



**DELIVERING ON THE  
2030 AGENDA:  
OUR PROMISE FOR  
DIGNITY, PROSPERITY  
AND PEACE ON A  
HEALTHY PLANET**



# UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM REPOSITIONING

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q1: Why is the Secretary-General proposing to reposition the United Nations development system?**

The Secretary-General is responding to the mandates of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). In doing so, the Secretary-General has released two consecutive reports in June and December 2017.

His reports set out the major changes required to ensure a more coherent, accountable and effective support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN development system.

The Secretary-General is convinced that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an imperative for change for the United Nations. Significant changes in the set up, leadership, accountability mechanisms and capacities of the UN development system are required to ensure it is positioned to provide countries with the support they need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as well as meet the Paris commitments on climate change.

The repositioning of the United Nations development system is part of the broader efforts launched by the Secretary-General on taking office to transform the United Nations with prevention at the centre.

### **Q2: What are the key proposals of the Secretary-General’?**

The Secretary-General proposed seven key areas for transformation:

1. A new generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs), demand-driven, with enhanced skill-sets and tailored to meet the specific development priorities and needs of countries.
2. A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system. RCs will have sustainable development in their DNA, with stronger capacity, leadership, accountability and impartiality.
3. A coordinated, reprofiled and restructured regional approach to better support work on the ground.
4. Renewed spaces for Member States to guide system-wide actions and ensure greater coherence, transparency and accountability for results, underpinned by independent system-wide evaluations.
5. A stronger UN institutional response and system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda.
6. A Funding Compact to bring better quality, quantity and predictability of resources, increased spending transparency and accountability for system-wide results to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

7. Concrete steps to accelerate the system's alignment to the 2030 Agenda, through a system-wide strategic document developed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) in response to a specific QCPR mandate.

Taken together, the proposed changes offer a bold but realistic way forward. This is a mutually reinforcing, indivisible package. All proposals respond to three key principles: reinforcing national ownership; developing country-contextual responses; and ensuring effective delivery of development results on the ground.

### **Q3: What have Member States decided?**

Member States supported the vision and direction of the package of proposals by the Secretary-General. Specifically, the General Assembly has:

1. Approved the proposed measures to reinvigorate the RC system;
2. Endorsed the proposed approach for a new generation of UNCTs, including the use of indicative criteria to help inform country-level presence of the UNDS, and the advancement of common business operations, including common back offices and common premises";
3. Agreed with the proposed phased approach for the revamping of the UNDS' regional approach;
4. Considered the proposals on Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and on the Executive Boards of the New York-based entities of the UNDS for follow-up in the relevant intergovernmental processes;
5. Welcomed the Funding Compact.

In other areas of transformation, including critical areas of work on partnership, the Secretary-

General's proposals will be advanced under existing mandates. The Secretary-General will ensure that the UNDS takes forward all possible measures to strengthen its support to the 2030 Agenda.

### **Q4: What is the timeframe for the implementation of the proposed change measures?**

The full change process could be completed within two to four years. Critical aspects of the repositioning process—including the establishment of a new generation of UN Country Teams and reinvigorated RC system—will be operational in 2019.

Steps are being taken to ensure that this change process is smooth and well sequenced and minimizes disruption. The Secretary-General is establishing a transition team to work in an inclusive and transparent manner to prepare the full implementation of all change measures, including for the UN development system.

### **Q5: The Secretary-General stated that the measures for change form a mutually reinforcing, indivisible package. What is meant by that?**

The changes proposed by the Secretary-General and adopted by Member States are meant to reinforce themselves, with an ultimate focus on improving country-level delivery of results. If taken in isolation, these measures may not lead to the expected results – in some cases, a piecemeal implementation could even lead to negative, unintended consequences.

Of particular importance is ensuring the integral quality related to a cohesive new generation of UNCTs. Separating the functions of the RC from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Representative will only lead to trans-

formative change if accompanied by robust measures to strengthen the authorities, mechanisms and resources of RCs.

Changes proposed to the ECOSOC and other governing bodies of the United Nations will rely on the system's enhanced capacity to report—and be held accountable—on system-wide action. More flexible and predictable funding underpins all efforts.

Repositioning the UNDS also reinforces the impact of concurrent reforms of internal management and the peace and security architecture.

### **Q6: How will the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system be funded?**

The repositioning of the UNDS will require a step change in its coordination system. This will require a more robust, and adequately funded, RC function.

Our development coordination function is vastly underfunded today. In many countries, RCs lack the basic staffing capacities to credibly lead the sustainable development activities of the United Nations.

This creates a significant gap between the resolutions of Member States to advance sustainable development and poverty eradication—and the actual resources to help make those resolutions a reality on the ground. The lack of predictable funding for coordination is a serious challenge to RCs and UNCTs.

That is why the Secretary-General had recommended that Member States consider funding the core capacities of the RC system through assessed contributions. While the General Assembly could not achieve consensus on the full funding the RC system through assessed contributions, it has proposed a hybrid funding

formula that could provide a sufficient level of predictability moving forward. It includes cost-sharing amongst UN entities, a levy on donor contributions to UNDS projects and voluntary contributions.

The continued commitment and immediate support by Member States will be critical to ensure sufficient resources are made available in the course of 2018 for the RC system to hit the ground running on 1 January 2019.

A more robust coordination function—at only about 1 per cent of the annual contributions for operational activities for development—will bring value for money.

### **Q7: What is the proposed Funding Compact?**

The Funding Compact is intended as a tool of mutual commitment and accountability between the UNDS and Member States. As such, it can only be the product of a genuine partnership.

The specific proposals and targets advanced by the Secretary-General in his December report were devised further to extensive analysis of funding trends and intensive dialogue with all Member States and other partners. They offer a realistic way to start reversing, within a few years, the funding trends that have led to a highly-fragmented funding base within the UNDS. These mutual-accountability commitments and targets will now be further discussed and agreed upon in a dialogue with Member States in the course of 2018. This Funding Dialogue will be held ahead of the ECOSOC Operational Activities segment in 2019.

The UN's request focuses on a call for more core funding to individual entities, and a greater share of pooled funds for system-wide activities. This includes the full capitalization of the new

Joint Fund for Agenda 2030 at \$290 million per annum; and a quantum leap in funding to the Peacebuilding Fund. The UN's commitment is, among others, to undertake a series of measures that will improve the transparency and accountability of the UNDS, including through enhanced access to financial data on resources entrusted to the system; and independent system-wide evaluations for credible assessment of results.

### **Q8: What is the relation between the repositioning of the UNDS and the reform of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)?**

The DESA reform process follows a specific mandate, emanating from General Assembly Resolution A/70/299, which is parallel to the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

These processes are nonetheless interrelated. An effective repositioning of the United Nations development system relies greatly on a strengthened and more efficient DESA, as the United Nations entity with primary responsibility for development policy and support to inter-governmental processes at the global level. It is therefore critical that both repositioning processes lead to coherent outcomes.

The Secretary-General has therefore entrusted the new leadership of DESA to strengthen and better align its work streams that provide support to intergovernmental processes for the review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; and step up its capacities for policy analysis and knowledge production. A key step towards a repositioned DESA has been the appointment of a Chief Economist, which reflects the reprioritization of economics and finance for development and strengthens the system's policy capacities in these areas.

### **Q9: What is the rationale for proceeding in two steps to improve the United Nations work at the regional level?**

There is an evident need for a deep transformation of the United Nations regional architecture to perform the functions required by the 2030 Agenda. The regional level must offer a convening platform and deliver integrated policy advice, normative support and technical capacity on regional priorities.

A review commissioned by the Secretary-General in the second semester of 2017 has revealed that the system possesses significant assets at the regional level, which need to be deployed in a more effective and efficient manner.

The regional presence is diverse across regions, and scattered within each region. This brings additional complexity in considering the costs and benefits of other far-reaching structural changes. The General Assembly has therefore decided to endorse the Secretary-General's proposal to proceed in two-steps: optimizing, immediately, the existing United Nations regional assets; while assessing in greater detail the options for bolder restructuring in the medium term. In doing so, it is possible to ensure continued ambition while thoroughly considering the implications of change.

### **Q10: What is the role of governance in support of change?**

As part of efforts to reposition the UNDS, the QCPR stressed the need to improve its governance to become more coherent, transparent, responsive and effective.

Increasing system-wide accountability to Member States—from UNCTs to host governments, but also from the UNDS to Member

States in New York—will require intergovernmental space to be created for more effective horizontal oversight and coordination, increased transparency and more consistent engagement with Member States on the system’s collective performance.

Reforms of intergovernmental bodies are nonetheless the strict prerogative of the Member States.

**Q11: Why were some changes already made in 2017 to mechanisms such as the UNDG, while the repositioning process was still unfolding?**

Two years into the 2030 Agenda, there is no time to lose in repositioning the UNDS. The early actions already taken by the Secretary-General were meant to have a positive systemic impact in terms of the United Nations’ capacity to support the 2030 Agenda, within existing resources and mandates.

The renewal of the UNSDG for example, was a critical step to enhance strategic direction, impartial oversight and accountability to

the system’s in-country contribution to the 2030 Agenda. A Joint Steering Committee to advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration was also created to bring solutions, at scale, to challenges faced by countries and UNCTs at the outset of a shock or in situations of protracted crises. Operating under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General, both mechanisms rely on strong operational leadership by the respective Vice-Chairs.

Specifically, the UNDP Administrator serves as the Vice-Chair of the UNSDG, with critical functions in leading a Core Group of UNDG entities that ensures operational coordination and coherence and programmatic support to UNCTs, under the strategic guidance of the full UNSDG. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and the UNDP Administrator serve as Vice-Chairs, leading a joint support team in service of the Joint Steering Committee.