

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON UN SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE**

New York, 22 June 2009

Mr. President,
Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address this stocktaking meeting on System-wide Coherence.

I congratulate the two co-chairs, Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain for the transparent and inclusive manner in which they have conducted the consultations.

I appreciate the progress you have made. This momentum bodes well for an outcome that will revitalize the capacity of the United Nations. I am encouraged by the constructive spirit in which you have conducted the consultations on funding. An important outcome is within reach.

Strengthening system-wide coherence is particularly important at a time when all countries are grappling with the global economic and financial crisis and with major challenges such as food security, climate change and the Millennium Development Goals.

I therefore attach great importance to this process. Our efforts should aim to increase efficiency and, most of all, achieve concrete development results, as stressed in the most recent General Assembly resolution on the comprehensive policy review.

Today I will focus on the five areas of the system-wide coherence process, namely funding, governance, gender, “delivering-as-one” and the harmonization of business practices.

First, funding.

There is a broad-based consensus among Member States that the current fragmentation of the funding architecture of UN development cooperation is seriously

undermining the efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of the UN system at the country-level.

To address these weaknesses, I have proposed that donor countries renew their commitment to the quantity and quality of resource flows, while UN entities undertake commensurate action to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their country-level operations.

The most important priority for UN operational activities for development is an adequate, predictable and stable funding base.

Towards that end, I have offered to convene a high-level policy dialogue with Member States, with a particular focus on how the UN system can contribute to socio-economic recovery in developing countries during this time of crisis.

Your consultations have also sent a clear message about the need to adopt a strategic and integrated approach to strengthening the funding and governance architecture of UN development cooperation.

The two issues are closely linked. Improvements in funding will have an impact on the effectiveness of governance, and vice versa.

With that in mind, let me turn now to the issue of governance.

I see four strategic priorities in this area.

First is furthering common country programming. This should be based on the premise that system-wide coherence should be voluntary and nationally-owned, and should start at the country-level.

With more than 90 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks to be rolled out over the next three years, Member States have an opportunity to accelerate the process in this direction.

The second strategic priority is to further strengthen the General Assembly policy guidance process.

The comprehensive policy review, which will now take place every four years, could be made more relevant for country-level operations by better defining the strategic, policy and operational issues that should be part of this influential legislative framework.

The intergovernmental process would also benefit from greater involvement of national policy-makers.

The third strategic priority is to work within the Economic and Social Council the main body for coordination, to strengthen its overview and coordination roles.

With more than \$19 billion contributed to UN operational activities for development in 2007, there is strong justification for improving the effectiveness of the discussions and legislation from ECOSOC.

This would not require changes in the mandates of the Council. Rather, we should use what we have more effectively.

The fourth strategic priority is system-wide performance review and evaluation, which would be anchored in the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation unit and a central repository of information on UN operational activities for development.

These measures would enhance the ability to provide strategic overview of UN development cooperation and to hold UN entities to account.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the discussions on reforming the United Nations' gender architecture.

Significant progress has been made in this area since we met in March.

Member States have received a comprehensive set of proposals on the structure, governance, staffing and funding of a new architecture, and on the relationships with other bodies and entities.

It is clear that there is strong support for a “composite” entity.

Such an entity would be best positioned to support the UN system and hold it accountable for gender mainstreaming.

It would also combine a strong and strategic field presence with a formidable analytical, policy, normative and research capacity. This would strengthen collaboration between Member States, the UN system and civil society, particularly women's networks and non-governmental organizations.

Here, too, funding is crucial. We knew at the start of the review of the UN gender architecture that the available resources were inadequate and unpredictable.

I urge Member States to muster the political will to create the composite entity during the current session, and to fund it properly. I look forward to your broad guidance.

We have been talking about the gender architecture for quite some time now. The needs are known. It is time for Member States to act.

We owe it to future generations to ensure that the United Nations is doing everything it can to ensure the equality and empowerment of women and girls, and that they can play their full and proper role in their societies.

Let me now briefly review progress in the “delivering-as-one” pilot initiative.

In the past two years, governments in eight programme countries, with the support of the UN system, have been engaged in the “delivering-as-one” pilot initiative, which aims to leverage the expertise and mandates of the wider UN family in support of national development priorities.

The initiative has improved the alignment of UN development cooperation with national development priorities. Many pilot countries have reported that the common budgetary framework and country fund have improved transparency and accountability.

National capacity-building and the increased use of national systems and procedures have also assumed a more prominent role. There has also been progress in the harmonization of business practices.

A number of challenges remain, in particular the need to step up harmonization of business practices and results-based reporting, and to enhance the predictability of funding flows.

The 2007 comprehensive policy review of the General Assembly called for an independent evaluation of the pilot initiative. We need to move forward with some sense of clarity on what would be the best process for conducting such an assessment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last area I would like to review this afternoon is the harmonization of business practices.

As you know, a plan of action is being developed under the auspices of the Chief Executives Board. The plan proposes initiatives in a number of key areas, covering all major management functions.

Following the plan’s endorsement by the CEB, a funding proposal was circulated to potential donors in October 2008. The first contribution is being used to fund a project to develop a common framework to deal with suspect vendors.

Implementation of the plan has begun in other areas, too, thanks to other contributions as well as internal resources earmarked by UN organizations. Among the initial priorities are projects related to procurement, human resources, financial management and information and communications technology.

Ladies and gentlemen,

That concludes my briefing. In closing, let me stress again the great importance I attach to this effort.

System-wide coherence is a vital undertaking for all of us and for the many millions of people around the world who look to us for help. Together, we can and must strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to serve humankind and the international community.

My colleagues and I stand ready to continue to assist you in every possible way.

Thank you.