

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS TO INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON UN SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE**

**New York, 24 April 2009**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you again.

These consultations on United Nations System-wide Coherence, under the able guidance of Ambassadors Mbuende and Yáñez-Barnuevo, are tremendously important to the work and future of the Organization.

I will focus mainly on the paper on governance, which is before you. But first, allow me to say a few words on funding, which is the subject of another paper that you will receive very soon.

The availability, as well as the use, of resources made available to the United Nations system directly relates to coherence. In fact, the way the Organization system is financed is a source of incoherence.

The current funding architecture is fragmented. Core resources as a share of total resources have declined significantly. Funding is neither stable nor predictable. This undermines the system's ability to provide a coordinated and coherent response to the diverse development challenges we face. I therefore urge you to view funding and governance issues as interlinked pieces of the same puzzle.

Allow me now to turn to governance. There are two facets to the governance of operational activities.

First, there is the political oversight that Member States exercise through the United Nations' principal organs and the governance structures of the entities.

Second, there is the question of institutional governance – the executive direction and management carried out by the Secretariat. The note before you addresses both perspectives.

Excellencies,

Coherence, or incoherence, starts at home.

The engagement of governments in United Nations system bodies often mirrors partitions between different ministries at the national level. The result is that positions expressed in one UN forum can be at odds with those taken by the same government in another.

Another challenge is that Ministers or senior officials most closely engaged in development cooperation at home are not involved at the United Nations system level. Government officials, who know what is happening on the ground, need to be directly involved in crafting policy guidance at the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

Let me now turn to the question of institutional governance. Many of the coherence problems we face can be traced back to the founding and evolution of the Organization. Member States chose to create organizations around specific thematic or sectoral functions.

We have a range of United Nations entities with their own governing bodies that are not directly guided by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. We need better mechanisms for providing strategic overview and guidance.

Despite this historical legacy, we have made considerable progress in improving coherence in the last few years.

The Chief Executives Board regularly initiates common responses to global challenges. The High-level Task Force on Global Food Crisis adopted a Comprehensive Framework for Action and is working on a funding mechanism. Most recently, the Board launched a joint initiative to respond to the financial and economic crisis.

Through its High-level Committee on Management, the Board is also working on the harmonization of business practices. The United Nations Development Group has made progress in making our operational work more coordinated and inclusive at the country level. Such a progress has been achieved by strengthening the Resident Coordinator System and helping United Nations organizations work together in new and more efficient ways.

The Delivering as One process has also helped the United Nations perform more coherently at country level by introducing “One Programme,” “One Budget,” “One Leader” and “One Office,” under the leadership of governments.

Notwithstanding these advances, much more clearly needs to be done.

The Secretary-General's note on governance is the product of extensive inter-agency consultations. It builds on three fundamental premises. First, improved governance at the global level should advance national ownership and leadership, and support national development strategies. Second, it should increase the effectiveness of the United Nations system's operational work.

Third, improved governance should build on the General Assembly's regular comprehensive policy reviews of operational activities to guide development cooperation throughout the United Nations system.

At the start of these informal consultations, the Secretary-General stressed four priority areas for improved governance:

- Better strategic overview;
- Improved policy coherence;
- Strengthened coordination; and
- Greater accountability.

The ten principal recommendations in the Secretary-General's paper address these priority areas. They put forward various suggestions for providing high-quality information for decision-making at the global and national levels. In addition, they delineate policy roles for the General Assembly and ECOSOC in providing guidance to the United Nations system. They recommend giving national focal points a greater role in global policy-making.

The paper also recommends strengthening the capacity of national governments to align external assistance with national goals and strategies. This, of course, lies at the core of the Delivering as One process.

Other recommendations in the paper include:

- Enriching ECOSOC's guidance through government-nominated experts;
- Improving coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions; and
- Enhancing the evaluation of the impact of the United Nations system in promoting the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Excellencies,

We believe that the proposals in the Secretary-General's note will go a long way towards increasing the coherence of the United Nations system.

We look forward to working closely with you on this complex exercise.

Thank you very much.