

U.S. Talking Points for ECOSOC Dialogue

Prepared for delivery by Ambassador Richard Erdman, Senior Adviser and Acting ECOSOC Ambassador, US Mission to the United Nations

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Thank you, Madame Chair. We'd like to join others in commending your exceptional leadership and stewardship of this process. Thank you also to the Secretariat and the UNDG team, which have both contributed thoughtful and valuable papers on the many consequential topics we have covered, including the most recent summary paper. This has been a long but extremely worthwhile process, and we think it would be valuable to reflect on some of what we have learned.

Role of the UN development system

Madame Chair, we learned in the course of these dialogues how much the UN development system has evolved over time. At its creation 70 years ago, no one imagined that the UN would become a major actor in development cooperation in developing countries. Instead, over the last half-century, the structure, scope, and demands placed on the UN development system have grown, in organic and—in some cases—duplicative ways. We see that the system evolved to match the expectations of those who use it, both donor and program countries, and that this is a necessary and natural process. We fully expect that the post-2015 era will usher in a new stage in this ongoing process of adaptation and refinement, which is necessary to arrive at the UN development system we want.

It is our view that the UN development system going forward must focus on its comparative advantage in order to remain competitive and relevant. This includes its unique role as a multilateral organization with universal legitimacy, neutrality, focus on national ownership and leadership, global reach, and convening power. The new paradigm for cooperation will no longer be of one region giving resources and advice to another; instead, countries from all corners of the globe will work together as partners to achieve our common goals. In support of this, the work of

the UN development system must become more coordinated, and its core pillars must become mutually reinforcing rather than competitive and overlapping.

Functions

As many dialogue participants noted, the form—that is, the structure and organization—of the UN development system should follow its function—that is, what we want it to do. We must work together to decide how exactly the UN development system will help Member States implement the goals of the post-2015 development agenda, and then design the system’s structure around those tasks. For example, if the UN development system is to continue playing its unique role in crisis-affected and fragile states, as well as coordinating both humanitarian and development efforts in some of the world’s toughest locations, we should determine the best ways to deliver those services and then redesign the agencies to provide them in the most efficient manner.

As we mentioned in the first dialogue, we believe the work of the UN development system must also become more differentiated in the post-2015 era. In a world of rapidly developing emerging economies, where some developing countries are amassing more financial, intellectual and human resources than ever before, the UN development system should provide different services in different contexts. For example, in middle income countries the UN should provide policy advice, support coherence, leverage financial resources and expertise, and set norms and standards, while in least developed countries the UN development system will still need to play a more active role in program delivery, strengthening government capacity, and convening the necessary resources and partnerships to help achieve national development goals. In both these contexts, the UN development system has a critical role to play in promoting South-South and triangular cooperation, which will become increasingly important in helping countries to realize their post-2015 commitments.

Funding

Function should also drive funding, with different aspects of the UN development system potentially funded through different modalities. We agree that the post-2015 era presents a unique opportunity for Member States and the UN development system to comprehensively review the funding architecture and

design one that better supports the new functions. The new funding architecture should also reflect the changing development landscape, with more funding capacity available and more able partners than ever before. In this regard, we welcome the UNDP's "100 Donors" campaign, as well as other efforts by the UN system to broaden the donor base.

And partnerships with multiple stakeholders – the private sector, civil society, academia, NGOs, and others— will be critical to mobilizing the resources needed to address our future development challenges. Given the recent fate of the proposed partnership facility, we are interested in ideas from others about how the UN can best harness the vast potential of partnerships while reassuring Member States of the quality assurance and accountability they seek from non-state partners. The idea of expanding issue-based coalitions as key partners for implementing the SDGs, proposed in the December session, is still interesting. And lessons learned in using partnerships to leverage influence and incubate change should be fed back into the system to promote better practices across the UN. One question we must all answer is, what key steps will the UN development system need to take to promote and expand effective partnerships?

Governance

On governance, we know this is an issue of great interest to our colleagues, and we are prepared to take a sincere and comprehensive look at what type of governance arrangements will best suit the needs of the post-2015 development agenda. One of the dialogues proposed that governance of operational activities should be devolved and exercised at the country level—and another proposed much more coordinated system-wide governance of operational activities. We look forward to exploring these and other ideas further.

Organizational arrangements

On organizational arrangements, the fact that the UN development system has become the largest multilateral partner of the OECD/DAC countries does not mean it will always remain in that position. The UN cannot assume donor countries will always give hundreds of millions of dollars to the UN to carry out development work, or that program countries will look to the UN as the primary partner to implement that work. There are other actors in the international system today.

NGOs, foundations, philanthropies, divisions of private companies, multi-stakeholder partnerships, to name just a few, are carrying out much of the same work and providing many of the same services the UN development system has historically provided. The system must adapt in order to remain relevant in the post-2015 context.

Capacity and impact

Regarding capacity, we agree that the UN must be able to maintain a staff of exceptional international civil servants necessary for a world-class organization that is able to deliver the sophisticated policy guidance increasingly demanded by many countries.

And to track impact, we will need consistent, high-quality results-based management and detailed results reporting. We are pleased to note that the annual session of the Executive Boards, which just concluded, showcased the superior quality of results UNDP and UNFPA are now able to report as they detail progress against their Strategic Plans. We see this as a very encouraging sign that the system is adapting in the necessary ways, and look forward to even more comprehensive results being reported as more data becomes available.

Madame Chair, these dialogues have been a rich and fruitful exercise. We thank you for your guidance and look forward to more constructive engagement on these issues over the next year.

Thank you.