

Statement of Helen Clark  
Chair of the United Nations Development Group  
Dialogue session at the Operational Activities Segment, Economic  
and Social Council

“Challenges for the Resident Co-ordinator System Going Forward”

3 pm, 16 July 2009, Geneva

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to join you today to brief you on the challenges facing the resident co-ordinator system moving forward.

The UN development system has an important role to play in articulating and supporting a coherent global response to the current global crisis.

The lynchpin for our efforts at the country level is the resident co-ordinator system.

The 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution recognises the central role of the Resident Co-ordinators. Their leadership role helps the UN development system to function effectively and efficiently. That is central, both in responding to the present crisis, and in helping to achieve better long term development results.

A priority for the UN Development Group at this time must be to mobilize support for the MDGs globally as a central focus for development strategies.

Going forward I will be expecting the whole UNDG structure with its regional and country level tiers to be focused on identifying gaps in MDG achievement, and on how together we can help to fill them.

Country-by-country analysis reveals which of the MDGs are currently lagging behind, but which could also be reached with more effort, backed by the necessary resources.

Existing UN Development Assistance Frameworks need to be reviewed and recalibrated to respond to the economic crisis and to prevent reversals of the gains made towards the MDGs.

The roll-out of ninety UNDAFs over the next three years presents a good opportunity for our system to focus sharply on the actions required to achieve the MDGs.

We also need to bring our work on climate change into the core of how we go about trying to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

I have instructed all resident co-ordinators to approach their host governments proactively to offer support to them as they evaluate their policy options and develop their positions for the negotiations at Copenhagen.

The significance of the resources which can flow to development from a new climate change agreement are such that we cannot treat these negotiations and these issues in silos separate from our central development paradigms.

Getting the resident co-ordinator system working well is critical to delivering better results in support of nationally-led and demand-driven development programmes.



It is clear we cannot be effective working as a disparate set of UN agencies. That is why it is so important that we co-ordinate not for co-ordination's sake, but to help achieve the best development results we can.

There are costs involved in this co-ordination. We must watch them closely, and make the best use of the resources we have. But not investing in co-ordination means that transaction costs for programme countries and our other counterparts are higher than they need to be.

Empowered resident co-ordinators can more fully leverage the expertise and mandates of the wider UN development system, including non-resident agencies, in support of national development priorities.

Across the specialized agencies, funds, and programmes, we are implementing measures to strengthen the resident co-ordinator's position.

Last year the UN Development Group agreed on a mutual accountability framework and on a division of labour between resident co-ordinators and UN Country Team. This pathbreaking agreement notes that the resident co-ordinator system is managed by UNDP on behalf of all members of the UN development family.

The agreed long-term vision is that the resident co-ordinator will have an equal relationship with, and responsibility to, all UN Country Team member agencies.

At the same time, the resident co-ordinator will be empowered by the clear recognition by each agency of his/her role in ensuring that

the strategic focus of the overall UN programme is aligned to national development priorities and settings.

UN Country Team members will be accountable for results in areas where they have agreed to lead the team.

The resident co-ordinator is to have access to the technical resources of all the agencies. I look forward to the full support of all UNDG agencies in ensuring that this happens.

These important agreements need to be translated into action and to lead to change in how the UN conducts business at country level.

The UNDG at its various levels is working to make that happen.

The support of all UN member states, including on the different executive boards on which you sit, is important to advance this agenda.

Progress has also been made on the system of appointing resident co-ordinators.

A talent management initiative is being undertaken to attract, recruit, and retain high quality leaders, as resident co-ordinators, drawn from within and outside the UN system. This involves better candidate alignment with posts, strengthening the system of competency assessment and development, and reinforcing career management.

We also need to ensure that the UN's diversity and gender targets are met. As of March 2009, 32 per cent of resident co-ordinators were women, 49 per cent were from the South, and 33 per cent were originally from agencies other than UNDP.

This represents progress, but we can and must do better still.



The work of resident co-ordinators and UN Country Team members has become much more diverse and complex, with the resident co-ordinators often wearing multiple hats.

That means we need to strengthen the strategic planning and co-ordination capacity available to resident co-ordinators, particularly in crisis and post crisis countries.

More broadly, it is also essential that we have the appropriate capacity at each level of our organisations, including at the country level and through the resident co-ordinator system, to help nations achieve their development priorities.

We will need to strengthen our upstream policy support capacity at the country level, and deploy staff with profiles relevant to the specific development needs of different countries. This is an issue I am prioritizing within the undg.

Lastly, within the UNDG and through the inter-governmental process, we will continue to gather the initial lessons and experiences emerging from the 'delivering as one' pilots, to improve the UN's response to national development plans and priorities. We are placing great priority on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review's call for the UN to be more effective, coherent, and efficient.

I have met with the resident co-ordinators and resident representatives from the eight pilot countries. One cannot fail to be impressed with the progress that the governments and UN Country Teams of these countries have made in delivering as one.

I also recognize the important efforts of a number of other governments and UN Country Teams around the world which are working, on their own initiative, to improve the UN's ability to respond to national priorities.

The 2008 Stocktaking Reports were prepared jointly by the national governments of the pilot countries and the UN Country Teams. The reports show that the pilot country governments have exercised increased national leadership over UN programmes, and that UN Country Teams have better aligned their capacity to the needs of programme countries.

Challenges remain, including accelerating the harmonization of business practices, and meeting the call for the development of a single report which would capture the totality of the UN development system's results in a country on an annual basis.

Business as usual approaches are not sufficient to maintain traction on development at this time. As a UN system, we must do whatever

we can to support the achievement of national development goals.  
Strengthening the resident co-ordinator system is critical to that.

As Chair of the UN Development Group, I am committed to  
working within and beyond the UN development system to make  
that happen.

Thank you.