

**Dialogue with
the Executive Heads of UN Funds and Programmes
ECOSOC Chamber
Monday, 12 July 2010, 10.20 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Address by Helen Clark Chair of the UN Development Group and UNDP Administrator

I appreciate this opportunity for dialogue with Member States on how to accelerate progress towards the MDGs through greater coherence at the country level.

The MDG Summit, which is barely two months away now, offers an excellent opportunity to generate new political commitment and spur the collective action needed to achieve the MDGs.

The message for the MDG Summit must be clear: the MDGs can be achieved. There is a range of tried and tested policies, which can ensure progress if scaled up and adapted to national context.

For the UN development system to give quality support to MDG progress, we will need to be as well co-ordinated as possible. Working together, we in the funds, programmes, and specialized agencies can draw on our diverse and complementary expertise to tackle complex and multifaceted development challenges.

By concentrating our human and financial resources around priority goals, we can maximise the development impact of our support.

The UNDG is placing accelerating MDG achievement for programme countries as a top priority of our work.

To that end, we have put in place numerous measures to improve coherence and co-ordination across the system.

The UN Development Assistance Frameworks – the UNDAFs – are at the heart of those efforts.

This year some 48 programme countries will develop new UNDAFs, and 28 countries will do so in 2011. These are valuable opportunities to position the UN development system in support of country-led development efforts and MDG achievement.

Our experience in the field has repeatedly shown that national ownership and leadership are fundamental to accelerating and sustaining development progress.

In the Synthesis of the 2009 RC Annual Reports, which is about to be published, 115 UN Country Teams already report that their UNDAFs are fully aligned with national strategic priorities and have a strong focus on MDG achievement.

For example, all the UN's development work under India's UNDAF is aimed at meeting the MDGs. The UN agencies have signed a Joint Programme on Convergence with the Government of India and seven state governments, to assist in placing 35 districts on track to achieve the MDGs. The Joint Programme is fully owned by the national and state governments, which have reported their appreciation of this approach.

Countries are also reporting that through joint programmes and common programme planning mechanisms, the UN development system is helping to accelerate the achievement of national and international development goals, including the MDGs.

Co-ordination among the funds, programmes, and specialized agencies is most advanced in the Delivering as One countries and in those which have voluntarily adopted that approach.

For example, in Tanzania, a Delivering as One pilot country, the UN Country Team has effectively responded to the national priority and the MDG on maternal health and newborn mortality. Through a joint programme, we have brought together the special competencies of each contributing UN organization to support the Tanzanian Government's efforts. A decline in deaths has already been seen in one of the three provinces where the joint programme operates.

The Delivering as One approach has also been important in accelerating progress on MDG 3 in Albania, a pilot country, by increasing the numbers of women in parliament from low levels.

UNIFEM, UNICEF, and UNDP partnered in promoting women's political participation - as candidates and as voters – with each organization focusing on its comparative advantage.

- UNIFEM drew on its long running relationships with women's groups and with gender advocates within the Albanian Government to mobilize women and monitor the implementation of the thirty per cent quota for women candidates on party lists which was set.
- UNICEF worked through Albania's system of youth parliaments to spread the message on the importance of women as candidates and voters.
- UNDP and UNIFEM worked together with journalists to promote fair media coverage of gender equality issues, relevant to the elections, and of women candidates.

In the 2009 elections, the percentage of women in Parliament more than doubled from the previous elections, from seven per cent to 16.4 per cent.

Joint work on MDGs was also undertaken in Uruguay, another pilot country, where UNDP, UNFPA, and UNIFEM have worked together to foster co-operation among women parliamentarians from different parties to strengthen the gender focus of issues under consideration by Parliament. One notable sign of progress has been the adoption of gender responsive budgeting by the Ministry of Finance.

At the global level, the UNDG has provided important resources for programme countries on how to achieve development progress on the MDGs.

For example, we have issued in-depth thematic papers addressing seven of the MDGs. They are available at the back of this conference room, and are "hot off the press".

The papers provide an analysis of successful strategies, factors underpinning progress, critical gaps, and a summary of key lessons and future measures conducive to accelerating MDG progress.

We have also issued an “MDG Good Practices Publication”, which contains over 200 examples of good practices of governments, UN organizations, non-governmental organization, research institutes, and the private sector.

The UNDG has also revised the guidelines for country reporting on the MDGs to guide governments in the preparation of national MDG reports, and to ensure that these reports both clearly highlight progress to date and examine what more needs to be done.

In addition to contributing to this work of the UNDG, UNDP has prepared an “International Assessment” of what it will take to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It is based on evidence drawn from around fifty up to date national MDG reports.

The Assessment identifies common and underlying MDG success factors, and highlights constraints on progress. It proposes an MDG Action Agenda, emphasizing eight priority areas which can help to drive progress across the MDGs.

Currently a number of UN Country Teams are piloting an MDG acceleration framework. It is a new diagnostic tool, designed to help governments identify both constraints on MDG progress and the country specific interventions which would have the most impact in overcoming them.

Notwithstanding far-reaching efforts to make the UN development system more effective in assisting programme countries in their MDG achievement, challenges remain.

For example, we can do better in deepening our engagement in national development processes; in building the UN Country Teams’ strategic planning capabilities through the UNDAFs; and by increasing the effectiveness of our assistance through the harmonization and simplification of our business practices.

As Chair of the UN Development Group, I am committed to giving leadership to the maximum co-ordination possible of the UN development system at the global, regional, and country levels.

By supporting country ownership and leadership of the development process; by increasing the coherence and effectiveness of our collective efforts; and by drawing on evidence-based global best practice which is tailored to country-specific circumstances, we can strengthen the UN’s unique position to assist programme countries in their development efforts.

Our goal is to see the MDGs met.