

Informal Summary
ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment
Dialogue with the Executive Heads of the Funds and Programmes

12 July 2010
10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

The Vice-President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ambassador Alexandru Cujba, welcomed the Executive Heads of the United Nations Funds and Programmes, and turned over the floor to the Moderator, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Sha Zukang. The Moderator introduced the speakers and their respective topics, as follows:

Ms. Helen Clark, Chair of the UN Development Group and Administrator of UNDP, speaking on *“Accelerating progress towards the achievement of the MDGs through ‘delivering as one’ at country level”*; Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of the UNFPA on *“Partnerships with the United Nations organization and other development actors: strategies, mechanisms, value added and sustainability?”*; Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, on *“Reaching the MDGs with equity”*; and Mr. Ramiro da Silva, Deputy Executive Director of WGP, on *“Efficiency, modern business practices and management for MDG results”*.

In her remarks, Ms. Clark stressed that the message for the MDG Summit must be clear: the MDGs can be achieved. She pointed to tried and tested policies which can ensure progress if scaled up and adapted to national context. On the part of the UN Development Group, accelerating MDG achievement in programme countries is the top priority. Measures are being taken to improve coherence and coordination across the system towards this end. The development new UNDAFs in some 76 countries between 2010 and 2011, under national ownership and leadership provides important opportunities. Ms. Clark cited examples from India (on MDG strategy), and Albania and Uruguay (on empowerment of women) where coherence and coordination among UN agencies have led to increased impact and results. In moving forward, Ms. Clark cited the collection of scalable best practices and strategies from around the world that the UNDG has recently put together to share among countries. UNDP also worked to analyse what it would take to achieve the MDGs based on national MDG progress reports. An “MDG acceleration framework” is currently being piloted, as a diagnostic tool. Ms. Clark however pointed to challenges facing the UN system, such as building up the UN country’ teams’ strategic planning capabilities and further work on harmonization and simplification of business practices. She stressed the commitment of the UNDG leadership to assisting programme countries meet the MDGs.

Ms. Obaid spoke of the importance of partnerships, providing more holistic approach and broad-based support in achieving the MDGs. Key partnerships include: South-South cooperation; partnership with Governments, civil society, the private sector, and within and among UN organizations and other actors. Ms. Obaid underlined the

continuing development dialogue with governments and the unique role of the partnerships in the regional context. Partnership with civil society on the other hand broadens ownership of development by the communities, also bringing value added and building on respective comparative advantages. Ms. Obaid cited some of the major partnerships of UNFPA, such as: the NGO Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development which has leveraged action on the ICPD agenda; the NGO Advisory Panel which draws voices from civil society; the Global Network for Faith-Based Organization; and Y-Peer and the Youth Advisory Panel which bring the voices of young people. She stressed the importance of institutionalizing partnership relationships to ensure sustainability, ensuring that all voices are heard and supporting an open dialogue on expectations on partnerships and results. She also cited the importance of partnership with the private sector citing as example the UN Global Compact on human rights, labour standards and environment and good governance. Within the UN system, she mentioned the H4+1 partnership to tackle health related MDGs; the Secretary-General's Unite Campaign to End Violence Against Women; the H8 partnership with four UN organizations and the Gates Foundation joined with the Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB and Malaria and the GAVI alliance. One of the key challenges in partnerships is the accountability for results: while multiple players contribute to common results, donors and audit systems continue to expect single-agency reporting.

Mr. Lake spoke about underlying disparities in the progress in the achievement of the MDGs and cited specific areas where inequalities are widening such as in child mortality. He gave the example of LDCs which are the richest in terms of the number of children and the poorest in child survival, development and protection. He shared maps of Brazil where disaggregation of statistics by sub-national and sub-regional levels shows the location of lagging areas. The main message is the need to focus on the bottom quintiles of populations; the need to disaggregate data to uncover the disparities; and the need to coordinate efforts with civil society actors who may have a better reach of communities. The use of technologies, such as SMS-texting could help in delivery of services to hard-to-reach and underserved areas. Mr. Lake also mentioned how UNICEF had encouraged achievement of human development goals with local governments and their communities through the UNICEF Seal of Approval awards.

Mr. da Silva, stressed that maximizing resources in the current financial climate is a challenge, and that better management practices should improve impact including through reduction in transactions cost and improvement in efficiency. Key changes being introduced in the UN system include: adoption of IPSAS which should provide better picture of financial performance; strengthening of control and accountability systems which not only to reduce risk, but also to ensure achievement of strategic objectives in a cost-effective manner; the use of IT platforms; and the use of the Harmonized Approach to Cash transfer (HACT). Examples from Delivering as One have demonstrated concrete results. The High-level Committee on Programmes launched joint projects to improve efficiency and conducted a joint mission with UNDG to identify bottlenecks in business practices. While all these changes are taking place, Mr. da Silva cited continuing major challenges to harmonization and simplification, including: the multiple reporting

requirements to various governance entities; the diversity of staffing policies for national staff at country level; and the up-front investment needed for systems changes.

Speakers welcomed the focus placed by funds and programmes on the realization of the MDGs and looked forward to the September 2010 MDGs Summit to mobilize support for the MDGs.

They also underscored the need to demonstrate and communicate concrete results from Delivering as One (DaO). It was important to understand better how headquarters could fully support the DaO reform. At the same time, it was reiterated that there is no one-size-fits all approach to development cooperation.

It was felt that UN funding was still inadequate to meet current needs and expectations. The need to enlarge the donor base of the UN system was underscored.

It was also suggested that the follow-up to the decisions of the General Assembly on System-Wide Coherence could take place as part of the process on the review of operational activities (QCPR).

The audience also asked about:

- where significant gains on efficiencies could come from, and what major bottlenecks need to be addressed
- the concept of “critical mass” and how this is to address the imbalance between core and non-core resources
- how changes from delivering as one can be sustained without incurring additional costs
- whether the implementation of the *Mutual Accountability System of the Resident Coordinator System, including the functional firewall* is proceeding well
- how strengthening of the work of the funds and programmes on the MDGs can be supported
- how funds and programmes would coordinate with the newly created “UN-women”
- what are the most promising forms of partnerships
- how well the functional firewall is functioning
- how UNDP will play the role of “convenor” of smaller non-resident agencies and how to house the expertise of some specialized agencies.
- how coordination with the new gender entity will work
- how to best help countries adjust to climate change

In response, Executive Heads informed that the High-Level joint Mission of the HLCM and UNDG on Simplification and Harmonization of business practices has outlined some key areas for actions which will be discussed in a CEB meeting in September. The work on IT platforms and IPSAS is promising. With the expanding number of partnerships and the growing use of national system, there will be a need to rethink the way accountability and auditing systems work

Executive Heads also informed that undg is commissioning an independent evaluation to assess the progress of the *Management and Accountability System of the Resident Coordinator System, including the functional firewall*.

There is yet a very general notion of the ‘critical mass’ of resources which is related to maintaining a substantive global presence. This will be discussed by the governing bodies of funds and programmes in the coming months. Given that WFP does not have core resources, this concept does not apply to WFP. Core resources enabled for instance to respond fast to changing needs and to emergencies. Multi-year contributions are critical as they allow organizations to plan on a cost effective basis. The One Fund is seen as a mechanism to provide a platform for small and new/emerging donors. Innovative funding mechanisms to expand the donor base should be further developed.

UN Women will be a member of undg. A transition team for the UN Women is expected to be in place by September which will outline the functional arrangements. UNFPA will continue working on Gender and Reproductive Health issues, while UN Women is expected to focus on other issues such as Violence Against Women for example.

Further efforts were needed to support climate change adaptation. undg has provided guidance on adjusting to climate change in the latest undaf guidelines.

On supporting MDG databases, funding is needed for example in supporting analytical work from census data, not just funding of the census itself. As matter of strategy, focus should be on interventions with the greatest impact. Community based programmes were difficult but enabled to respond to needs and achieve impact. The partnership with Middle Income countries or countries graduating out of UN assistance could be a source of knowledge for the UN system.