

ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer-term Positioning of the UN Development System

Background Paper on Capacity, Impact and Partnerships Revised Draft

Independent Expert Paper by Daniel Lopez-Acuna and Alison King

13 May 2015

Long Version

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	2
Chapter 2: QCPR and Greater Fitness for Purpose of the UN Development System.....	2
2.1 The QCPR Process.....	2
2.2 QCPR Implementation and Reporting.....	3
Chapter 3: Capacity of the United Nations Development System to Deliver Results in Support of Member States in the Post-2015 Era	5
3.1 Evolution of the Work of the UN Development System and of Strategies to Strengthen its Capacities	5
3.2 Some Lessons Learned	8
3.3 Likely Implications of the Post-2015 Era for the Capacities of the UN Development System	10
3.4 Selected Discussion Questions	20
Chapter 4: Enhancing Impact of the UN Development System in the Post-2015 Era by Strengthening Results Management and System-wide Accountability.....	21
4.1. Evolution of Results Management and Accountability	21
4.2. Some Lessons Learned	27
4.3. The Post-2015 Era: Likely Implications of the SDGs... ..	30
4.4. Selected Discussion Questions	33
Chapter 5: UN Development System Approaches to Partnerships in the Post-2015 Era	33
5.1 Evolution of UN Development System Partnership Approaches	34
5.2 Some Lessons Learned	37
5.3 Likely Implications of the Post-2015 Era for the UN Development System’s Approach to Partnerships	39
5.4 Selected Discussion Questions	39
Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks	40
Acronyms and Abbreviations	42

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in resolution 2014/14 decided to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS), taking into account the universal post-2015 development agenda, including the inter-linkages between functions, funding practices, governance structures, capacity, impact, partnership approaches, and organizational arrangements. This dialogue is part of inter-governmental processes addressing the fitness for purpose of the UNDS for the challenging universal post-2015 development agenda and the evolving development cooperation environment. It ultimately serves as part of the build-up to the Special UN Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015 and as preparation for the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) in 2016.

2. DESA has commissioned independent expert papers on the above seven dimensions to provide out of the box food for thought to stimulate Member State discussions in April and May 2015. While recognizing that numerous UN Member States have expressed their keenness to build on progress made in implementing the 2012 QCPR, these papers should acknowledge the need for a greater transformation of the UNDS than up until now for addressing the challenges of a substantially different and more complex international development agenda.

3. The subject of this particular paper are the changes needed in support of the world's transformative agenda implied in the post-2015 compact to (i) ensure the internal capacity of the UNDS to efficiently and effectively carry out its functions (relevant existing ones and new ones) and deliver results; (ii) ensure strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation and accountability of UNDS operational activities for development for greater effectiveness and sustainable impact in the different areas of the new sustainable development agenda in a globalizing world; and (iii) ensure appropriate approaches for forging the types of partnerships relevant to the new challenges in the evolving development cooperation environment and for creating the necessary synergies to attain the collectively agreed priorities.¹ Comprehensive policy reviews, and particularly the 2012 QCPR have provided very relevant information for the present paper. Chapter 2 therefore sets the stage by providing a succinct overview of the QCPR process. Subsequent chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively talk to the capacity, impact and partnerships dimensions of the UNDS. It makes particular reference to the functions dimension.

Chapter 2: QCPR and Greater Fitness for Purpose of the UN Development System

2.1 The QCPR Process

4. The QCPR process is particularly relevant for facilitating UN Member State engagement in and oversight of the UNDS. It is the mechanism by which the UNGA regularly assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of UN operational activities for development and negotiates decisions and policy guidance. The QCPR resolution establishes system-wide policy orientations for development cooperation and country-level modalities of UN system activities in support of Member States'

¹ The present mapping was done through a literature review and analysis of recent debates on the subjects, both within and outside the UN. In a 2nd phase, the co-authors will take into account comments and feedback from stakeholders at the ECOSOC dialogue workshop scheduled for 27 May and the 1st retreat on 29/30 May.

development efforts. It addresses the functioning of the UNDS at country level, funding of its operational activities, as well as the development effectiveness of its assistance. In December 2012, the UNGA adopted resolution 67/226 on the QCPR. It contains 189 operational paragraphs in five main areas: i) introduction; ii) funding; iii) contribution to national capacity development and development effectiveness; iv) improved functioning; and v) follow-up and monitoring. From a policy perspective, the resolution affirms eradication of poverty as the overarching challenge and key element of sustainable development. It emphasizes the inter-linkages between development, peace and security and human rights; and stresses the relevance of achieving internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It reaffirms the centrality of national ownership and primary responsibility of each country for its own development. Overall, the resolution does not go much beyond previous ones except to underline the importance of improving the funding of the RC system, to recognize the contribution of the Delivering as One (DaO) approach, and to request the UNDS to formulate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as guidelines for countries wishing to adopt the DaO approach. Some other key messages worth highlighting are:

- There is no “one size fits all” approach to development;
- UN operational activities for development should respond to development needs of countries, the requests of those countries and their national policies and priorities for development;
- The UNDS needs to be more relevant, coherent, efficient and effective
- Improvement of coordination and coherence of UN activities should be undertaken in a manner that recognizes the mandates and roles of all UN agencies;
- Importance of engaging in results-oriented, innovative national, regional and global partnerships; and
- It is important to strengthen accountability for results and impact.

2.2 QCPR Implementation and Reporting

5. UNGA resolutions, including the QCPR one, are not legally binding for UN specialized agencies; they are, however, considered as recommendations. That said there is a tacit expectation from Member States that specialized agencies behave in consonance with the QCPR resolution.

6. The UNDG places the highest priority on implementing the QCPR resolution and has developed a common Action Plan for its implementation and monitoring. While all QCPR mandates have to be addressed by the UN funds, programmes and agencies as relevant, the UNDG Action Plan has identified 28 main priority areas associated to those mandates that require collective action by the UNDG. The Action Plan identifies common actions for all members of the UNDG, as well as indicators to track progress. Some of the challenges arising from the QCPR mandates can be summarized as follows:

- *Funding*

7. The resolution urges Member States to substantially increase their voluntary contributions on a multi-year basis, in a sustained and predictable manner. The resolution called for integrated budgetary frameworks at headquarters and common budgetary frameworks at country level.

- *National capacity building*

8. Based on national leadership and priorities, the UNDS is called to effectively support national institutions, including by using national systems and building capacities, in order to respond to national and global challenges.

- *Improved functioning of the UN development system*

9. Dealing with the way the UN operates, the resolution looks at the instruments and processes that support and enable programming, business practices, functioning of the RC system and DaO approach. Some of the key aspects are:

- National governments play a central role in all phases of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process;
- All UN planning and programming documents should be further simplified and fully aligned with national priorities;
- Appropriate decentralization of authority from headquarters to country-level representatives for making financial and programmatic decisions is needed;
- RCs play a central role, under the leadership of programme country governments, in coordinating UN activities. They can propose, in full consultation with governments and individual agencies, amendments to programmes to align them with UNDAFs, as well as amendments to the UNDAF itself, if they are no longer aligned with national needs, priorities and challenges;
- Modalities of the RC system funding need to be elaborated, and the “functional firewall” fully implemented;
- The DaO process should be consolidated by developing an integrated package of support including standard operating procedures and guidance for each of the five “ones”²; and
- Further simplification and harmonization of business practices is needed.

10. DESA prepares annual reports of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) on the implementation of UNGA resolution 67/226, which are released during the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment. As requested by ECOSOC resolution 2013/5, a new single, coherent and comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework was developed for this purpose. The latest report provides an overview of results achieved as well as measures and processes to implement the QCPR as of the end of 2014. Generally speaking, progress has reportedly been good on many mandates, though it was uneven in some areas relating to the coherent and effective functioning of the UNDS. It is particularly worth noting that SOPs, centred around five “ones” - One Program; Common Budgetary Framework and One Fund; One Leader; Operating as One or “One Business”; and Communicating as One - were endorsed by the UNDG in early 2013, albeit with concerns by several agencies. A Plan of Action for headquarters in support to the SOPs was endorsed by the UNDG in early 2014. The UNSG’s report further underscored that inter-governmental processes, including the establishment of the High-level Political Forum and the strengthening of ECOSOC, had also charted courses of action to improve system-wide coherence in policy and implementation. It highlighted that future follow-up to the QCPR ought to be situated in the evolving post-2015 development agenda, and that there was a need for an internal reflection by the

² ECOSOC would then consider options for the Executive Boards of funds and programmes to review and approve country programme documents as part of One Programme documents for DaO countries.

UNDS on policy coherence and fit for purpose in the context of changes in the overall global environment and new development cooperation landscape.

Chapter 3: Capacity of the United Nations Development System to Deliver Results in Support of Member States in the Post-2015 Era

Framing question: What are the critical capacities that the UNDS will need to put in place and further develop to respond to the changing needs of today's and the post-2015 development landscape?

11. This chapter addresses the issue of the capacity of the UNDS to deliver results that are relevant to the transformative agenda emanating from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It examines the relationship of such capacities with the emerging functions, organizational arrangements and business models that the UNDS will have to advance and adopt during the coming years. It reviews the evolution of UNDS capacities during the last decades and suggests some lessons learned as well as some likely implications of the post-2015 development agenda. Throughout, the chapter speaks to inter-linkages with the six other dimensions that are the focus of the ongoing ECOSOC dialogue. The chapter ends with suggested questions for Member States' discussions of the subject.

3.1 Evolution of the Work of the UN Development System and of Strategies to Strengthen its Capacities

12. This section briefly reviews the evolution of the internal capacities of the UNDS over the past couple of decades and describes the current state of play/thinking. It reveals imbalances between the current profile of capacities of the UNDS, very much oriented towards project implementation and resource mobilization, and the required capacities associated in greater degree with building national capacities, providing upstream policy advice, leveraging partnerships, issuing norms and standards and generating necessary evidence for advocacy and sound accountability practices.

13. The scope of the UNDS's work and size of its operations have grown considerably. They are, however, difficult to sustain, particularly with the current levels and types of funding received. Operations comprise support for technical and normative activities as well as ad hoc project activities. Especially the latter have increased considerably as a consequence of the growth in voluntary official development assistance (ODA) contributions and the relative and absolute shrinkage of assessed contributions. Growth in project activities has forced the UNDS throughout the last three decades to become, de facto, an operational arm of ODA from member countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This has "bilateralized" many activities of the UNDS, especially at country level. Consequently, the bulk of UNDS capacities, especially at the country level, has shifted towards project management and implementation as well as resource mobilization, thus affecting the multilateral advocacy, policy, normative and collective action functions and the effectiveness of the UNDS's upstream technical cooperation delivery in support of Member States. The capacities present across the different levels of organizations of the UNDS are not optimally aligned with the need for producing institutional strengthening and capacity-building efforts in Member States.

14. The current ECOSOC dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system has highlighted the fact that the historical evolution of functions and the juxtaposition of mandates of the UNDS have introduced a changing nature in the internal capacities of the system throughout the different decades in the life of the UN system. This has not always followed a coherent logic and in many respects has implied building new layers on top of old layers without fully replacing them. It has also identified that “a 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”³, thus characterizing the following eight potential key functions of the UNDS in response to the post-2015 development agenda, its universal nature, and other key drivers of change:

- Support to countries to respond to national development challenges in a wide range of areas
- Normative and technical support to countries to ensure that no-one is left behind
- Support to countries to address global development challenges
- Invest in conflict prevention, disaster-risk reduction, peace-building, humanitarian assistance, recovery and resilience-building
- Support to South-South and triangular cooperation
- Partnership-building and stakeholder engagement
- Integrated policy advice/advocacy and
- Strategic innovations in development

15. It can be argued that this taxonomy is a mixture of three different things: strategic approaches to the work of the UNDS, functions of the UNDS and possible business models of the UNDS. In addition it is important to note that, in future, it will be useful to drill down into these areas and tease out what is the nature of the work the UNDS ought to do (functions in actionable terms), which are the organizational arrangements, capacities and business models that ought to be adopted to carry out those functions and which are the strategic approaches that the system should adopt to carry out the functions within the organizational arrangements that are deemed useful. All of these will then shed the necessary light into the nature of the impact that the UNDS ought to pursue.

16. Having said this, the main problems in connection with a “system-wide operating model” or “way of doing business” as identified by several reports⁴ and Member States can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of a unified system-wide operating model: There is no organizational process overview of how the current operating model works;
- Lack of consistency, harmony, coherence and uniformity of processes. Although policies and systems are in place, the UNDS currently applies different process and standards across its organizations;
- Unclear division of labour: The lack of clear division of labour, segregation of activities, roles, and accountability across the organizations that form the UNDS lead to duplications, weak effectiveness and efficiency and low impact, especially at country level;

³ UN DESA: 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 on Functions (April 2015).

⁴ Carsten Staur: Shared Responsibility - The United Nations in the Age of Globalization, McGill-Queens University Press, 2013. Weiss, Thomas and Thakur, Ramesh: Global Governance and the UN, United Nations Intellectual History Project Series, Indiana University Press, 2005.

- Lack of compliance with standard operating procedures and insufficient monitoring and accountability practices for ensuring their implementation;
- Lack of synergy between the different levels to allow for the delivery of well-defined products and services;
- More prominent triangular or South-South cooperation: Countries are helping each other solve problems that all countries face, regardless of level of income, such as those related to integrating economic and environmental agendas, reaching marginalized groups with public and social services, and improving and innovating the way in which public services are delivered;
- Increasing influence of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) within the international arena: These countries represent around 25% of the world's gross national income, and more than 40% of the world's population.⁵ Although much attention has been paid to their economic performance, less widely noted is the fact that these countries are also well positioned to exert a significant influence on development cooperation. Other emergent economies such as Mexico, The Republic of Korea and Indonesia are also playing an increasing influence in the international scene.

17. The high-level symposium “Development cooperation in a post-2015 era: Sustainable development for all” held in Montreux, Switzerland, in October 2014, provided an opportunity to discuss how development cooperation can help advance sustainable development for all in the post-2015 era. It included deliberations on the implications of a post-2015 development agenda that is both unified and universal. One of the central issues in the debate was the role of Official Development Aid (ODA). The representatives of G77 countries underscored that it will continue to be central to future modalities of development cooperation whereas OECD countries, especially the major donors, tended to minimize the role of ODA and to emphasize the increasing role of private sector and domestic flows of resources in the future of development cooperation. The discussions revolved around the following issues:

- What are the implications that a post-2015 agenda could have for the allocation of different types of resources among and within countries and sectors?
- How can development cooperation be used to mobilize additional public and private sources to finance sustainable development?
- How to ensure coherence in approaches to different types of financing and improve accessibility of funding?
- How would global monitoring of and accountability for development cooperation have to evolve in the post-2015 setting?

18. It was clearly recognized that the transition towards a development agenda that is unified, bringing poverty eradication and sustainable development, and universal, applying to all countries, has to be achieved in a significantly changed international context. During the meeting the debates underscored that particular attention will be required to strike the right balance between social equity concerns and the financing of global public goods as well as to enhance the mobilization of additional domestic and international public and private resources for the larger financing needs of a global development agenda. As the high-level symposium concluded: “The traditional North-South framework for pursuing global

⁵ World Bank: World Development Indicators Database, 2013.

development cooperation is losing its hold. Sustainability has moved out of its environmental confines and is set to become a centrepiece of a post-2015 development agenda. A new narrative of international development cooperation is urgently needed that matches the changed development landscape”.

19. The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) organized by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in July 2014 entitled “Bringing the future of development cooperation to post-2015” provided the opportunity to review the contextual elements of development cooperation associated with:

- trends and progress in international development cooperation
- ways to advance a unified and universal development agenda
- the critical role of ODA in development cooperation post 2015
- extract lessons from South-South cooperation and learn from them in looking to the future
- a renewed partnership for development could work in practice
- how the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda will among others, require greater focus on enhancing the effectiveness, quality and accountability of development cooperation to ensure the achievement of lasting development results
- key steps towards a global post-2015 monitoring and accountability framework for development cooperation
- shaping of a new narrative for development cooperation post 2015

20. DCF discussions were centred around the notion of a renewed global partnership for development that puts greater emphasis on strengthening accountability for commitments made. The outcome of the DCF will influence without a doubt the continuation of the post-2015 debate as well as deliberations on the fitness for purpose of the UNDS both within the UN Chief Executives' Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary mechanisms as well as within the ECOSOC.

21. During the workshop on functions of the ECOSOC dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UNDS, held on 17 April 2015, it was concluded that “the universal and integrated nature of the post-2015 development framework adds to the need to further reflect on what the UN functions in middle and high-income countries should be (...). For the UN system to deliver on the implications of the universality of the post-2015 development agenda and to respond to the increasingly differentiated country capacities and needs, the issues of efficiency, effectiveness, coordination and coherence are the critical elements (...). The system has already done a lot of work to that end, but can and must continue to build on and add to the ongoing work (...) to explore further ‘what’ and ‘how’ we can have a UN fit-for-purpose” placing the discussion of a UN fit-for-purpose into the broader picture, and focusing on bigger issues”.⁶

3.2 Some Lessons Learned

22. *In this section, some lessons learned regarding the UNDS capacities have been identified from the above retrospective. They provide useful elements for the forward-looking definition of the capacities the UNDS is expected to have in the years to come in the following section.*

⁶ Closing remarks by H.E. Mrs. Maria Emma Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia and Vice-President of ECOSOC.

23. The following strategic issues related to the capacities of the UNDS can be identified:

- The need for a theory of change that identifies the expected contributions from the UNDS to the worldwide transformative agenda for advancing a sustainable development paradigm;
- The importance of ensuring “capacities of the UNDS to build capacity in Member States” as the primary way of delivering technical cooperation especially in light of the gradual fading away of the function of direct service provision;
- The need for the UNDS to play a catalytic role in support of the transformative agenda associated to the post 2015 era;
- The need for a shift of intellectual and organizational capacities required to perform the functions that the UNDS is expected to perform in the post-2015 era;
- The relevance of having a UNDS that has the ability to mobilize capacities of Member States;
- The need for building synergies between the capacities of the UNDS and the capacities of the peace-keeping and humanitarian streams of work of the UN so there can be a meaningful impact generated in an integrated manner; and
- The importance of differentiating the capacities depending on the subject of technical cooperation and on the economic, social and political context of each Member State.

24. The evolution of the UNDS capacities described in the previous section ought to undergo substantial modifications in the way of "doing business" both in quantitative and qualitative terms and be accompanied by a revision of the UNDS-wide operating model for rationalizing the work of its organizations and for defining a solid basis for its financial sustainability. The establishment of priorities for the core business of the UNDS, to be agreed upon by the UNGA in light of the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda setting, should be translated into a more focused operational programmatic thrust for UNDS organizations.

25. In a system-wide operating model the policies, strategies, technical developments, program management practices, partnerships, initiatives and resource mobilization efforts will have to be better coordinated and should present a common face to the external world. This requires the UNDS to have a very different set of skills and staffing patterns, which in turn will translate in qualitatively different capacities.

26. The UNDS, through its managerial processes and internal governance practices, should fully internalize this new system-wide operating model as part of the system’s repositioning endeavours and elaborate a plan for implementing it across its different components within a relatively short period of time. Gradualism is not the best approach when dramatic transformations are warranted.

27. The capacities that dominate the business models of UNDS organizations, especially at country level, are not necessarily the same capacities needed for the new development cooperation agenda and for fulfilling the new roles of the UNDS. The proliferation of activities funded by voluntary contributions has favoured a model of capacities for project implementation, filling gaps that Member States cannot fill, and formulating and implementing direct services in lieu of or in parallel with national counterparts. There is a need to incentivize a shift so the UNDS have the capacities to build national capacities, provide policy advice, broker knowledge, catalyse national action, and convene stakeholders that can have a

catalytic role in supporting the advancement of the transformative agendas at the national, regional and global level.

28. The increasing capacity of many Member States, in particular of middle-income-countries, should encourage the UNDS to reflect on the need for development cooperation practices among countries that are more centred around knowledge sharing, joint endeavours, common platforms of action, collective efforts for undertaking basic and applied research and technology transfer supported and catalysed by the UNDS. This has major implications on the internal capacities of the UNDS and highlights the need for re-profiling current capacities that are excessively driven by project implementation and resource mobilization imperatives at the expense of capacity-building capacities.

3.3 Likely Implications of the Post-2015 Era for the Capacities of the UN Development System

29. This section underscores the importance of reform and change by contrasting the status quo - both in terms of programme and business operations - with identified needs and the transformative agenda derived from the post-2015 compact. It speaks to the required capacity of the UNDS to perform the functions that it is supposed to perform in a post-2015 world - at country, regional and global levels - and to fulfil a catalytic role in the new paradigm of international development cooperation. This section attempts to identify key elements of an improved operating model for the work of the UNDS. It considers the readiness of UNDS human capital and organizational arrangements to adopt the business models that will permit the attainment of results and an impact differentiated according to diverse contexts. Furthermore, this section identifies major factors (including bottlenecks) influencing effective UNDS internal capacity for enhancing development cooperation within the new paradigm of universality and highlights possible innovations.

The remit of the UN development system in the post-2015 era

30. What will be the remit of the UNDS, within the larger development cooperation architecture, to support Member States advance the post-2015 agenda? Will it focus its mandate and the scope and reach of its activities to be strategic and targeted in an era of restricted resources or will it continue with a myriad of mandates and with sub-optimal coherence and relevance? The challenge ahead is to build a more effective, more meaningful and more relevant process of development cooperation in light of a more inclusive post-2015 development agenda. This implies a shift to a universal and transformative development agenda - where action is by all for the benefits of all.

31. This calls upon the development cooperation architecture at large, the multilateral system in general and the UNDS in particular, to go beyond the current aid paradigm and encompass a broader range of means of implementation. Development aid alone is insufficient. Middle-income-countries may have seen their GDP per capita increase in recent years, but they also have the largest number of people living in poverty and the greatest level of inequity in the world. Targeting the most excluded within countries and the poorest countries and regions remains relevant.

32. A universal agenda is one that promotes sustainable development in all its dimensions and in all societies. The concept of universality includes issues that are of common concern, do not affect countries and peoples in the same way or degree, and might not be applicable everywhere, but that

require common action and commitment. Universal concerns require differentiated responses. Hence the dichotomy between “developing” and “industrialized” countries is less and less relevant. However, universality for the UNDS should not mean trying to do everything, everywhere. The UNDS should assume its responsibility to deliver where it can bring most value in each context, across the range of issues in the post-2015 development agenda.

33. A universal agenda also means that the development cooperation architecture in general and the UN system in particular have to contribute towards enhanced provision of global public goods. Therefore, in the immediate future the UNDS needs to be able to concentrate on enhancing the provision and facilitating access to global public goods. This is one of the fundamental drivers for transitioning from aid-centred to universal - global public goods-centred development. At the same time, the UNDS has to move in a direction that permits building greater equity and greater inclusiveness in the application of the norms, standards and human rights principles.

34. UNDS capacities require adapting to working together with Member States at very different levels of development; to integrate different forms of cooperation in order to support sustainable economic, social and environmental change; to develop partnerships with relevant actors; and to facilitate the negotiation and effective implementation of international agreements in support of global public goods. Those capacities are already present within the system but are differently distributed according to the humanitarian, economic and normative mandates of different agencies.

35. The emerging needs and new demands faced by the UNDS warrant the development of a revised strategic direction of its work based on a shared vision of its long-term pursuit. This should be accompanied by an improved way of organizing the work of the UNDS while ensuring an optimal coordination between its different parts at all levels. The UNDS will need to deliver as one and in addition maintain relevance for Member States’ transformative agendas. A strategic reorientation whereby the UNDS concentrates its efforts in areas of action that make a difference in improving people’s well-being in a sustainable manner is required, particularly in light of the evolving development agendas of Member States, of the changing global architecture and of the financial constraints of the world’s economy.

36. The work of the UNDS has to undergo substantial changes. To this end it is necessary to articulate a system-wide operating model that allows the UNDS to better implement the programmatic priorities within its areas of core business endorsed by Member States at the Sustainable Development Summit in a relevant, efficient, effective and transparent manner.

Greater fitness for purpose

37. A very important part of the fitness for purpose efforts consists in better defining the purpose of the UNDS in light of the Member State-driven definition of the post-2015 agenda. This means a clearer definition of the what, not so much in terms of principles or in terms of process but rather in terms of substance. The UNDS cannot and should not undertake the responsibility of delivering cooperation for the entire spectrum of the post-2015 development agenda. If the UNDS does not focus its purpose and concentrate on selected strategic priorities it will end up spreading itself too thinly. The name of the

game for the future will be to narrow down the remit of the UNDS, especially in the collective actions of the UNDS, and concentrate efforts on a few strategic propositions.

38. Therefore fitness for purpose should consist in delivering joint work, especially at the country level, in those areas of concentration where the UNDS has a comparative advantage and where its action can generate global public goods aimed at eradicating poverty and contributing to sustainable development. This will imply doing the necessary work to ensure human rights and social protection in a globalized economy and society. At the same time, the UNDS should also continue addressing the challenges of peace and security in an increasingly complex world and geopolitical environment.

39. There is a need for reaching a consensus on the strategic areas where the UNDS should work together, over and above the individual mandates of individual UN organizations, and have a clear endorsement of this consensus by Member States. The UNDS ought to go beyond the current silos approach of the individual organizations remit and mandate. Therefore, more than coordination or integration, we should speak about coherent joint action in those areas contained in the new post-2015 agenda, especially in those fields where joint work will make a difference at the country level.

40. Those areas should have the attribute of requiring multi-sectoral coalitions and promote multi-agency work. In addition, it is likely that they will require a multi-stakeholder approach beyond governments and multilateral organizations. However, it will be extremely important to define criteria for the selection of those areas of work and for the engagement of other stakeholders. Some examples could be migration and development, social protection, and food and nutrition security. They could also be important leit-motifs for promoting coherence and coordination between the humanitarian response, the development efforts and the peace and security actions within a human rights framework.

41. The UNDS ought to move towards global public goods that are truly universal and norms and standards that are relevant for all. At the same time, it should go in a direction that permits building greater equity and greater inclusiveness in the application of the human rights principles. In this regard, it is important not to forget that UN normative work is not only confined to the human rights-based normative agenda but also encompasses norms and standards that are advanced by the UN specialized agencies and the platforms, mechanisms and actions that constitute global public goods.

How to go about it?

42. An important discussion in the discussion is about the how. This means discussing how to deliver support to those strategic areas and what are the best ways to do it, what kind of country-level business models will respond to the post-2015 agenda with support from the global and regional levels? This should be a discussion not only in terms of process but particularly referred to content. It is a deliberation that goes beyond comprehensive policy reviews and the DaO approach. In brief, it is a conversation about the nature of what the UNDS will deliver and how it will do it. How will the UNDS go about re-profiling itself to improve its fitness for purpose? What measures will it have to take to modify its way of doing business? Which capacities should be in place so the UNDS can perform its roles? This in turn raises the questions of what should be the role of the UNDS within the wider development cooperation architecture and how its action should lever other forces of international nature in support of national, regional and global sustainable development.

43. The UNDS plays multifaceted roles in different contexts: firstly, towards programme countries; secondly, internally towards UN operational activities for development; and thirdly, externally towards other stakeholders. One of the UN's comparative advantages resides in its convener role. As such the UNDS should be taking a lead role in supporting Member States in a wider external coordination of development stakeholders.

44. This debate is closely related to the definition of the role of the UNDS within the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC⁷) and to the discussion of the global governance of the development cooperation architecture. It implies recognizing the importance of cooperation among countries and of the important contribution that South-South and triangular cooperation can make to sustainable development as well as stepping up efforts towards gender equality, promoting sustainable development in fragile circumstances and strengthening resilience.

45. Moreover, it will be important to capitalize progress already made in pursuing greater coherence at the country level, and emphasizing the need to maximize, scale up or improve instruments and mechanisms that have already demonstrated results and/or potential. Where possible, the UNDS should build on what has worked, in terms of both approaches and instruments. Ongoing efforts and reforms undertaken by individual UN organizations for developing greater fitness for purpose should also be taken into account.

System-wide operating model of the UN development system

46. A central pillar of the repositioning of the UNDS is the creation of an effective operating model in such a way that the following objectives can be accomplished:

- Attain greater organizational effectiveness with particular emphasis on improved performance at country level;
- Define the roles and responsibilities, the division of labour and the internal governance arrangements among UN organizations and between levels;
- Identify options for rationalizing the financial base of UNDS activities including coherence between resource allocation and defined functions; and
- Provide solid frameworks for results-based management, for the staffing models of UN organizations, and for the formulation of the fundamental deliverables at all levels which will crystallize the programmatic objectives of the UNDS in support of the Member States' transformative agenda for attaining the SDGs.

47. UNDS work to support countries in their efforts to improve people's lives, minimize the consequences of crises and attain the SDGs requires a high level of coordinated work between its different parts. Action needs to be as seamless as possible across them to attain the necessary level of integrated responses. The way the UNDS should organize its work should therefore be guided by the following principles:

- Make the organizations that form the UNDS fit for purpose - relevant, effective, efficient, responsive, objective, transparent and accountable;
- Attain greater consistency and coherence in the way of working;

⁷ <http://effectivecooperation.org/>.

- Increase country focus;
- Rethink the modalities of technical cooperation;
- Strengthen the capacity to support the development and management of priority global public goods;
- Promote managerial accountability;
- Allocate resources strategically; and
- Align resource mobilization and resource allocation practices to the functions defined in the revised system-wide operating model.

48. This demands a reformulation of what will be done, how it will be done and where will be done; identifying what should be the substantive work in the coming years, how it should be carried out and what should be the division of labour within the UNDS. Hence, the UNDS-wide operating model needs to respond to the following three questions:

49. *What is the nature of work that the UNDS ought to do?* Which are the substantive areas that ought to be covered? This will have to be defined through a formulation of priorities within the debates of the post- 2015 development agenda. Member States should agree on the priorities for UNDS work in support of national, regional and global transformations that should be taking place to attain the SDGs. Definitions will need to follow in terms of the critical capacities needed to put in place a revised system-wide operating model and the corollaries in term of the staffing model and the planning process aligned with them.

50. *How should the UNDS do this work?* Which are the key functions that need to be performed? Which functions should be temporary or project based and which ones ought to be performed on a permanent basis? How should the UNDS organize itself to perform these functions? How should the technical, managerial and administrative expertise of the UNDS organizations be aligned to build the foundations of an effective system-wide operating model?

51. *Where this work should be done?* What should be the division of labour? Which components of the functions should be performed at country, sub-regional, regional and headquarter levels?

52. Further on, the main outputs and outcomes to be delivered by the UNDS in each of its core business areas should be defined as part of the operating model, translating into new strategic programmes for the period 2016-2020. Therefore, this stream of work ought to dovetail with three other streams of work to reposition the UNDS - i.e., results-based management, improved accountability and human resources management.

What should the architecture of the UNDS-wide operating model look like?

53. The fundamental architecture of a repositioned UNDS-wide operating model would encompass the implementation of catalytic actions in the seven substantive areas of work (core business) related to the post-2015 agenda as defined in the UNSG's Synthesis Report⁸, which encompass the 17 goals defined by the Open Working Group (OWG) of the UNGA on Sustainable Development Goals⁹. Secondly, it would

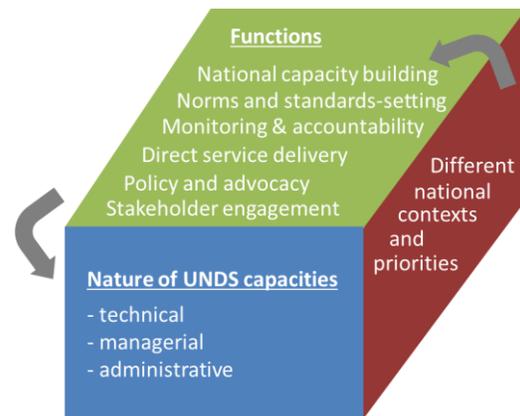
⁸ A/69/700 (2014).

⁹ A/68/970: Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, 2014.

include the definition and operationalization of new and relevant ongoing functions that need to be performed by the UNDS. Thirdly, it should identify a complementary and synergistic division of labour across UN organizations and between levels. As depicted in Figure 1 for programme countries, this can be represented by a three-dimensional matrix, composed of:

- Seven substantive areas (core business)
- Eight functions
 - Formulation of policies and strategies and advocacy
 - Development of norms, tools and standards
 - Technical support for capacity building
 - Fostering cooperation among countries
 - Leveraging of partnerships
 - Monitoring global norms and standards and progress towards internationally-agreed goals
 - Research and innovation
 - Knowledge brokerage and management
- Three different levels where the work of the Organization is carried out, namely
 - Country level
 - Regional and sub-regional level
 - Headquarters level

Figure 1: Linkages between UNDS capacities and functions - effective system-wide operating model: UNDS capacities are an expression of UNDS functions adapted to a particular post-2015 country setting



Source: Alison King & Daniel Lopez-Alcuna

54. Strictly speaking, the more direct action and operational work of the UNDS, especially in peace building efforts and humanitarian response, is not contained within those eight functions; neither is the gap filling dimension well reflected. It could therefore be useful to consider an additional 9th function, applicable in exceptional situations, to have a full picture of the necessary capacities of the UNDS, formulated as follows:

- Direct action and operational work for filling gaps

55. This would have major implications for the work of the UNDS and demand considerable adjustments to the institutional capacities of its organizations to satisfy Member State expectations. It would imply having capacities in place in countries in crisis for fulfilling the functions of direct service delivery that the countries themselves are not able to perform.

56. This architecture requires a reformulation of the managerial process with explicit rules of internal governance to make sure that it functions effectively and efficiently. To this end, the components of the functions which are the responsibility of each organization of the UNDS need to be better defined and aligned to programmatic objectives. Synergies and complementarities among functions need to be improved. Human and financial resource allocations would need to follow the logic of the operating model for attaining greater efficiency and financial sustainability.

How should the work of the UNDS be organized and what are the implications in terms of internal capacities?

57. An effective UNDS-wide operating model would include:

- the attributes of a unified/corporate way of working;
- clear definition of roles and responsibilities of its different organizational components;
- identification of synergies and economies of scale/skill; and
- an new organizational design responding to the characteristics of the improved operating model

58. A number of critical factors, summarized in the following paragraphs, would need to be keyed into the equation of a new operating model.

a) Increased country focus

59. The way of organizing and conducting the work of the UNDS should be more country focused and geared towards the attainment of impact. To this end the UNDS should use a typology of countries (a set of country archetypes) according to defined criteria, which would facilitate a more standardized approach to country programmes and to capacities corresponding to certain staffing models. Grouping countries according to commonalities and challenges can help the UNDS to share best practices in comparable situations and foster inter-country cooperation. To adopt a functional grouping of countries based on their respective needs and capacities will help the UNDS to adjust the nature and size of its presence. This characterization of different country programme scenarios would result in a deployment of highly-qualified and suitable managerial, technical and administrative human resources to country offices. Specific measures to be taken to this end would be the following:

- Deploy international technical experts at country level for covering the key areas of the core business of the UNDS, on the basis of country needs defined in the UNDAFs;
- Take into consideration the level of required country presence given the existence of national capacities and availability of regional and sub-regional expertise for backstopping country programmes;
- Shift managerial, technical and administrative posts currently at headquarters, regional and sub-regional levels to country offices;
- Deploy staff taking into account the required level of country presence and the absorption capacity of the country programmes; and
- Define core products and services to be delivered at country level, adapted to different country profiles and scenarios, which will guide the managerial, technical and administrative staffing model for country programmes.

b) Decentralization

60. The UNDS decentralized structure is an asset. Organizational changes should be aimed at clarifying and streamlining roles at country, regional and headquarters levels. They should seek to attain complementarities and synergies based on the principles of joint but differentiated responsibilities as well as the application of the principle of subsidiarity, an organizational principle implying that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest of least-centralized level of competent authority. In a revised system-wide operating model, headquarters and regional offices should have a subsidiary role - e.g., performing only those tasks that cannot be performed effectively and efficiently at a more immediate or local level. These organizational principles should be accompanied by a corresponding

level of delegation of authority for expediting managerial processes and by a clear accountability framework both in programme and financial terms.

c) Networks and hubs of expertise

61. The UNDS ought to revisit the ways in which identifies, accesses and mobilizes expertise, both internally and externally. As first priority, organizations should create and manage greater connectivity among their experts located in multiple locations through virtual functional networks leveraging information technology to facilitate collaboration. Such a modality of working in networks would require a clear definition of the managerial process for running these virtual groups in a unified fashion. They should assess the desirability of physically concentrating specialized expertise in a limited number of hubs that have an adequate critical mass for technical interaction while having an ability to provide support to country needs and tap into the national expertise. This could typically add value in the case of activities that are knowledge based, low volume and high value adding. Such teams would be placed where the highest standard of achievement are aimed for in a particular sphere of activity. They are teams of people that promote collaboration using best practice around a specific focus area to drive results.

d) Vertical and horizontal synergies

62. What are the ways of organizing the work of the UNDS so it can deliver coherently? What works well and could be used more broadly? The answers to these two questions are fundamental for improving the system-wide operating model so the different parts of the system operate in a more unified fashion. There is a need to avoid duplication as well as to articulate, plan and coordinate in a better fashion the activities across the UNDS according to agreed roles and functions. Synergies require the development of an appropriate environment and innovative mechanisms identified within the tri-dimensional matrix of core business, functions and levels, using opportunities provided by the external environment. This should be based on some existing good practices within and outside the UNDS. Some of the possible ways of creating vertical synergies (across levels of the UNDS) as well as horizontal synergies (within a given level of the organization) are:

- Joint planning
- Peer review processes of work plans, implementation processes and technical developments
- Joint monitoring and evaluation
- Multi-level teams responsible for development and achievement of results

e) Cross-cutting mandates and global support functions

63. The UNDS is committed to human rights and gender equality as enshrined in the UN Charter and international treaties. These values must be reflected in all work of the UNDS across the three levels. This approach, which applies also to other cross-cutting mandates, should be reflected in a renewed set of internal capacities consonant with the capacities of its country counterparts. It cannot be efficiently addressed by the current silos structure. These values and mandates should be incorporated, mainstreamed into the work of each UNDS organization and promoted at the global regional and country levels

64. A different approach should be taken as regards corporate shared functions or global support functions that require complementarities, synergies and cost-effectiveness such as communication, security, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation and, to various degrees, where there is a possibility of economy of scale - i.e., information and communication technology, procurement and travel.

f) New business models and human resources issues

65. The concept of “new business model” is central. A broad interpretation of the concept should be adopted with less focus on tools and processes and more on demonstrating how the UNDS can be organized in innovative but cost-effective ways to deliver action, providing added value to Member States. More specifically, it is important to look at the different ways of organizing the UNDS work especially at the country level, taking into account the multiplicity of situations in which it operates. Overall, the presence of the UN as well as the business models developed to implement programmes should be guided by the principles of bringing added value and utilizing the comparative advantages that the UN can bring through its unique mandates.

66. Regarding human resources of the UNDS, the general challenges/issues linked to the management of human resources in a comprehensive manner will have to adopt innovative proposals regarding the way forward with the UNDS workforce, which will be central for the UNDS to become truly fit for purpose. Characteristics of such a workforce should include a focus on continuous learning and innovation, results-oriented and risk management-driven decision making and ability to partner effectively, bringing together and managing a large group of diverse stakeholders. A review of UN hiring practices should be initiated, to ensure that the system hires top talents and does not risk mediocrity. More harmonized human resources practices and a single, positive UN brand, while not easy to achieve in the short term, would increase the effectiveness of the UNDS and improve its image as an employer.

Implications of the functions identified in the ECOSOC dialogue on UNDS capacities

67. The ECOSOC dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UNDS in the context of the post-2015 development agenda¹⁰ has come to the preliminary conclusion that “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 silos approach to integrated service delivery will be critical”. In addition, it highlighted the need 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

¹⁰ UN DESA: 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 on Functions (April 2015).

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.”

68. However, the functions that have been identified as those the UN system should concentrate on during the coming years are not always accompanied by the readily-available internal capacities to make them a reality, especially at country level. Therefore, some fundamental capacities need to be developed by attracting the right kind of talent and skill mix as well as training existing human resources able to make the shift to the new emerging demands.

69. In a nutshell, the UNDS should do the necessary to ensure the following internal capacities for advancing the eight identified functions:

a) Support to countries to respond to national development challenges in a wide range of areas

70. Capacities needed in this area are “capacities to build capacity”. This entails the skills and competencies to identify critical needs of institutional building in the different domains of the post-2015 agenda, to develop strategic interventions for supporting national transformational agendas and consolidating national institutions, as well as the capacity to mobilize national public and private expertise for contributing to UN actions in support of national sustainable development agendas.

b) Normative and technical support to countries to ensure that no-one is left behind

71. The UNDS should ensure the necessary internal capacity for supporting Member States in their efforts to reduce inequities, eradicate poverty and attain the SDGs. This encompasses capacities for supporting Member States in terms of establishing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating normative standards and agreed-upon goals. It calls for strong analytical and policy making capacities as well as knowledge management and evidence-based decision-making competencies.

c) Support to countries to address global development challenges

72. This function will require competencies in harnessing the instruments of development cooperation and ability to support Member States to comply with their commitments to undertake collective action within the framework of the UN and for meeting their obligations under agreed international treaties and instruments. As national capacities develop in this sphere there will be lesser and lesser need for the UNDS of undertaking purely operational activities.

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

73. A critical level of operational capacity to rapidly organize the international response in crises and natural disasters should be available in those UNDS institutions that play a role in humanitarian recovery and peace-building efforts. However, these capacities will never be sufficient for coping with the magnitude of needs associated with disasters and crises and should be the seed for catalysing a greater surge ability reliant on UN Member States’ assets and skills. This can ensure that the basic needs of the affected populations are met, responding to the humanitarian imperative, while building the foundations of long-term sustainable development.

e) Support to South-South and triangular cooperation

74. Capacity to understand the changing nature of development cooperation and the relevance of cooperation among countries as well as to encourage and promote South-South and triangular cooperation is of the essence. This includes analytical policy making and managerial capacities to support and strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation.

f) Partnership-building and stakeholder engagement

75. Internal capacity to convene multi-sector efforts and issue-based partnerships aligned with normative values and standards and good governance principles will be needed. This should be done at country level in alignment with national plans and priorities and without replacing the leading role of national authorities. These competencies encompass capacity to convene, enhance the engagement of multiple stakeholders fostering inclusiveness, and facilitate collective responses to global development challenges in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

g) Integrated policy advice/advocacy

76. The UNDS will need capacities to gather evidence, to translate it into policy advice and to undertake the necessary advocacy for the new sustainable development agenda. A challenge will be to reconcile the three pillars of the organization (peace and security, human rights and development) and the three dimensions of sustainable development in a truly integrated policy formulation process. This involves as well analytical and knowledge brokerage capacities.

h) Strategic innovations in development

77. It will be important to have a UNDS with greater capacity to orchestrate strategic research and to innovate in the delivery of technical cooperation. This should not be confused with making the UNDS a collection of research institutions. The UNDS should identify the critical areas that require generation of new knowledge and innovation and should have the ability to engage the academic research communities of Member States to engage in the production of the knowledge relevant for the transformative process associated to the post 2015 development agenda.

78. In conclusion, a critical challenge ahead will be mapping the current capacities of the UNDS and comparing them with those mentioned above required in the future. This will permit the establishment of gaps that need to be filled to make the UNDS more fit for the purpose of supporting Member States efforts attain the SDGs.

3.4 Selected Discussion Questions

79. The chapter concludes with a few questions aimed at informing the deliberations on how UNDS capacities should evolve and adapt to the new realities and agendas to contribute to its repositioning, taking into account the evolving development cooperation architecture as well as the high expectations of Member States.

- 1) Does the UNDS have a clear notion of what kind of capacities are needed to build national capacity and institutional developments in Member States?
- 2) What kind of intellectual and organizational capacities are required for the UNDS to perform the functions it is expected to perform? Are these capacities uniform across agencies and across

countries or should they be differentiated depending on the subject of technical cooperation and on the economic, social and political context of each Member State?

- 3) Are capacities in place? Do they need to be supplemented or furthered at a faster speed to ensure the UNDS is relevant and effective? Is the capacity issue exclusively related to internal capacities of the UNDS or should future efforts rely much more on the UNDS ability to mobilize capacities of Member States?
- 4) Can capacities of the UNDS be discussed on their own or do synergies with capacities of the peace-keeping and humanitarian streams of work of the UN need to be kept in mind?
- 5) Is the three-dimensional matrix of substantive areas, functions and levels, as presented above, useful for defining a revised operating model that can help the UNDS reposition itself in light of the post-2015 challenges?
- 6) Are the suggested capacities for advancing each of the eight functions suggested in the ECOSOC dialogue the right ones? Are capacities missing?
- 7) How should capacity gaps be filled.

Chapter 4: Enhancing Impact of the UN Development System in the Post-2015 Era by Strengthening Results Management and System-wide Accountability

Framing Question: What is the nature of the impact that should be expected from the UN development system in the post-2015 era and how to strengthen results management and system-wide accountability to contribute to that end?

80. This chapter examines the nature of impact the UNDS is expected to have on people and the environment in the years to come. It discusses the evolution of management strategies for planning, measuring and reporting on results for impact assessment and learning and accountability purposes. Building on a review of the subject, some lessons learned are suggested and likely implications of the universal post-2015 development agenda are highlighted. Throughout, the chapter speaks to inter-linkages with the six other dimensions that are the focus of the ongoing ECOSOC dialogue. It ends with selected questions for facilitating Member States' discussions on the subject.

4.1. Evolution of Results Management and Accountability

81. This section reviews key developments related to the nature of expected impact of the UNDS as well as to the evolution of programme management and accountability since the early 1990s - i.e., the era of global conferences, the MDGs, aid effectiveness principles and increased demand for UN system-wide coherence for a more effective response.

Achieving and measuring what?

82. German Development Institute Discussion Paper 22/2013 provides a useful overview of the evolving - until the change of the Millennium somewhat generic and limited - inter-governmental guidance on the expected impact of the UNDS - i.e., *what* long-term goals the UNDS should pursue - alongside other actors. The paper highlights guidance provided by the UN Charter to, *inter alia*, achieve international

cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It touches upon UNGA development decade declarations, points to the 1993 UNGA resolution 48/162¹¹, which references “United Nations goals, targets and programmes for action in the economic, social and related fields”, and emphasizes UNGA comprehensive policy review resolutions, especially following the Millennium Declaration and the elaboration of the MDGs.¹²

83. UNGA comprehensive policy reviews have further detailed Member State expectations of the UNDS. Formulated as objectives they are:

- Poverty is eradicated;
- Gender equality and women’s empowerment is achieved;
- Transition from relief to development has occurred;
- National capacities are built; and
- South-south cooperation takes place.

84. In so doing, the QCPR has mixed long-term effects (impact) which the UNDS is meant to help set in motion but which are beyond its control and short- to medium-term objectives (outcomes) for which the UNDS, together with its close partners, can be expected to demonstrate accountability for public funds. Also, literature review shows that there is currently a certain amount of vagueness in terms of guidance on the desirability and feasibility of system-wide performance metrics. Apart from in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment¹³, there are no common measures or key performance indicators. The UNGA has since 2008 repeatedly requested the UNDS to develop a common approach and framework for measuring progress in capacity development results. Such a system-wide approach is now planned to be ready for use in the course of 2015.

Evolution of management strategies for achieving and accounting for results...

85. The management dimension of programming, monitoring, evaluation and reporting has constantly grown in importance in the context of UN operational activities for development. Faced with pressures on funding and demands for greater efficiencies and effectiveness in view of contributing to international development goals, results-based management (RBM) - i.e., a management strategy focussing on results rather than on inputs or processes - has existed in some form or the other in the UNDS since the 1990s. It was not until towards the end 2000s that UN agencies progressively started to strengthen actual implementation of RBM within their respective organizations. An explicit inter-governmental affirmation of the importance of and a request to institutionalize RBM with the objective of contributing to improved development results and organizational effectiveness was not expressed by the UNGA until 2012. At the same time, the UNGA requested the UNDS to accelerate work to develop and sustain a results culture at all levels.

¹¹ On restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

¹² German Development Institute (DIE) Discussion Paper 22/2013: A Resolution for a Quiet Revolution - Taking the United Nations to Sustainable Development ‘Beyond Aid’, p14-17.

¹³ UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) and UNCT performance indicators for gender equality (scorecard), including both management and development results.

86. The UNGA has been very clear on the need for the UNDS to strengthen and use national capacities and systems in programme countries to uphold the principle of national ownership and leadership. This is also valid for planning, monitoring, evaluating and reporting. However, the development and utilization of national experts and institutions remain low: The percentage of programme country governments strongly agreeing that the UN system has generally been effective in developing national capacity is only 30.6% (2014), up from 24.1% in 2012¹⁴; the percentage strongly agreeing that the UN system uses national monitoring and reporting systems wherever possible, although increased from 10.2% in 2012 to 17.1% in 2014, is even less¹⁵. In 2014, only 15.7% of programme country governments strongly agreed that the UN had contributed to strengthening of national evaluation capacities.¹⁶ This disappointing situation undoubtedly contributed to the adoption in December 2014 of the first-ever stand-alone UNGA resolution on evaluation - i.e., A/69/237 "Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level".

...at the country level

87. The UNGA's main focus as regards programming, monitoring and reporting on UNDS activities has been at the country level, starting with the voluntary country strategy note¹⁷, which towards the end of the 1990s, due to slow progress, was replaced by the UNDAF and later on the One Programme as strategic planning and outcome-oriented frameworks. The UNDAF, while welcomed from its beginning, suffered from weaknesses such as insufficient agency participation, long preparation processes, high workload and transaction costs, low quality of design, inadequate alignment between UNDAF outcomes and agency-specific country programme document outcomes, insufficient harmonization with government planning cycles, and improvable monitoring, results reporting and evaluation. Moreover, the UNDAF was introduced on top of existing country programmes, adding an additional programming and management layer for country offices.

88. Member States never seriously considered the recommendation of the UNSG's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence to establish a Sustainable Development Board to review and oversee operational activities for development and to drive coordination.¹⁸ Thus, UNDS governance structures still require individual funds, programmes and specialized agencies to work through vertical silos with their respective governing bodies. In view of the financial and accountability roles that agency-specific country programmes therefore continue to play, the option of doing them away or approving common country programme documents was not entertained. Instead, opportunities for simplification and harmonization have been sought, all the while aiming to ensure - but not always succeeding - agencies' mutual coherence through alignment with UNDAF outcomes. To date, 13 agencies have simplified and harmonized their country programming instruments and processes.¹⁹ However, insufficiently-

¹⁴ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 24 (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

¹⁵ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 25 (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

¹⁶ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 98 (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

¹⁷ Country strategy notes were supposed to, *inter alia*, outline the contribution of the UNDS.

¹⁸ Delivering as one - Report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, November 2008 (A/61/583).

¹⁹ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 56 (A/70/62-E/2015/4). Amongst other things, the executive boards of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP at their first regular sessions of 2014 approved a

harmonized agency results framework structures, including the different levels at which expected results are pitched, continue to hamper joint monitoring of and reporting on UNDAF results.

89. Meanwhile, the 2012 QCPR reaffirmed the central role of the UNDAF process. UNDAF guidance materials have been refined, the preparation process is reported to take 12 months²⁰, cycles have been harmonized with government planning cycles in about two thirds of programme countries, a standard format for UNDAF reporting to national governments has been adopted, and 71.8% of UN country teams (UNCTs) have strengthened UNDS joint accountability by submitting UNDAF progress reports to national governments once in the past four years.²¹ Moreover, in 2012 and again in 2014, nearly half the programme countries strongly agreed that the UNDAF had helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had separately planned its support.²²

...at headquarters

90. The UNGA has brought around some improvements to corporate-level strategic planning of and reporting to governing bodies on UN operational activities for development. While the 1990s did not pay particular attention to corporate-level planning or reporting, the new Millennium saw movement towards harmonized and results-oriented, agency-specific planning and performance reporting linked to the dual purposes of accountability and funding. In 2001, the UNGA noted and invited multi-year funding frameworks as strategic resource management tools. In 2008, it affirmed the importance of further harmonized results-based reporting on the work of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies for increased quantity and quality of funding. In 2012, UNDS agencies were requested to develop “clear and robust results frameworks that demonstrate complete results chains that establish expected results at the output, outcome and impact levels and include measurable indicators with baselines, milestones and targets for monitoring, and to report annually on implementation”. Meanwhile, 15 entities²³ have prepared strategic plans including robust results frameworks²⁴, which can be²⁵ very important in terms of increasing the scale of work and effectiveness of individual agencies. Recent literature, however, also points to possible backdrops to results-oriented development cooperation and management - i.e., the simultaneous rapid growth in earmarked contributions to UNDS agencies over the past 15 to 20 years as opposed to the system’s earlier reliance on assessed and voluntary core resources.²⁶

modified format and procedures for country programme documents, including a simplified one-step approval procedure (see 2015 SG Op. Activities Report para. 114).

²⁰ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 57 (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

²¹ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 47 (A/70/62-E/2015/4). In this regard, the Group of 77 and China, in their statement during the 2015 Operational Activities for Development Segment of ECOSOC on 24 February 2015, voiced concern over the lack of transparency around the reporting received from the UN system at country-level and requested that regular reporting on results achieved by the UN system is provided to governments of programme countries at least twice in one UNDAF cycle.

²² 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 59 (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

²³ Including UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, WFP, UN-Women and WHO.

²⁴ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 93 (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

²⁵ A more in-depth assessment of the hypothesis was outside the scope of this paper.

²⁶ It was outside the scope of the current paper to assess this aspect more in-depth.

91. Moreover, progress towards synchronizing the timing and duration of corporate plans has been made since 2008 thanks to measures to align agency planning cycles with the quadrennial policy review cycle. The UNGA has however not provided policy guidance on the feasibility and desirability of system-wide strategic planning at corporate level to improve the strategic positioning of the UNDS and to foster programmatic synergies. Neither has the UNGA taken any decisions to adapt inter-governmental reporting requirements in order to strengthen system-wide learning, programme improvement and collective accountability for system-wide results as well as to reduce transaction costs arising at the country level from double reporting lines to host governments and to agency headquarters. Corporate-level reporting, fed by country-level inputs, is on individual mandates and strategic plans. There is no regular reporting on and inter-governmental review of UNDS-wide data, results and contributions to the attainment of the MDGs.

...evaluation function

92. Evaluation is an essential component of the RBM-cycle. The UNGA has consistently reaffirmed the importance of impartial and independent evaluations of UN system operational activities for development for the purpose of evidence-based learning and institutional accountability, at the country level under the leadership of programme countries. Since the mid to late 2000s it has pushed for independent, credible, useful and sufficiently-resourced evaluation functions within each organization of the UNDS, agency-specific evaluation policies in line with the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards, and evaluation plans aligned with corporate strategic plans.

93. United Nations organizations have been found to be working to create an environment conducive to effective evaluation and to aspire to meet the UNEG norms and standards of evaluation.²⁷ UNEG is recognized to have played a central role therein. At the same time, important evaluations and reviews reveal room for improving the culture and role of evaluation in the UNDS in view of providing a solid foundation for broader assessment of performance, learning and decision-taking: In 2014, a Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system²⁸ made nine recommendations, inter alia for legislative bodies to request the development of comprehensive budget frameworks and resource allocation plans for effective and sustainable evaluation functions and to direct the revision of policies for appointing evaluation office heads to enhance independence and credibility. Furthermore, it recommended executive heads to consider a strategic repositioning of agency-specific evaluation functions to enhance their relevance in enabling the UNDS to address change and emerging challenges, including those of the post-2015 development agenda. More recently, in 2015, the biennial Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) “Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives”²⁹ found that although evaluation processes and procedures within Secretariat entities had been strengthened, evaluation remained concentrated in relatively few entities and the quality of evaluation reports had not improved. Furthermore, earlier gaps such as insufficient resources, inadequate staff competencies and

²⁷ Comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for the system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system - Note by the Secretary-General, June 2012 (A/66/852).

²⁸ JIU/REP/2014/6: Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, Geneva 2014.

²⁹ A/70/72 of 20 March 2015.

limited buy-in from senior management and staff persisted and hindered the further strengthening of the evaluation function.

94. Regarding decentralized evaluations, in 2015, the UNDS recognized continued weaknesses in the number and quality of UNDAF evaluations. Despite being a mandatory UNDG requirement since 2009, only half of all UNDAFs have been evaluated; owing to a low level of investment, the quality of UNDAF evaluations was found to be mixed and the use of findings poor. In addition, the above-mentioned JIU analysis revealed that, even ten years after having been introduced, UNDAFs had in many cases not led to greater coherence of the evaluation function at the country level: It found limited joint evaluations due to separate governance structures and little to no coordination between decentralized evaluations, UNDAF evaluations and strategic country programme evaluations.

95. Responding to calls from the UNGA in the context of UN system-wide coherence and follow-up to the Millennium Summit to take system-wide coordination, harmonization and collaboration on evaluation to a higher level, the UNSG³⁰ in February 2013 was able to move beyond earlier diverging standpoints on desired structure to establish an interim coordination mechanism for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development, hosted by the JIU. Meanwhile, the ECOSOC and the UNGA took note³¹ of a policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. Somewhat delayed because of insufficient extra-budgetary resources for implementing the policy, two pilot independent system-wide evaluations requested by the UNGA are currently underway.³²

Accountability

96. Besides serving the purpose of learning, monitoring and evaluation are importantly also one of the means to ensuring that the UNDS is accountable. Or approaching it from a different angle: Rigorous accountability systems are a precondition for effective monitoring and evaluation. But is there a common understanding of accountability and what else is needed to ensure it? The OECD glossary of key terms defines accountability as

“an obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards or to report fairly and accurately on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and/or plans”

or

“obligations of partners to act accordingly to clearly defined responsibilities, roles and performance expectations, often with respect to the prudent use of resources”.

³⁰ In accordance with UNGA resolution 67/226.

³¹ Note by the Secretary-General A/68/658-E/2014/7; E/RES/2013/5; A/RES/68/229.

³² A/RES/68/229. System-wide evaluations on “Meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations, with a particular focus on poverty eradication” and “Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals”. A further system-wide evaluation of the effectiveness, added value and impact of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is also envisaged by 2016 (see QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicator 40).

97. In the absence of policy guidance specifically addressing the UNDS, reference is also made to the UNGA resolution entitled “Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat”³³, which defines accountability as

“the obligation of the Secretariat and its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without qualification or exception. Accountability includes achieving objectives and high-quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, in fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat approved by the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other subsidiary organs established by them in compliance with all resolutions, regulations, rules and ethical standards; truthful, objective, accurate and timely reporting on performance results; responsible stewardship of funds and resources; all aspects of performance, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions; and with due recognition to the important role of the oversight bodies and in full compliance with accepted recommendations”.

98. In his third progress report on the accountability system in the UN Secretariat, the UNSG distinguished three useful components of the accountability system - i.e., a stronger focus on performance and results; improving governance and oversight; and better management and administration.

99. More recently and more generally, the issue of accountability of different stakeholders for implementing the post-2015 development agenda has been an integral part of preparations for the Sustainable Development Summit, including in the regions and the UNSG’s Synthesis Report³⁴. While touching upon the global and regional levels, debates have stressed people-centred accountability for achieving the SDGs at the country level.

4.2. Some Lessons Learned

100. *In this section some lessons learned from the above retrospective regarding what impact the UNDS is expected to have and how the UNDS should coherently plan for and measure it are identified. Overall, over the last decades, incremental organizational and cultural changes within the UNDS were important, but there is a need for more fundamental reforms towards coherence and integration while acknowledging individual agency mandates.*

101. *Substantive policy guidance on UNDS impact and effectiveness:* To measure results effectively, they must be clearly defined, with key indicators to measure performance. High-level inter-governmental guidance on the expected impact and effectiveness of the UNDS has become more specific over time. However, guidance still is *somewhat ambiguous*: On the one hand, at the level of impact, Member States expect the UNDS to work towards national development priorities and the MDGs; on the other hand, emphasis is on UNDS contributions to poverty eradication (a subset of the MDGs). Guidance is also *incomplete*: For one, Member States have not yet arrived at a consensus regarding their expectations of UN operational activities for development in terms of promoting and upholding human rights.³⁵ Guidance on functions at the outcome level is *outdated* in view of the different ways the UNDS - in response to the times and needs - is increasingly facilitating transformational change rather than

³³ A/RES/64/259 (2010).

³⁴ A/69/700 (2014).

³⁵ Although some informed views perceive gradual progress towards a consensus.

providing direct products and services. Work to shape norms and standards, coordinate humanitarian aid, provide policy advice, and leverage inclusive partnerships and development funding comes to mind. This is also the level at which Member States as representatives of the peoples can expect accountability for results, ideally based on manageable sets of standard system-wide metrics.

102. *Transiting from a bilateral to a multilateral paradigm of impact assessment of the UNDS:* Along with a focus on contributing to national priorities and the MDGs, the aid effectiveness principle of results-orientation has gained considerable ground in terms of managing UN operational activities for development and enhancing their effectiveness and sustainable impact. However, a bilateral paradigm driven by traditional development aid logic has prevailed in the last decades, forcing as measures of success of the UNDS many parameters that increasingly no longer correspond to the essence of its work and its multilateral catalytic role based on capacity building and partnerships. Moreover, it is important to be aware that current linear results frameworks (logical frameworks) that establish desired results and generate information at the output, outcome and impact levels tend to over-simplify the world and the contextual complexities in which UN development agencies work, minimize the flexibility required, and neglect the time it takes to see lives change. Thus, in order not to arrive at wrong conclusions and take ill-informed decisions both when planning and reporting, it is absolutely central to specify results that can be soundly attributed to the agreed-upon functions of the UNDS and to undertake a thorough analysis of causal relationships, risks and assumptions.

103. *Instilling a mature results culture:* Results-based management within the UNDS implies a shift away from compliance with rules and regulations pertaining to processes and activities towards internal management for and external reporting on results. Developing and sustaining a more strategic and coherent results culture, including for cross-agency collaboration, is ambitious. It requires strong leadership, adequate capacities and skills and an enabling environment to discuss both good and poor results, not only within UN organizations but also their governing bodies. It also requires removing disincentives such as - importantly - the growing dependency on earmarked resources. To track the reinforcement of a results culture across the UNDS, the QCPR requires UNDS agencies to report on their average percentage shares of total personnel at the country and headquarters levels dedicated to RBM, monitoring and evaluation.³⁶ This is not a smart enough indicator to measure the maturity of a results culture. Moreover, any such targets would clearly need to be defined against the background of the core function of the UNDS to first and foremost build and where possible use national capacities and systems, including for managing for results.

104. *Parallel system-wide and agency-specific planning and reporting at country level:* Despite weaknesses in design and implementation that over time have been corrected and overcome, including thanks to new organizational arrangements such as the UNDG and UNCT results-groups, the introduction of the UNDAF and the One Programme was one of the major innovations of the last 20 years in terms of attempting to bring about greater UN system coherence and goal-orientation for greater effectiveness, impact and accountability at the country level. However, a largely entity-centred logic prevailed, and the incapability to adapt UNDS governance structures and corporate funding mechanisms to country-level

³⁶ 2015 reporting on QCPR Monitoring and Reporting Framework Indicators 95(a) and 95(b) (A/70/62-E/2015/4).

reforms, has hindered a departure from the costly requirement to elaborate, approve and report on agency-specific country programming instruments and has undermined horizontal accountability. As second-best option, opportunities for simplification and harmonization of such programming instruments have been sought and found.

105. *Absence of system-wide planning and reporting to Member States*: Proposals are on the table for improving coherence in system-wide planning and reporting on development results at the corporate level such as the recommendation to establish a Sustainable Development Board or the proposal by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)³⁷ to elaborate a conceptual framework for system-wide strategic planning consisting of an overarching system-wide policy planning framework, a set of issue-specific system-wide sectoral frameworks and agency-specific corporate strategic plans.³⁸ However, the time has apparently not yet been ripe for achieving consensus on the desirability of and options for ensuring system-wide planning for operational activities for development at the corporate level in view of strengthening system-wide contributions to international development goals. Despite all talk of coherence, the fact also remains that there is no regular progress reporting on and inter-governmental oversight of UNDS-wide development effectiveness and contributions to the attainment of the MDGs at the global level in order to strengthen system-wide learning and collective accountability to Member States for system-wide results.

106. *Fragmented and biased accountability*: The dominant model of accountability is currently vertical: Despite rhetorical and genuine efforts, especially at the country level vis-à-vis programme country governments, the UNDS has not yet moved from a vertical agency-specific approach to accountability to a horizontal system for accountability for performance.³⁹ In fact, demand for agency-specific reporting, attribution and visibility has probably increased in tandem with demands for system-wide reporting. UN staff members thus first and foremost feel accountable to and obliged to comply with their supervisors, organizations and donors rather than committed to shared visions and common goals. The extensive independent evaluation of DaO revealed that fragmented lines of accountability are the key obstacle to achieving greater convergence in delivery. Furthermore, accountability of the UNDS is biased towards governments: The UNDS and its different parts are accountable to governments, in their individual capacities and/or as UN governing body members. Based on the understanding that those same governments are in turn accountable to their respective citizens, the UNDS is not required to directly account to non-governmental stakeholders and beneficiaries. The post-2015 development agenda could introduce multiple layers of accountability and a much stronger engagement with the people that the UN works for. For now, the 2012 QCPR resolution encourages UN organizations “to further improve their communication with the general public on their mandates and development results”.⁴⁰

³⁷ JIU/REP/2012/12: Strategic Planning in the United Nations System.

³⁸ At the time, organizations supported the concept of defining a coherent overarching framework and common goals for strategic planning, but expressed concerns regarding the added value of having an additional layer of system-wide sectoral strategic frameworks (see A/67/873/Add.1).

³⁹ Vertical accountability implies accountability within individual agencies; horizontal accountability implies accountability across agencies jointly to stakeholders.

⁴⁰ 2012 QCPR OP 36.

107. *System-wide evaluation*: Independent evaluation functions and evaluations are now widely recognized as an essential complement to and validation of more frequent internal results monitoring for the purpose of evidence-based learning and institutional accountability. A thriving evaluation culture requires adequate and attuned agency-specific and system-wide organizational arrangements, predictable financial resources and evaluation capacities. UNEG has played a central role in professionalizing UN agency evaluation functions, including by developing the norms and standards for evaluation within the UN system and carrying out peer reviews. However, the literature reveals room for further improvement, including increasing evaluation resources and enhancing competencies. The establishment of the interim coordination mechanism for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development is a step towards ensuring greater coherence, effectiveness and collective accountability of the UNDS, although the question arises why a new organizational arrangement was needed given the existence and success of UNEG. However, whichever mechanism is ultimately chosen, it cannot function effectively and is not sustainable without true independence from UNDS senior management and access to adequate and predictable funding.

4.3. The Post-2015 Era: Likely Implications of the SDGs...

108. *This section explores likely implications of the post-2015 era and the evolving SDGs for the results agenda of the UNDS. Where relevant, it focuses on inter-linkages with the other six dimensions of the ongoing ECOSOC dialogue.*

109. *Measuring results is critical to the credibility of the UNDS in a time of social, economic and environmental transition. A transformational agenda for the post-2015 era as spelled out by the OWG of the UNGA on Sustainable Development Goals⁴¹ and by the UNSG⁴² warrants sound conceptual and operational modalities for measuring the specific UNDS contributions as well as solid and convincing accountability frameworks for ensuring adherence to its mandate and implementation of corrective action when needed. The results - or effectiveness - agenda can be expected to experience a new push with the anticipated inter-governmental agreement on the SDGs.*

...for the types of results expected of the UNDS

110. Beginning 2016 at the latest, the focus of the UNDS and its operational activities for development, building on individual UNDG member mandates, will need to go beyond the current eight MDGs to ultimately making contributions to achieving all 17 universal SDGs by 2030 at the latest. It is important to recognize that the UNDS can only contribute to changing lives and progress towards the SDGs, expected to cover the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, environmental and social as called for at the Rio Earth Summit in 2012. In order to be more than a drop in the bucket in the grand scheme of things, the UNDS needs to focus on the right things, work with the right partners and do things right. As Figure 2 shows, its contributions are a reflection of its particular functions, of which national capacity building is core, and which are closely related to its multilateral nature, and where it has comparative advantages. They will differ between countries with different levels of income, from country to country

⁴¹ A/68/970 (2014): Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals.

⁴² A/69/700 (2014): The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

and over time. To be relevant, they need to focus on reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities and promoting human rights. Together with its partners, the UNDS should be made accountable for those contributions, no more and no less.

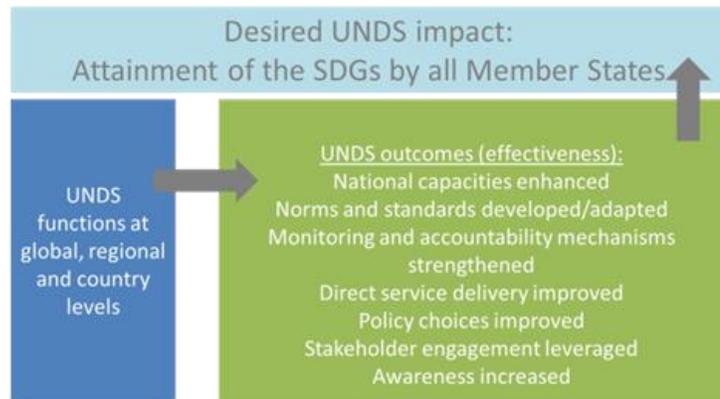
...for UN system-wide planning, learning and global-level accountability

111. As mentioned above, there is currently no system-wide planning or reporting to Member States on development results and the contributions of the UNDS to the MDGs.

The current QCPR monitoring and reporting, for lack of comprehensive coverage of the “what”, cannot be considered a sufficient source of information. The post-2015 era and evolving inter-related SDGs are thus an opportune moment for taking overdue steps to strengthen UN system-wide planning, learning and accountability. Earlier comprehensive policy reviews have provided useful guidance to the UNDS on operational activities for development, but Member States now have a very good reason to transform and replace QCPR guidance into a more action and results-oriented “UN system-wide strategy for inclusive and people-centred sustainable development”⁴³ that:

- is elaborated by the UNDG based on existing policy guidance and in consultation with Member States;
- commits all UNDG agencies;
- is aligned with and expected to contribute to the post-2015 development agenda;
- looks at the big picture⁴⁴ by providing an overall context analysis (why should the UNDS do what it wants to do?), theory of change (what should the UNDS achieve and contribute to?) and approach⁴⁵ (how should the UNDS achieve its objectives?).
- includes a manageable monitoring and evaluation plan;
- initially is adopted by the UNGA in 2016 in lieu of negotiating a traditional QCPR resolution;

Figure 2: Linkages between UNDS impact and functions:
The UNDS’s ultimate manifestation is the contribution of its multiple functions to the SDGs at different levels



Source: Alison King & Daniel Lopez-Acuna

⁴³ Similarly, DIE Briefing Paper 22/2013 suggests that “Member States beef up the QCPR instrument from its current limited function and status into a system-wide strategy, or a ‘QCPR+’ to create a cohesive UNDS that links the system-wide what to the how and provides further guidance about means of implementation. These main elements of the QCPR+ are the equivalent of a corporate strategy in the business world.” It continues to say that “the future of QCPR resolutions lies in moving from a limited policy review to a system-wide strategy for sustainable development the QCPR+ that would define the mandate, operations, structure, partnerships and financial means for a four-year cycle of UNDS operations moving towards implementing a Sustainable Development Agenda ‘beyond aid’..”. Also see DIE Briefing Paper 13/2013.

⁴⁴ A strategy is not a work plan. As such, such a strategy would focus on the overall objectives and approaches and leave the details to UNDG member agencies.

⁴⁵ Including programming principles, functions, funding, organizational arrangements, capacities, and division of labour.

- serves as starting point for synchronized agency-specific medium-term plans;
- is complemented with system-wide thematic, functional and operational strategies;
- is reviewed annually by ECOSOC; and
- is reaffirmed by the UNGA in the context of comprehensive SDG reviews.

...for assessing partnerships

112. In future, in view of the sweeping set of SDGs and investments necessary to attain them, transformative partnerships with the private sector, civil society, philanthropists, academia and new constituencies will be an increasingly integral and strategic part of how Member States address challenges, accomplish necessary actions to abide by their commitments, foster the necessary advancements towards more sustainable development, and evaluate performance. The UNDS and its different parts will need to align with these dynamics specify contributions in support of Member States and deliver on commitments to fulfil its catalytic role. In terms of managing for impact of these partnerships in the post-2015 era, Member States might wish to request the UNDS to review existing strategies and guidelines and, bearing relevant UNGA resolutions in mind, to develop a common approach and framework for monitoring and evaluating partnership results. From a methodological point of view, however, planning for and assessing partnership results are not straightforward. To be able to credibly speak of the enormous power of partnerships, it is not only necessary to consider their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness (including determining UNDS contributions) and sustainability. It is equally or even more important to judge the added value of working in partnership.

...for the internal capacity of the UNDS to manage for results

113. Results-focused planning and monitoring for impact of the UNDS happens predominantly at the country and agency levels. The actual “doing” not only requires programme staff time and money. Effectively and efficiently managing for impact also demands access to core professional advice and quality assurance; not only within the UNDS but also within Member States who should own country programmes and provide inter-governmental oversight. Based on their larger scope and complexity, will the SDGs require more UNDS internal expertise and skills for ensuring rigorous and quality planning and monitoring of UNDS operational activities for development? For lack of baselines and comparisons, this is currently difficult to assess. At the country level, it also depends on the availability of national capacities. To ensure system-wide coherence in terms of RBM and accountability frameworks, it could well be worth discussing the desirability of creating pooled inter-disciplinary planning and monitoring advisory capacities for the entire UNDS and a UNDS planning network.

...for evaluation

114. As was also concluded by the OIOS report “Thematic evaluation of monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals: lessons learned for the post-2015 era”⁴⁶, evaluation should play a more important role in making implementation of the new development agenda more evidence-based than it did in engaging with the MDGs. As the MDGs come to a close, it is important to realize that monitoring and reporting are important but insufficient for providing the UNDS and Member States with opportunities for learning, accountability and decision-making. In future, monitoring information on the

⁴⁶ E/AC.51/2015/3* of 18 March 2015.

different facets of the work of the UNDS in support of the SDGs originating from within the UNDS ought to be systematically supplemented with rigorous publicly-available evaluations that provide independent evidence-based analysis on how the UNDS is doing and whether it is effective and adding value and that make forward-looking recommendations for policy and programme development and course corrections in a fast-changing world. To be fit for purpose, this for one requires further improving the necessary skills and competencies for ensuring at the outset that policies, strategies, programmes and even the post-2015 development agenda itself are evaluable and for planning, managing and conducting evaluations, both within UNDS agencies and Member States. At the global level, this could mean developing, financing and implementing a medium-term evaluation plan linked to future QCPRs or “strategies for sustainable development” rather than commissioning ad hoc system-wide evaluations as currently the case. At the country level, it demands a strengthening of the importance and quality of UNDAF evaluations (could investments in country programme evaluations be more meaningfully invested in UNDAF evaluations without compromising agency-specific management and oversight requirements?).

4.4. Selected Discussion Questions

115. Below questions on impact have been prepared to facilitate deliberations of Member States during the workshop on capacity, impact and partnerships to be held on 27 May 2015 as part of the ECOSOC dialogue process on the longer-term positioning of the UNDS.

- 1) Is there a risk that results-based management negatively impacts on core resources as the bedrock of operational activities for development?
- 2) In view of the post-2015 development agenda, should Member States, through ECOSOC and the UNGA, agree on the need to redefine the theory of change associated with the work of the UNDS in order for the appropriate set of attributable results to be defined and the right nature of impact to be assessed, all the while recognizing the complexities and challenges of multilateral development?
- 3) Is it desirable and is it feasible to define binding key indicators for assessing UNDS development effectiveness at the system level?
- 4) Should Member States, at the Sustainable Development Summit, agree to upgrade the current QCPR to a “UN system-wide strategy for sustainable development”? Would this solve the problem of dominant vertical accountability or are other decisions and measures required?
- 5) Should Member States, through ECOSOC and the UNGA, recommend that not only should national accountability mechanisms and processes be assisted by UN country teams, but that they should explicitly also serve to hold UN country teams accountable to non-governmental stakeholders for commitments made in support of country progress towards the SDGs?

Chapter 5: UN Development System Approaches to Partnerships in the Post-2015 Era

Framing question: How will the UN need to evolve and adapt vis-à-vis the growing number of players in the development space and ensure its partnership approach is aligned with UN priorities and mandates?

116. *The UN itself is the ultimate partnership, gathering the collective efforts of 193 Member States in pursuit of common goals within a framework of shared values. Furthermore, the UN secretariat, funds, programmes and specialized agencies that constitute the UNDS are not only individual organizations partnering with non-state development actors. They also have, by nature, the ability of encompassing the collective capacity of their Member States to work towards agreed-upon goals and targets. As a system, the UN partners with private sector and civil society at the country, regional and global levels with the aim to leverage resources and competences and trigger innovative solutions.*

117. *Building on a brief review of the evolution of UNDS partnership approaches over the past couple of decades and lessons learned, this chapter assesses how the UNDS will likely need to adapt vis-à-vis the growing number of players in the development space and ensure its partnership approach is consistent with its post-2015 priorities and mandates for greater effectiveness and impact. Throughout, the chapter speaks to inter-linkages with the six other dimensions that are the focus of the ongoing ECOCOC dialogue. The paper also addresses the governance challenges associated with the development of UNDS partnerships.*

5.1 Evolution of UN Development System Partnership Approaches

118. *This section briefly reviews key issues related to UNDS partnerships and describes the current state of play/thinking within the larger framework of effective development cooperation.*

119. The 20th century model of UN operational activities for development focused on government partners and bureaucratic approaches. Partnerships with non-state actors emerged over time with an early focus⁴⁷ on leveraging expertise in developed countries for the delivery of technical assistance in programme countries and as of late as a response to the limits of multilateralism, where inter-governmental action and diplomacy alone cannot grapple with the pressing problems and complex dimensions of development, and as a response to the need to convene the knowledge, expertise and capacities of multiple stakeholders to cut through sectors. In UNGA resolution 55/2 entitled “United Nations Millennium Declaration” Member States resolved to “develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication”. It also paved the way for a global partnership for development (MDG 8).⁴⁸ Debates and action have since not questioned the need for partnerships, but rather have orbited around the best approaches to partnerships, although Member States continue to differ in their positions on the level of involvement of non-state actors.

Effectiveness of development cooperation

120. It is of critical relevance to contextualize UNDS partnership approaches within the larger perspective of effective development cooperation and the niche of the UNDS within the larger development cooperation architecture.

⁴⁷ Until the latter part of the 1980s.

⁴⁸ MDG 8 included six targets pertaining to trading and financial system, special needs of least developed countries and small island development states, debt, essential drugs, and new technologies. It was a mixed bag of policy objectives, economic measures and instrumental actions, which faced considerable challenges of operationalization and did not always align themselves with the rest of the MDGs.

121. The Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness that took place in Busan, South Korea, in November 2011, was the fourth meeting on aid effectiveness.⁴⁹ The purpose of the Forum was to take stock of achievements made since the signing of the Paris Declaration in 2005 and to identify how best to maintain and accelerate implementation of aid effectiveness commitments in a rapidly-changing global development context. As such, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation focuses on the effectiveness of “development cooperation” rather than of “aid”. For the first time, it established a framework for development cooperation that embraces traditional donors, South-South co-operators, the BRICs, international and civil society organizations and private funders.⁵⁰ It is important to note that the UNDG but not all Member States have endorsed the principles⁵¹ of the Busan Partnership.⁵²

122. The first High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC, meanwhile bringing together 160 countries and 45 organizations (including UNDG agencies), subsequently took place in Mexico City in April 2014. It presented a further important opportunity for multi-stakeholder discussions on challenges and progress in improving the effectiveness of development cooperation in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and for advancing an inclusive approach to development cooperation.

Inter-governmental policy guidance on partnerships

123. Partnerships with non-state actors have become an increasingly important aspect of UN reforms, implying greater pragmatism, results-orientation, flexibility and efficiency. However, high-level inter-governmental comprehensive policy reviews of UN operational activities for development have not placed a particular emphasis on UNDS partnership approaches. It was only in 2012, following the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development⁵³ in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that the QCPR explicitly used the term “partnerships”

124. Generally speaking, comprehensive policy reviews have considered the role of the UNDS in linking various stakeholders for the purpose of achieving innovative development results and mobilizing non-state funding for the UNDS. In 1998, and again in 2001, 2004, 2008 and 2012, the UNGA decided that the UNDS should assist national governments in creating an enabling environment in which the links between national governments, the UNDS, civil society, national non-governmental organizations and the private sector involved in development are strengthened (including during UNDAF preparation processes), with a view to seeking new and innovative solutions to development problems. In the context of funding for UN operational activities for development, the 2001 TCPR also noted that

⁴⁹ The first meeting took place in Rome in 2003. Two years later in 2005 the signing of the Paris Declaration defined principles and set targets as well as indicators for increasing aid effectiveness to be achieved by 2010. In Accra in 2008, the Agenda for Action took stock of progress and emphasized some of the Paris Declaration targets.

⁵⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/fourthhighlevelforumonaideffectiveness.htm>.

⁵¹ Country ownership, results focus, transparency and accountability and inclusive partnerships.

⁵² <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanadherents.htm>.

⁵³ Amongst other things, the outcome document acknowledged “that the implementation of sustainable development will depend on the active engagement of both the public and the private sectors. We recognize that the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including through the important tool of public-private partnerships. We support national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives, taking into account the importance of corporate social responsibility. We call upon the private sector to engage in responsible business practices, such as those promoted by the United Nations Global Compact”.

contributions from private sources can supplement but not substitute government contributions. In 2012, the QCPR recognized the importance of the UNDS increasing its capacity to engage in results-oriented innovative national, regional and global partnerships with diverse stakeholders and encouraged it to intensify its collaboration with those stakeholders, including for mobilizing financial contributions. During a similar period, the UNGA adopted several resolutions entitled “Towards global partnerships”.⁵⁴ The most recent resolution from the end of 2013 emphasized the importance of safeguarding the integrity of the UN; considering gender perspectives; placing greater emphasis on transparency and due diligence without imposing undue rigidity; disclosing partners, contributions and matching funds; updating the guidelines on cooperation between the UN and the business sector; and strengthening Global Compact local networks.

The role of partnerships in the UN development system

“Partnership is a key enabler for meeting global challenges and leading in the creation of transformation, which can have a catalytic impact on the full range of UN activities from sustainable development and sustained economic growth to peace and security, humanitarian action and human rights.”⁵⁵

125. Partnership is not a new approach adopted by the UNDS. However, during the last decade, since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the UNDS has made extra efforts to capture the full potential of partnerships and to facilitate a systematic approach to partnerships with business, finance, philanthropic organizations, civil society, and academic and scientific institutions. “Partnerships” and “partnering” have become an omnipresent word in UN system organizational strategies and programmes. Most UN organizations today have a partnership bureau, a partnership advisor or a partnership focal point; they either have completed or, like WHO, are currently engaging in discussions with their governing bodies on the adoption of partnership frameworks and strategies.

126. Over the years, and especially since the 1990s, to achieve expected outcomes and contribute to reaching the MDGs, UN entities have created or joined a multitude of partnerships with a wide variety of external stakeholders, bilaterally or jointly, directly or in the case of UNICEF and UNIFEM/UN Women through National Committees in high-income countries. At the global level, UNSGs have initiated broad-based multi-stakeholder partnerships built along four dimensions: environmental sustainability, peace and security, inclusive economic development and inclusive social development. Examples are Every Woman Every Child, the Scaling up Nutrition Movement and Sustainable Energy for All. Results and advantages derived from partnerships are claimed to be enormous.

127. In 2002⁵⁶, the UNSG proposed the creation of a Partnerships Office as a single focal point for the organization’s engagement with the private sector, grouping the Global Compact Office (GCO) and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP). However, it was only in 2006, pursuant to the 2005 World Summit⁵⁷, and without grouping the two offices, that the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP) was created with the objective to strengthen system-wide coherence in the establishment of operational relationships with global partners of the UN, to provide support for the UN

⁵⁴ https://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/Government_Support/general_assembly_resolutions.html.

⁵⁵ UN Office of Partnerships.

⁵⁶ A/57/387: Report of the Secretary-General - Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change.

⁵⁷ UNGA resolution A/RES/60/1 (2005).

Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and to manage UNFIP. UNOP is attached to the UN Department of Management. It submits annual reports to the UNGA through the UNSG⁵⁸, but has not yet been mentioned in any of the above-mentioned UNGA resolutions or subject to an evaluation by OIOS. In 2010, the JIU recommended that the UNSG “should, as previously proposed, regroup the GCO and UNOP under one umbrella, building on their complementarities and distinctive roles, and clearly delineate their respective responsibilities, jurisdiction, monitoring tools and reporting requirements so that the GCO can focus on the implementation of the ten principles by businesses, and UNOP on developing United Nations business partnerships and related capacities”.⁵⁹ No action was taken.

128. To harness the full power of partnership across the range of UN activities in view of the evolving post-2015 development agenda, in April 2013⁶⁰, the UNSG proposed to Member States on the occasion of an ECOSOC special event on partnering for innovative solutions to sustainable development to create and institutionalize a central UN Partnership Facility within the UN secretariat with five full-time budgetary posts headed by a new Under-Secretary-General to coordinate and enhance the capacity of the UNDS and its agencies to leverage and engage in transformational (rather than one-off and ad hoc) partnerships to deliver on priority functions and to promote and increase their effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and accountability. Meanwhile, the proposal to establish the Facility is stuck in a number of political sensitivities unrelated to its merit. Consultations with Member States on this development continue.

5.2 Some Lessons Learned

129. *This section elaborates on challenges and opportunities identified so far; it draws conclusions and lessons from past partnership experiences.*

130. *Transformation of global society:* In contemporary societies and in our globalized world there has been a redistribution of power between states on the one hand and markets, civil society and individuals on the other. Many global challenges cannot be tackled primarily or exclusively through inter-governmental action. Experience has shown that neither the state nor national boundaries provide a sufficient framework for the character of action that emerging global challenges require. Social forces unleashed by globalization (the private sector, civil society, technological innovation, the empowerment of individuals, the dynamic of scientific research, the impact of communications) by and large operate alongside governments and with limited regard to boundaries.⁶¹

131. *Shift towards networked governance:* Multi-stakeholder partnerships have been framed as “innovative” forms of governance. They are conceived as “post-sovereign”, “networked” and “hybrid”

⁵⁸ ST/SGB/2009/14: Secretary-General’s bulletin - Organization of the United Nations Office for Partnerships.

⁵⁹ JIU/REP/2010/9: United Nations corporate partnerships: The role and functioning of the Global Compact. In his note to the UNGA (A/66/137/Add.1) under agenda item “towards global partnerships”, the UNSG responded that “in the context of ensuring efficiency and effectiveness within the United Nations system, a number of ideas regarding how to integrate some of the functions of the United Nations Office for Partnerships into the Global Compact Office are beginning to be discussed. Upon the finalization of the consultation process the Secretary-General will take the corresponding decision on this matter”.

⁶⁰ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sgsm14977.doc.htm>.

⁶¹ Jenks, B. UN Development at a Crossroads. Development dialogue paper no.3: Dag Hammarjold Foundation (2013).

governance. They have been branded as a new form of governance with greater potential to bridge multilateral norms and local action by drawing on a diverse number of actors in civil society, government and business. However the following question arises: Has the rise of partnerships implied a relocation and diffusion of authority from government to "public-private implementation networks"?⁶² If so, there are issues of power, representation and voice, and there are questions about the legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability of networked governance. Nevertheless, if clearer linkages to institutions and multilateral agreements are introduced and if appropriate mechanisms to strengthen leadership, monitoring, evaluation and oversight are in place, partnerships can potentially shape a more pluralistic governance order.

132. *Global partnership for development*: As stated by the Working Group on the Global Partnership for Development beyond 2015 of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, created in September 2012: "The world has changed fundamentally since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration. (...) The renewed global partnership for development underpinning the post-2015 development agenda will need to evolve with the changing development landscape to enable transformative changes".

133. *Basic principles for engaging with non-state actors*: Conflicts of interests, real or perceived, individual and institutional must be adequately managed and be seen to be managed in ways that are accessible to all stakeholders. The typology of relationships with non-state actors should provide the basis for *regulating* their involvement and for defining detailed rules of engagement to develop operational procedures and policies that relate to each type of engagement and, where appropriate, to different types of non-state actors.

134. *Limited UNGA oversight of UNDS partnerships*: A close look at the documentation reveals that system-wide standards for reporting on and reviewing UNDS partnerships - going beyond anecdotal evidence - is limited in view of optimizing the strategic positioning of the UNDS as a whole and driving system-wide reform. Recent QCPR monitoring and reporting only addresses the extent of partnerships with non-governmental organizations at the country level.⁶³ Member States and the UNDS currently really do not know whether the proliferation of partnerships is just a balkanization of efforts or whether it demonstrates real and durable complementarities and synergies.

135. *Differentiating partnerships according to their nature*: Experts have pointed to the need for the UNDS to differentiate between issue-based partnerships that bring additional impetus and/or income to the UNDS and those that leverage additional resources and independent action in pursuit of the SDGs (stakeholder engagement). As such, issue-based partnerships could be considered a strategic approach to the work of the UNDS; stakeholder engagement a function of the UNDS.

⁶² Backstrand K. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development: rethinking legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness. ERP Environment. John Wiley and Sons (2006).

⁶³ A/70/62-E/2015/4: Implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2015, Indicators 48 and 49. In 2014, 61% of programme country governments strongly agreed that the UNDS had been very effective in facilitating the participation of civil society and national non-governmental organizations in national development processes; in 2012, 44.1% of civil society organizations strongly agreed that it had been effective in collaborating with civil society and national non-governmental organizations.

5.3 Likely Implications of the Post-2015 Era for the UN Development System’s Approach to Partnerships

136. In view of the changing development landscape, changing needs of developing countries, the growing number and types of (potential) players in the development space, and to compensate a decline in ODA, the UNDS will need to enhance and enlarge its approach to partnerships for boosting its contribution to the evolving ambitious and complex post-2015 development agenda.

137. There are opportunities for but also challenges to partnerships in view of the UNDS successfully contributing to the pursuit of the complex and inter-connected SDGs. Needless to say, as depicted in Figure 3, that also when partnering for impact the UNDS should focus on its recognized functions where it has an added value, and that UNDS capacities and organizational arrangements will need to be adjusted in support of whatever approach is chosen. Consideration should be given to whether the partnership approach at global and regional level should be the same as the one at country level.

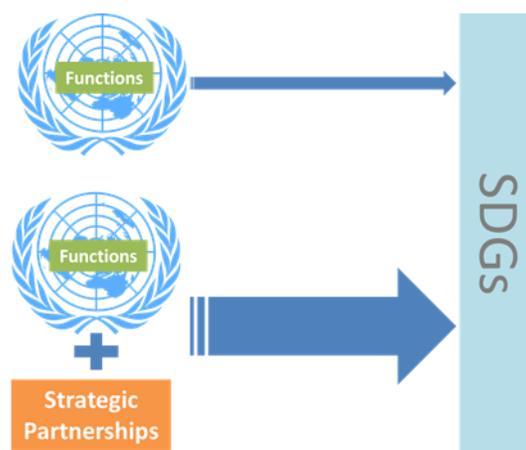
138. In the pursuit of greater fitness for purpose, it will be important for the UNDS to define parameters and criteria for multi-stakeholder partnerships that link global change to local change in favour of greater sustainable development. Successful partnerships with CSOs/NGOs, foundations and the corporate sector, principled and rights-based, exempt from conflict of interest, should serve to amplify the catalytic effect of development cooperation at global, regional and country level provided they do not disempower Member States and they contribute to global public goods. Ownership of the sustainable development agenda by individual Member States is of the essence and the UNDS ought to support this process and not undermine it by indirectly weakening its governance through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Member States will need to pay particular attention to governance aspects of UNDS partnerships, including addressing and managing conflicts of interest, and the need to ensure accountability.

139. In connection with its partnerships with non-state actors, transparency is the key safeguard that should underpin all interactions. An essential step to increase transparency should be the establishment of a system whereby all UNDS relationships with non-state actors can be viewed, and which sets out partnership objectives, types of partner contributions, governance and sources of funding. Disclosure is however only the first step. An institutional architecture (tools and processes) to conduct and review independent evaluations of the effectiveness and added value of partnerships is required.

5.4 Selected Discussion Questions

140. This chapter concludes with a few questions to help advance deliberations on how the UNDS will need to evolve and adapt vis-à-vis the growing number and types of players in the development space

Figure 3: Linkages between UNDS strategic partnerships and functions: Partnerships have the potential to boost the impact of the UNDS on the SDGs



Source: Alison King & Daniel Lopez-Acuna

and ensure that its partnership approach is aligned with UN values, priorities and mandates in support of the post-2015 development agenda.

- 1) Should UNDS partnerships be linked to the SDGs and the transformative agenda for attaining them?
- 2) Should the approach to partnerships be the same at global, regional and country levels?
- 3) Should UNDS partnerships be more open to public scrutiny?
- 4) How can dual governance problems introduced by some partnerships be avoided?
- 5) Should partnerships at the country level be led by the UNDS or should this be the primary responsibility of governments? Should the UNDS play a catalytic or leveraging role at country level?
- 6) How should the UNDS ensure availability of sufficient evidence of the effectiveness and added value of UNDS partnerships at the country level?
- 7) What kind of additional monitoring information on UNDS partnerships would Member States like to receive in the context of the QCPR?
- 8) How should networks, coalitions, issues-based multi-stakeholder initiatives dovetail with the regular programmes of the UNDS?

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks

141. Overall, over the last decades, incremental organizational and cultural changes within the UNDS were important, but there is a need for more fundamental reforms towards coherence and integration while acknowledging individual agency mandates.

142. There are numerous discussions on the implementation and monitoring of different aspects of the QCPR resolution as well as on the adequacy of inter-governmental mechanisms at the global level for furthering harmonization and coherence across the UNDS. The repositioning of the UNDS to make it fit for the purpose of supporting Member States in advancing the transformative agenda of the post-2015 sustainable development compact will most likely require major changes and will consequently require guidance by a framework that goes beyond the QCPR process.

143. The UNDS needs to strengthen its relevance as well as the effectiveness and impact of its activities. It needs to become more coherent and efficient, especially at country level. In order to do so it should rethink its functions and its organizational arrangements. It should transform its capacities to deliver on its mandate. It should introduce changes in its governance, define suitable ways of financing its work and enhance its ability to leverage partnerships and engage stakeholders to help attain the SDGs.

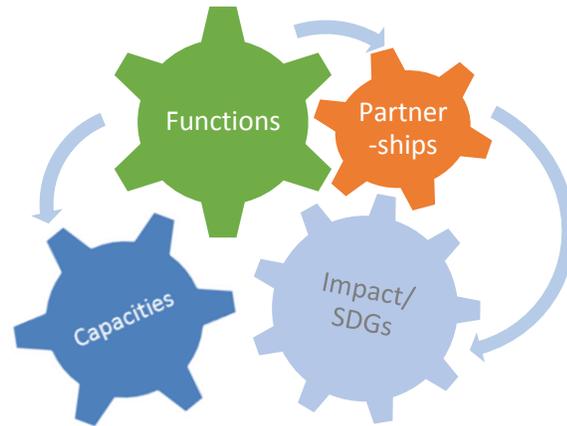
144. As discussed in this paper and depicted in Figure 4 below, the right kind of UNDS capacities to deliver on the agreed-upon functions, twinned with strategic and accountable partnerships will be a prerequisite for attaining effectiveness, which in turn permits obtaining the necessary impact.

145. It is important though to understand how much the current work of the UNDS already aligns with the new post-2015 development agenda. Mapping current efforts, functions and capacities and

comparing them with the emphasis to be placed in the future will yield very valuable information on the gaps to be filled and the magnitude of the effort that lies ahead to have a much greater fitness for purpose.

146. Another critical dimension of the long-term positioning of the UNDS for addressing the post-2015 agenda is the political economy of change. The fundamental question is whether the UNDS will be able to agree on the key parameters of the major change that has to be undertaken. It is doubtful, given past experiences, that it will do it by itself. Pressure for change will have to come from outside. The clear leadership and support of Member States will be necessary to provide the space for change. They will have to drive the process.

Figure 4: Linkages between UNDS capacities, impact, partnerships and functions: The right aggregation of UNDS capacities to deliver on agreed-upon functions and twinned with strategic and accountable partnerships are important prerequisites for effectiveness and impact



Source: Alison King & Daniel Lopez-Acuna

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CEB	UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination
DaO	UN Delivering as One
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
GCO	Global Compact Office
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
JIU	UN Joint Inspection Unit
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OWG	Open Working Group
RBM	Results-based management
RC	UN Resident Coordinator
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOPs	UN Standard Operating Procedures
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN country team
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	UN Development Group
UNDS	UN development system
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNOP	UN Office for Partnerships
UNSG	UN Secretary-General
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review