

Statement by Sarah Cliffe, Director, Centre on International Cooperation, New York University

Your Excellency Mr. Alejandro Palma Cerna, distinguished delegates and colleagues, it is an honor to participate in this discussion.

I believe that Agenda 2030 will have a significant impact on the vision of UN development cooperation, and would highlight four aspects: universality, leaving no-one behind, working together and knowledge and delivery partnerships.

1. On universality, this is really a game-changing commitment – it marks in some form the end of the rigid division between developing and developed countries, between Part I and Part II countries in terms of the International Financial Institution systems. It is a return to the UN's beginnings, when Communities of Practice between countries as equal partners were part of the founders' intentions, but it is also a very modern idea that reflects our changing times.

- Taken seriously, it requires the multilateral development system to think about how they facilitate exchanges between countries at *all* income levels on shared development challenges.
- It does not and should not of course mean directing development finance to higher income countries.
- But the system will need to be able to engage with all countries on how they are incorporating the goals into national planning and on lessons of implementation and reporting – important to keep the normative success of the Summit alive and instill the change in mindset needed to reflect universality of the goals, building momentum by allowing countries to showcase their successes and share experiences with others.
- Universality may also have implications for how member states intersect with the development system – for high income countries in the past this has been primarily through development agencies, but in the future it may involve much greater involvement of domestic sectoral ministries. Some countries – China, India, Brazil, Turkey for example – already deliver a significant part of their overseas cooperation through this type of exchange. Rather than being an

intermediate step on the way to consolidating cooperation under a development agency, this may actually be a feature of how to successfully support Agenda 2030.

2. The commitment to leaving no-one behind creates different challenges.
 - This would require more effective engagement by the UN development system in the least developed countries and in those affected by conflict, as well as in targeting the most marginalized groups in countries that are doing better in average growth and social development.
 - It will mean rethinking humanitarian-development cooperation, recognizing that displaced persons, for example, are part of the development challenge to leave no-one behind.
 - It will require more risk-taking and innovation to reach these groups.
 - Taken together with universality, this argues perhaps for developing a clear vision on a spectrum of country engagement and delivery models - from normative engagement, targeted policy and implementation advice and country exchanges further up the income spectrum to a stronger operational role and greater field presence in those more liable to be left behind.
 - There is no boilerplate, in each country approaches will need to take account of specific political economy and development conditions, but it should still be possible to develop a vision of the spectrum of engagement.

2. Agenda 2030 will also create a much stronger requirement for different parts of the UN development system to work together
 - No one agency “owns” any one of the goals, and all will require collaboration.
 - The system struggled to do this even under the MDGs. in the QCPR survey 64 percent of countries said that “competition among UN agencies creates confusion for the government” 68 percent that “competition among UN agencies diverts the agencies’ attention from the main tasks of providing support for the country.” There is an opportunity under Agenda 2030 to address this by greatly increasing the amount of joint policy work and operational support.

- There is also an opportunity to work on shared results with peace-building actors, recognizing as Minister Gaviria Munoz underlined the relevance of the SDGs to sustaining peace processes.
- The drive to work together and to define a spectrum of country engagement may also argue for a spectrum of representational models, and an opportunity to build on Delivering as One and consolidate the more than 1300 country presences the UN DS currently deploys. The most vulnerable countries logically require the greatest field presence and breadth of representation, whereas moving up the income spectrum strong country engagement can still be ensured though lighter and more unified representation.
- The Minister also raised a bigger question – does the agenda require clear thinking on which institutions are no longer relevant, which need to be consolidated or merged and which new institutions might be needed. These questions are never easy to address, but they may be important for member states to consider.

4. Last, the agenda will provide a real test of the knowledge and delivery partnerships that the UN development system can foster.

- Some of the goals build on the MDGs, and established delivery partnerships are in place – in health and nutrition for example.
- But in many areas the knowledge of what works and the delivery partnerships are new and will require a strong boot to get them to effectiveness and scale - youth employment or sustainable development and consumption are examples.
- And in some areas there are really no large-scale delivery partnerships in place, such as inequality or peace and access to justice.
- The UN development system has a great opportunity to bring these newer areas of the agenda into strong implementation, but this will require rapid action on our knowledge of what works and on implementation priorities and levers.
- Last, in some areas there are too many fragmented partnerships – there may be a need to bring different mechanisms together, as Every Woman

Every Child has done, and here the UN development system could play an important role.

In summary, the implications facing the UNDS are deep, and may include:

- A new vision for a spectrum of country engagement, recognizing both universality and the need to focus operational efforts on those most likely to be left behind.
- Clear commitment to working together, viewing Delivering as One as a floor not a ceiling.
- Rapid action on delivery arrangements, including a focus on delivery partnerships in the areas of the agenda where there are gaps.

This is both a great opportunity and a great challenge – and hence a very timely debate. Thank you very much for the opportunity to take part.