

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE
New York, 4 February 2010

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you today to resume consultations on system-wide coherence.

I congratulate Ambassador Intelmann of Estonia and Ambassador Jomaa of Tunisia for leading this process. I also thank Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain for their contributions during the last session of the General Assembly.

This year, there are real opportunities to make concrete progress on women's empowerment and the Millennium Development Goals. These areas are closely linked, and the drive to strengthen system-wide coherence plays a key role in each.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At your request, I submitted two reports to facilitate dialogue on system-wide coherence. I would like briefly to review their key messages.

The first report focuses on operational activities for development. In particular, it makes several proposals to strengthen governance of operational activities by enhancing the effectiveness of the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the governing bodies of specialized agencies, funds and programmes.

The report identifies four main ways to improve the functioning of these bodies

First is to strengthen coordination between them. These bodies often deal with the same or similar issues. Resolutions end up using the same or similar language. More effective coordination would eliminate at least some of this overlap. Member States may need to agree on more precise criteria for issues to be tabled to each body.

Second, let us ensure that countries participate on an equal basis. It is particularly important to ensure that national policy-makers from poorer developing countries have the chance to contribute because they are the ones implementing policy on the ground. We must hear their voices and heed their advice.

Third is to better prepare for governing-body meetings. Without improved agenda-setting, country representation and the drafting of legislative measures, meetings can lead to poor decision-making with little follow-up.

Fourth, we should strengthen the impact of intergovernmental decisions on UN development activities. The inability of states to reach agreement on sensitive topics often leads to resolutions that simply repeat language that has been used before. Over time, such language becomes sterile and meaningless, and the operational relevance of the resolutions is correspondingly weak.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My report on operational activities for development also addresses the critical issue of funding. We all know that if we are to advance the development agenda, funding must be more stable, predictable and less fragmented.

The good news is that between 2003 and 2008, contributions to the UN's operational activities for development grew on average by 6 per cent annually.

The bad news is that two-thirds of this increase was in non-core resources.

In 2008, these non-core resources accounted for 72 per cent of overall funding to the UN development system.

This means that the UN development system is increasingly relying on extra-budgetary resources for almost three-quarters of its funding base.

Such an imbalance between core and non-core funding, coupled with the fragmentation of resources, can only work against our goal of effective and coherent UN support for development work.

An improved funding system is therefore essential. As you requested, I will present my proposals on funding in a comprehensive report, which will be discussed at the July session of ECOSOC. I hope you will make these proposals a priority as they deal with such fundamental and urgent matters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With respect to the Delivering as One pilot countries, our experiences have shown that by working together, the UN family can work better. I expect that the country-led evaluations now under way will provide important lessons, and will shape the independent evaluation that will then take place.

With respect to the harmonization of business practices, the UN system, through the Chief Executives Board, is continuing to explore how best to do this.

I will keep you informed on the progress being made in both these areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now let me turn to my second report, on the composite entity for gender equality and women's empowerment.

As you know, continued discrimination against women is affecting success rates for every one of the MDGs. It is no coincidence that the MDG on which the least progress has been made is the reduction of maternal mortality. Women's issues are still not being given the high priority they deserve.

The creation of the composite entity is one of the ways we are tackling this situation.

The mandates and assets of the four current gender organizations are to be merged into this new entity, which will be a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly.

If the recommendations in this report are fully implemented, we will have an entity that will give a strong, unified voice to women and girls on the world stage.

It will enhance the UN system's ability to address the gaps and challenges you have identified.

It will ensure strong links between policy and operations by bringing together the policy framework developed by the Commission on the Status of Women with the operational guidance provided by an Executive Board.

It will give us the capacity to work with you in a flexible, demand-driven way -- not imposing an agenda, but rather, supporting your national priorities for women and girls.

It will, in short, demonstrate the collective determination of the international community to do more, and do better, for women and girls.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your consultations on system-wide coherence are of huge importance to the work and future of the United Nations.

I hope the outcome will help to revitalize the role of the UN in international development, and advance gender equality around the world.

As always, my colleagues and I stand ready to assist you in every possible way.

Thank you.