

8 June 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Tarrytown Retreat for the Dialogue on UN
Operational Activities for Development: Preparations for the 2012
QCPR**

Mr. Werner Puschra, Executive Director of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation in New York,
Mr. Navid Hanif, Director of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, representing the
United Nation Secretary-General tonight,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Tarrytown.

I am delighted that you are participating in this special dialogue.

Today's retreat comes at an important moment.

The global development cooperation environment is changing at a very rapid pace.

The time is now, therefore, to reflect on how to further advance the role and relevance of UN
operational activities for development.

This retreat is the culmination of a three-part seminar series leading-up to the 2012 QCPR, the General
Assembly quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the
UN system.

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation and to the
Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for co-organizing with my Office this QCPR dialogue
series.

Our retreat today would not be possible without their generous support and cooperation.

As we discussed in the first seminar in February, the global development cooperation landscape has
changed quite remarkably in the past decade.

As a result, the role and relevance of the UN development system is again being tested.

Recognizing the critical role of the UN General Assembly, I would like to start by briefly highlighting four factors that are likely to affect the future role of the UN development system in this changing global development cooperation environment:

First:

New centres of economic dynamism have emerged in the global economy.

As a result, geo-economic shifts are taking place.

Second:

The past decade has seen intensified global challenges, such as sustainable development, rising inequality, health, and an increasing number of countries in crisis or in transition.

Addressing all of those global challenges requires collective action.

Third:

The relations between states, on one side, and markets and individuals, on the other, have changed in a fundamental way in the recent past.

As a result, addressing many global issues will require forging broad-based alliances and partnerships, as well as stronger multilateralism.

Fourth:

The last decade has witnessed the emergence of a large number of new institutional actors involved in international cooperation for development.

For example, the Group of 20 and many influential foundations.

These challenges in the broader development cooperation environment, including their likely implications for the UN development system, will be the subject of further analysis by one of our keynote speakers at this retreat.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

In our second seminar in March, we focused on the issue of the “critical mass of core resources” for the funds and programmes.

The issue of funding is vital for the effectiveness of UN operational activities for development, and is therefore likely to be at the centre of the upcoming QCPR negotiations that will start in the fall.

Core resources are generally seen as a more efficient way of building relevant and effective partnerships with programme countries in the delivery of operational activities for development.

Core resources provide the highest quality and flexibility of pooled funding.

They are critical for ensuring the entities' capacity to deliver on their multilateral mandates.

They are also needed to provide continued substantive leadership and innovation around specific goals, advocacy and policy work, in addition to programmatic implementation on the ground.

Furthermore, core resources are central to ensuring the entities' independence, neutrality and role as a trusted partner in a changing development cooperation landscape.

While long-term trends in funding to the UN development system have been favourable, the core/non-core imbalance continues to grow.

It is enigmatic that, while non core resources to cover the activities of the organization have increased, the mandates depending on the core resources remain under-funded.

While we could trace many examples in the UN to explain this inconsistency, I have personal experience to share in this respect.

The Office of the PGA continues to face grave financial difficulty due to inadequacy of resources available from the core budget.

The level approved by the General Assembly in 1998-1999 has remained unchanged.

At the same time, the contributions for the Trust Fund which are earmarked continue to be unpredictable.

For example, while some contributions were made to the Trust Fund for the OPGA in the 65th session, no contribution was received for the 66th session, thereby exposing the financial vulnerabilities and putting the independence of the office and the effective implementation of its mandates at risk.

Another example is how the core ratio for development-related contributions of the OECD to the UN development system has decreased significantly in the last 10 years.

The practical implications of this declining share of core resources are evident at the country level.

For example, at the outset of many new UNDAFs assured funding through core resources can be as low as 30 per cent of planned programming by the UN development system.

If this share of core resources declines further, there is a real risk that the UN development system will lose its ability to mobilize non-core funding for country-level programming.

Continued decline in the share of core resources can therefore threaten the viability of the UNDAF approach.

For these reasons, the re-balancing of core and non-core resources for UN operational activities for development should be accorded high priority in the upcoming QCPR negotiations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now briefly highlight the three topics that will be the focus of our discussion tomorrow.

First:

The Resident Coordinator system is at the core of UN coherence at the country level.

However, as we all know, the Resident Coordinator is not the Resident Manager of the UN development system in programme countries.

Thus, he or she has to rely to a large extent on his/her personal attributes and leadership skills to enlist support from the UN country team.

It is interesting in this context to go back in time and see that this was not the original vision in GA resolution 32/197, which was adopted in 1977, for country-level coordination of the UN development system.

In this resolution, the Assembly endorsed the concept of a single UN officer being responsible for coordinating all UN operational activities at the country level.

The survey of programme countries that was conducted in preparation for the report of the Secretary-General for the 2012 QCPR has revealed that governments feel it is very important to strengthen the coordination role of the UN Resident Coordinator. In my view a new GA Resolution is needed to address this issue.

Tomorrow, we will discuss what would be the most feasible solution to reconcile the need for a stronger coordination role of the Resident Coordinator with the current vertical accountability lines in UN entities.

Second:

Promoting greater coherence among the development, humanitarian, peacekeeping and political pillars of the United Nations work in many transition countries is critical to the success of the organization's work in those challenging situations.

The Concept of Integration, introduced by the Secretary-General in 2008, has begun to make a difference in enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations system in those countries or areas that have adopted the integrated mission concept.

However, there is a sense among many governments that progress in this area needs to be stepped-up in the next QCPR cycle. This will be the topic of discussion in our second session tomorrow morning.

Third:

Looking forward, the UN development system, in order to remain relevant and effective, will increasingly have to tailor its support to different country contexts.

Middle-income countries, with stronger state capacity and access to resources, increasingly challenge the effectiveness of the traditional approach to development cooperation.

Between 2005 and 2011, for example, some 18 low-income countries moved to the middle-income status.

What are the implications of these changes for the work of the UN system in programme countries?

The QCPR process has revealed many innovations in the functioning of the UN development system in middle-income countries.

In that context, I would highlight the introduction by UN country teams of lighter instruments for programme planning and implementation.

For example, in Cape Verde, a Joint Office model has been developed.

In the third session tomorrow, we would like to examine what role the United Nations system should play in middle-income countries.

Dear colleagues,

I believe that the three issues we have selected for discussion in the retreat are all important for the future of the UN development system.

They are therefore likely to feature prominently in the upcoming QCPR process.

I am certain that this retreat will make an important contribution to the success of the 2012 QCPR.

Thank you for your attention.