agency levels. The adoption of the post-2015 development agenda may call for a review of how this term is defined and applied in the work of the UN development system in the new era.

4.   The post-2015 era: likely implications for the UN development system

A universal post-2015 development agenda is expected to mark another major new departure in the work of the UN development system. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the MDGs shortly thereafter, both the capacity of many programme countries and the nature of development challenges have evolved significantly. The development needs of countries have also become much more diversified, including with emerging and middle-income countries gaining significant domestic resources and capacities. While the core challenge of alleviating poverty remains at the centre of development cooperation efforts, other critical challenges, including those resulting from the process of globalization[8], increasing interdependence of countries[9], climate change[10] and urbanization[11], have grown in importance at the outset of the post-2015 era.

The overarching objective of development cooperation in the new era is expected to be poverty eradication, and particularly addressing inequality, including the unfinished business of the MDGs and the support for the implementation of much more broadly defined global commitments such as the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

In response to the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, the proposed SDGs are expected to bring the poverty eradication, social equity and equality, and environmental sustainability processes

---

[8]   Some academics have argued that planetary boundaries have been exceeded in a number of areas, including most prominently climate change, but also in others such as ocean acidification, the phosphorous cycle and the stratospheric ozone depletion (DESA, World Economic and Social Survey, 2013).

[9]   Rapid transmission of diseases has also accompanied the process of globalization and growing interconnectedness of countries.

[10]   The atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration has grown from 260-280 parts per million in pre-industrial times to 391 million ppm in September 2012 and global mean warming is already 0.8 degrees above pre-industrial levels (DESA, World Economic and Social Survey, 2013).

[11]   Some 70 per cent of the world's population is expected to reside in cities by the year 2030. During 1950-2010, a net 1.3 billion people was added in small cities, more than double the number in medium (632 million), or large cities (570 million) (DESA, World Economic and Social Survey, 2013).

together in a unified and universal post-2015 development agenda underpinned by a single set of sustainable development goals and a post-2015 sustainable development financing framework. The proposed SDGs build on the foundations laid by the MDGs, but are more comprehensive and more ambitious.

The proposed SDGs also signify the growing interdependence of country and global action inherent in the broadening of the post-2015 development agenda to include what is sometimes referred to as global development challenges requiring collective action. This interdependence of development action will require UN entities to further enhance synergy between the normative and operational support functions in the post-2015 era, but also mean that activities will increasingly need to be pursued in an integrated and coordinated manner.

The shift to a transformative sustainable development agenda also calls on the UN development system to identify means of engagement and implementation that allow for a universal response. Global targets and selected indicators will apply to all countries, with additional indicators to be set at the national level, taking into account country circumstances and progress. All countries will need to monitor and report on progress.

Besides the emerging post-2015 development agenda, the broader development landscape that impacts the work and functions of the UN development system is also changing in several other significant ways. This includes, but is not limited to, the changing profile of poverty; rising inequality within and across countries; increasing demand from people for more equitable and accountable development; the changing balance of economic power in international relations; the reality of climate change; the speed of urbanization; the rise of new development cooperation actors; technological innovations and the data revolution; the growing volume of South-South cooperation as a complement to the North-South cooperation; and the increasing demands from developing countries for more effective and participatory governance of the UN development system.

The significant broadening of the global development agenda as reflected in the proposed SDGs will have major impact on the functions of the UN development system in the post-2015 era. This note identifies the following eight potential key functions of the UN development system in response to the post-2015 development agenda, its universal nature, and other key drivers of change:

A. **Support to countries to respond to national development challenges in a wide range of areas**

Developing countries, especially, least-developed or low-income countries, have significant and often complex capacity development requirements starting from meeting the basic needs of their population to considerable demands for support for institution building and human resources development. These countries, in many instances, have not benefitted from globalization and are heavily reliant on official development assistance as a source of

development financing.[12] Supporting and utilizing national expertise for national planning, data collection and analysis, as well as monitoring and evaluation for evidence-based policy will be particularly critical.[13]

B. Normative and technical support to countries to ensure that no-one is left behind

Countries will need targeted support to establish, implement, monitor and report on normative standards and agreements with a view to advancing a more rights-based and people-centered approach to address all forms of inequalities, including for gender equality and women's empowerment, e.g. economic inequalities. Many countries, including emerging economies and middle-income countries, will also need policy and normative support to become active participants in economic and other globalization processes.[14] This would include capacity building support, e.g. the development of relevant and integrated policy frameworks and technical assistance, to ensure that all countries meet their sustainable development requirements and commitments for a universal poverty eradication agenda, to strengthen the resilience of countries to deal with risks and shocks associated with globalization and the consequences of climate change, and to forge collective responses to global development challenges, including with the involvement of affected communities themselves. This will also call for strong emphasis on promoting synergy between the normative and operational support functions of the UN system and enhanced assistance for evidence-based decision-making.

C. Support to countries to address global development challenges

As global and national development challenges become more interconnected, there will be significant need in the post-2015 era for country-level support to address global development challenges such as climate change, global health, loss of biodiversity, migration and rapid and unplanned urbanization, including meeting obligations under agreed international treaties and instruments, to further advance and add to the work already done. Development cooperation will have an important role to play in addressing global sustainable development challenges in the new era by increasing the supply of domestic public goods at the country level. Operational activities of the UN system will continue to be important in this regard.

D. Invest in conflict prevention, disaster-risk reduction, peace-building, humanitarian assistance, recovery and resilience-building

Operational, institution-building and human resources development support from the UN development system will continue to be vital in humanitarian and conflict-affected

---

[12] For least-developed countries, ODA still represents some 70 per cent of total external finance. The median ODA-to-government revenue ratio for LDCs as a group stood at around 60 per cent in 2012 (DESA estimate based on World Bank's World Development Indicators).

[13] As an example, in Malawi, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA developed a real-time monitoring framework to track UNDAF performance in contributing to MDGs acceleration by ensuring reliable data availability in focus areas such as health, protection and human rights.

[14] It is estimated that 70 per cent of poor people currently live in middle-income countries.

countries, and to ensure that the basic needs of the respective population, especially those affected by conflict, are met while building the foundations of long-term sustainable development. Protracted crises in need of longer-term support from the UN development system have become much more common in recent years. The Organization has developed a comparative advantage in supporting countries in such development situations. Bridging the emergency-development continuum, including by building on integrated peace missions, will be critical in this regard.[15]

E. Support to South-South and triangular cooperation

Support to countries to realize the post-2015 development agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation can be expected to become an important role of the UN development system in the new era.[16] This could also include significant support for strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation, benefiting from the technical capacities of the UN system at both regional and national levels.[17]

F. Partnership-building and stakeholder engagement

There is consensus that more broad-based partnerships will be critical to deliver the new post-2015 sustainable development agenda, including in the area of resource mobilization. The UN development system will need to convene multi-sector, issue-based partnerships, aligned to normative values and standards and good governance principles, to facilitate collective responses to global development challenges and mobilize country-level investment.[18] The configuration and scope of these partnerships may well vary considerably depending on the issue being addressed and the specific country and global contexts. The UN development system can be expected to foster greater inclusiveness, and by increasing and facilitating the engagement and participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including from the private sector and civil society, in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.[19]

G. Integrated policy advice/advocacy

---

[15] The Integrated Mission concept was initially developed for Kosovo in 1999 in order to ensure an effective division of labour between different actors operating on distinct mandates of peace implementation in Kosovo. The concept has since been revised, refined and adapted to other UN mission settings. However, there are some concerns that the development objective has not been sufficiently mainstreamed in many missions' blueprints and protocols. This is particularly relevant considering the protracted nature of some mission settings.

[16] DESA has estimated that global South-South development cooperation was in the order of magnitude between $16 and $19 billion in 2011.

[17] Many examples were discussed at a recent Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, WFP and UN-Women such as using technology to improve registration and access to national identification systems for vulnerable populations, ensuring that vulnerable populations can exercise their legal rights, access basic social services, able to own land and access citizen and legal protection.

[18] Such as the UNDG national and thematic consultations on the post-2015 development agenda and thematic dialogues on implementation, which saw unprecedented level of engagement worldwide in the identification of development priorities for the post-2015 era.

[19] There are many examples of such partnerships, e.g. Scaling-up Nutrition Movement, founded in 2010 in 54 countries where UNICEF, UNOPS, WFP and WHO together with bilateral and multilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, have come together to fight malnutrition.

The UN development system will have an important role to play in providing integrated policy advice and advocacy for a new development agenda that is people-centered, rights-based, gender-sensitive, and that brings together the three pillars of the Organization (peace and security, human rights and development) and the three dimensions of sustainable development in the post-2015 era, including through multi-stakeholder engagements, information campaigns, flagship reports and other relevant activities. This will also involve providing/supporting thought leadership initiatives, integrated analysis, and helping to ensure that robust evidence and data is available for decision-making at all levels.

H.   Strategic innovations in development

The growing diversity of development experiences of countries, combined with accelerating economic and technological globalization and interconnectedness and the universality and multidimensionality of the post-2015 development agenda, will call for greater capacity of UN entities individually and collectively to innovate in the delivery of normative, policy, technical and operational support. Such are the inter-linkages between many of the proposed sustainable development goals that innovations in one area may also contribute to the realization of others. The universality of the proposed SDGs could also involve the establishment of strategic partnerships with upper middle-income and high-income countries in support of country-level innovations, replacing traditional programming approaches, while being consistent with relevant organizational mandates.

A more comprehensive post-2015 development agenda, a changing development environment, and greater differentiation in the development needs of countries, can be expected to result in the broadening of the substantive scope of the UN development system and the need for integrated delivery of the Organization's functions, requiring considerable capacity, flexibility and expertise. The diversity of the UN system and its ability to provide support in complex contexts is a key strength in this regard. Proliferation of functions, however, can also lead to greater fragmentation and complexity. Policy coherence and thought leadership, moving away from a siloed approach to integrated service delivery will be critical.

In addition, it will be important to explore how the different functions anchor the operational to the normative role to achieve better development outcomes, i.e. how to "operationalize" the UN's normative role in support of national priorities and ownership in an effective manner; the UN's direct service delivery role and provision of upstream policy advice; providing comprehensive support across a variety of functions and the need to prioritize and focus in particular in the context of resource constraints.

The expected broadening ad integration of the functions of the UN development system in the post-2015 era will also impact the interlinkages with the five other areas that are the focus of the ECOSOC Dialogue, namely, capacity and impact, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements and partnership approaches. These interlinkages will be explored in some detail in other papers prepared for the ECOSOC Dialogue process.

5. Selected discussion questions

The below questions have been prepared to facilitate deliberations of Member States on the interlinkages between the alignment of functions and the other five areas (capacity and impact, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements and partnership approaches) in a workshop on functions to be held on 17 April 2015 as part of the ECOSOC Dialogue process:

1. What are the emerging priority functions of the UN development system in the post-2015 era building on the Organization's core comparative advantages?

2. What are some of the potential implications of the principle of universality for the work of the UN, including in high-income and developed countries?

3. What are the implications of stronger focus on the provision of integrated policy advice and normative support at the country level for capacity and impact, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements, including field presence models, and partnership approaches of the UN development system in the post-2015 era?

4. The capacity of the UN development system to deliver on priority functions will depend on the ability to forge partnerships. How to strengthen the ability of the organizations to leverage partnerships with the private sector and civil society in the post-2015 era?

Table 1: UN Development System

Preliminary analysis of interlinkages of drivers of change, functions, capacity and impact, funding, governance, organizational arrangements and partnership approaches

	1945-50s	1960s-80s	1990s-2015	2015-
Important drivers of change	Post WWII Limited number of states Increased political support for international cooperation Human rights agenda (e.g. Universal Declaration on Human Rights) Interests of major colonial states Marshall Plan Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA)[20]	Some 100 newly emerged states in need of support Cold War; bipolar political system Development of international human rights instruments Aid as instrument of foreign policy, real politik and superpower rivalry Creation of OECD/DAC ('63) Rise of state development cooperation actors Aid becomes an international obligation ('70) 1970 Consensus[21] Concern about duplication of UN country activities Growing economic and political tension in 80s[22]	End of Cold War; multi-polar political system Increased number of intrastate conflicts Globalization Sustainable development Global conferences Millennium Development Goals Human rights mainstreaming agenda Paradigm of "humane internationalism" DAC countries become main sources of funding Recognition of state as key development factor Rise of non-state actors Demand for UN system-wide coherence	Post-2015 sustainable development agenda Opportunities and threats of globalization including inequality, exclusion & systemic risks Climate Change Country-level technical cooperation demands emanating from globalization and interdependence, and climate change Norm- and standard-setting and other policy cooperation demands at intergovernmental level emanating from globalization and interdependence, and climate change Global development challenges Changing poverty profile Increasing protracted crises Diversification of country development needs Interdependence of domestic and global development action Changing balance of global economic power Demands for more effective and participatory decision-making in UN development system at intergovernmental level South-South and triangular cooperation Rise of new development cooperation actors Technological innovation & data revolution including pressures for increased transparency Need for issue coherence in delivery of UN activities at all levels

---

[20]   Established by the General Assembly in 1949.

[21]   The basic design that emerged from the 1970 Consensus was an integrated system of country programming based on national development plans.

[22]   Including collapse of NIEO, Latin American debt crisis, emergence of neo-liberalism in a number of economically powerful countries.

	1945-50s	1960s-80s	1990s-2015	2015-
Functions	Technical assistance as transfer of knowledge and skills to promote industrialization in developing countries	Support realization of national development plans in newly emerging states	Poverty eradication, social development, including gender equality and women's empowerment and environmental protection, with particular focus on improving provision of basic needs Conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance and recovery State building and good governance Normative support, policy advice/advocacy and data and evidence	Interlinkages between alignment of functions and the five other areas will be further elaborated in a subsequent note to be prepared for an ECOSOC Dialogue retreat in May
Capacity and impact	Knowledge transferred through expert reports Country priorities defined by UN entities, primarily specialized agencies Technical assistance implemented by specialized agencies and Secretariat departments	Development planning advisory services Support for pre-investment activities Institution building, human resources development, science & technology Programme countries define priorities Transfer of resources to programme countries Technical assistance implemented by specialized agencies and Secretariat departments Pilot national execution of projects	Capacity development with focus on upstream policy support & human resources development and institution building Emergency assistance Implementation services in programme countries Aid coordination Flagship reports National ownership Aid effectiveness Results-based management National execution of projects	Ditto
Funding practices	Agency-based funding system High share of core funding	Country-based funding system UNDP becomes central funding mechanism ('66) Non-core funding begins to increase in late '80s	MDGs-based funding system UNDP central funding mechanism abolished Humanitarian assistance increases significantly High non-core funding, overwhelmingly single-donor, programme and project-specific	Ditto
Governance structures	Governing body of EPTA Governing bodies of specialized agencies Technical Assistance Board composed of SG and agency Heads charged with coordination under the authority of a standing Technical Assistance Committee of ECOSOC[23] Limited coordination functions of ECOSOC	UNDP Governing Council ➤ Inter-agency Consultative Board Governing bodies of specialized agencies Limited coordination functions of ECOSOC	Creation of Executive Boards of Fs/Ps with 36 members ('93) Joint informal meeting of Executive Boards of Fs/Ps Constituency-based form of governance introduced in Global Environment Facility ('94) and UNAIDS Programme ('96) Governing bodies of specialized agencies Limited coordination functions of ECOSOC	Ditto

---

[23] The TAB would remain the coordinator until UNDP was established at the end of 1965. If conflicts arose in TAB, a Technical Assistance Committee, composed of ECOSOC members, would be charged with reaching an agreement.

	1945-50s	1960s-80s	1990s-2015	2015-
Organizational arrangements	Specialized agencies and Secretariat departments deliver country-level activities Post of Resident Representative of EPTA, reporting to Head of Technical Assistance Board, established in select major programme countries to coordinate country-level activities	Extensive system of field representatives in place in early 60s Evaluation of activities established in early 60s UNDP becomes central coordinator of operational activities ('66) Country programmes become the primary coordination instrument Global-level coherence: ➢ DG for DIEC ('77), Single Pledging Conference, QCPR Country-level coherence: ➢ Strengthening of RC function ('81) Gradual erosion of UNDP coordination role in the '80s[24]	UNDP central coordination abolished, becomes knowledge organization ('95) SG reforms ('97): ➢ Establishment of UNDG, including EC composed of Fs/Ps[25], DOCO, UNDAF & CCA, One UN House, stronger RC role, post of DSG System-wide coherence process ('07-'10): ➢ Launch of pilot DaO ('07), establishment of UN-Women ('10) QCPR process ('12): ➢ Independent system-wide evaluation ('12) Multi-country RC representation introduced in small number of countries	Ditto
Partnership approaches	The focus of partnerships in this period was primarily on leveraging expertise for delivery of technical assistance at country level	Continued focus on leveraging expertise for delivery of technical assistance. Leveraging funding from donor countries and NGOs to complement UNDP resources also becomes important in late 80s	The focus shifts to diversification of funding base with major expansion in partnerships with multilateral institutions, NGOs and private sector; innovative multi-stakeholder partnership models introduced	Ditto

Source: UNDESA elaboration.

---

[24] As specialized agencies increasingly began to mobilize resources directly from donors.

[25] UNDG Executive Committee was later abolished and superseded by an Advisory Group, composed of 13 member entities.

Box 1: UN Development System

The United Nations Development System is defined as the entities that receive contributions for operational activities for development.

In 2013, the following 34 entities engaged in operational activities for development.

*Funds and programmes***:** UNDP (incl. UNCDF, UNV), UN-Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD (incl. ITC), UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNRWA

Specialized agencies: FAO, IAEA, UNESCO, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNIDO, UPU, WIPO, WHO, WMO, UNWTO

Regional commissions: ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA

Secretariat departments: OCHA, DESA

Other entities: IFAD, OHCHR

Legislative mandates established in the *QCPR resolution* of the GA on operational activities for development are formally binding for those entities that report to the Assembly and ECOSOC. In 2012, these were 27 entities (30 if UNCDF, UNV (part of UNDP) and ITC (part of UNCTAD and WTO) are counted as specific entities):

- 12 funds and programmes: UNDP (including UNCDF, UNV), UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNHCR, UNODC, UNCTAD (including ITC), UNRWA, UN-Women, UNEP, UN Habitat, UNAIDS;
- 6 research and training institutions: UNICRI, UNIDIR, UNITAR, UNRISD, UNSSC, UNU (although none of them is involved in operational activities);
- 5 regional commissions which formally report to ECOSOC: ECLAC, ESCWA, ESCAP, ECA and ECE;
- 2 Secretariat departments: OCHA and UNDESA, and
- 2 other entities: UNISDR and UNOPS (UNISDR doesn't engage in operational activities and UNOPS only implements operational activities initiated by other entities).

Of the above 27 entities, 19 engaged in operational activities in 2013. The 8 entities that did not engage in such activities were: 6 above research and training institutions and UNISDR and UNOPS. Together, the 19 entities accounted for some 75 per cent of total operational activities for development in 2012 and the specialized agencies for the remaining 25 per cent.