



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Remarks by Helen Clark
UNDP Administrator and Chair of the UN Development Group
on the occasion of the
ECOSOC Dialogue with Executive Heads of Funds and Programmes

*“The future of operational activities for development of Funds and Programmes:
strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats”*

Geneva, 15 July 2011

I thank ECOSOC for the opportunity to be part of this annual dialogue with Member States, together with colleagues from the other UN Funds and Programmes.

This year, we have been asked to assess the future of the UN development system’s operational activities. Assessing the future is no small task at any time, but we can begin by acknowledging that the dynamic and uncertain times in which we live currently make this task particularly difficult.

The global recession, lingering financial instability, high food prices, and severe natural disasters have increased the vulnerability of the world’s poor. That, and the heightened risk of development setbacks which accompanies it, makes development work more complex.

At the same time, there are pressures on development actors to provide high quality advice and services, to demonstrate impact and value for money, and to adapt to a difficult development financing landscape.

In this environment, it is critical for the UN Funds and Programmes to identify clearly what the emerging opportunities are and to work strategically together to pursue them.

Opportunities for the future of development

One such opportunity emerges from the growing number and diversity of development actors.

Emerging economies are now making significant contributions to global development, including through South-South cooperation, and record numbers of middle income countries are playing important roles in their regional communities and the global community. The significance of South-South cooperation will continue to grow, and it is important that the UN's funds and programmes work to facilitate it. UNDP has been pursuing a number of new strategic partnerships to that end.

There is also a proliferation of civil society organizations, international NGOs, influential mega philanthropic institutions, and private sector actors active in development.

As well, individual citizens are increasingly using social movements and new technologies to make their voices heard and contribute to the development of their communities.

In all these trends there is much optimism, energy, and opportunity. To respond to them, we in the UN development system must continue to improve the systems which enable us to share what we know and learn, to enable governments and development actors alike to respond to the shifting needs, realities, and concerns of citizens.

The UN Funds and Programmes have a long history of working with a wide range of stakeholders, including national and global non-State actors. Using the platform of the UN's convening power and impartiality, we can connect development needs with a range of solutions, based on best practice and experiences. We can help bring the voices of the people and countries we serve to global consultations, including in the development of a framework for post 2015 which builds on what has been learned from implementing the MDG agenda.

A second opportunity for the UN development system lies in working jointly to help countries accelerate and sustain MDG progress.

To support more countries to achieve more MDG targets in the current challenging resource environment, we all need to aim for much more catalytic impact from our work. Narrow sectoral strategies must give way to initiatives which have significant multiplier effects, like investing in women and girls, and which maximize the synergies across different strands of development work. UNDP has been making the case for addressing the drivers of MDG progress as defined in the International Assessment we produced last year on what it would take to achieve the MDGs.

It will be critical to invest in developing stronger national institutions, systems, and capacities.

Sustainable, equitable, and inclusive economic growth is needed to reach the poor, and to generate domestic resources for development, and to grow countries' capacity to trade.

The likely substantial climate finance of the future must be accessible to poor countries and the adaptation and mitigation it helps to fund must support ongoing human development and progress too.

Initiatives which address security, peace, and development holistically must be supported. As the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report highlighted, insecurity is a big barrier to development. An estimated 1.5 billion people live in areas affected by conflict or large-scale violence.

Working effectively together, the UN Funds and Programmes can help countries use development assistance as a catalyst for the transformational change they seek to make, and help development actors to learn from each other and better understand local realities. We are well positioned to pursue future opportunities and operate successfully in a rapidly changing and fast paced environment. This is why it is so important for the next QCPR to encourage the UN to focus on coherence for results, not process, and to position the UN system for continuing high relevance and impact at the national level.

Building a stronger UN Development System

As Executive Heads of the UN Funds and Programmes, we recognize that the challenges to development progress are greater than the capacity of any one actor to respond to them. We have a shared commitment to tackle these challenges together.

Josette Sheeran and I have worked together to advance the business practice simplification and harmonization agenda, and are now overseeing a process to help streamline results reporting.

Michelle Bachelet, Anthony Lake, and Babatunde Osotimehin all assumed their positions last year, and are leading UN efforts to deliver jointly in a number of areas, including in efforts to improve maternal and newborn health, eliminate sexual violence, and better support young people.

Through our actions we are working to improve the coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of the UN development system. Our goal is to see the UN development system made truly “fit for purpose” in the 21st century. To achieve that, we must transform ourselves, and confront the weaknesses associated with fragmented approaches, pointless competition, and outdated and complicated systems and operations.

Let me highlight three areas where we have the opportunity to lift our game:

The first is in the UNDAF rollout countries, where we are repositioning UN Country Teams' support to be more strategic and focused in support of national development priorities;

The second is in the Delivering as One and voluntary adopter countries, which are pioneering innovative approaches for more coherent, effective, and efficient UN support.

The third is though a concerted UNDG effort to improve support for countries emerging from conflict or crisis. By working together more effectively and strategically, the UNDG at all levels can give better support to countries making the transition from humanitarian response to recovery, and enable them to address underlying development challenges as early as possible.

The UNDG is working on improving incentives for and removing barriers to agency collaboration at the global, regional, and country level.

Our UNDG Principals Advisory Group will meet in “retreat mode” in September to take stock of our achievements to date, and agree on the next steps needed to tackle the challenges ahead.

Meeting challenges in post crisis countries

I want now to comment on the work being done, following the release of the Civilian Capacity Review’s report, to improve the UN’s ability to support countries suffering from armed violence or conflict and for those trying to recover from it.

Recent decades saw a decrease in the number of inter- and intra-State conflicts, but also an increase in armed violence related to organized crime or ethnic tensions. Violence, conflict, and insecurity cause countries to lag behind their MDG targets.

In 2009, a UN Report on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict stressed the need for smooth, flexible, high-quality, and predictable support to such countries. The World Bank’s 2011 World Development Report followed through on this theme, and emphasized that building peace takes time and requires collaborative approaches. The WDR makes an important contribution to our understanding of how countries can move out of cycles of violence and conflict. The preparation of the WDR has been a good example of World Bank-UN collaboration, and there is much in its recommendations for us to take forward together. It highlights areas where more UN response capacity is needed, and suggests that international responses, in general, have been too slow, and too fragmented and too quick to exit.

Now the findings of the Civilian Capacity Review are being studied carefully for insights into how UN support in post conflict and conflict countries can be improved. Later this year, the UN Secretary General is expected to release a report detailing the steps the UN will take to implement the Review’s recommendations.

The emphasis will be on improving national ownership and strengthening the national capacities needed to support institutions which can generate and sustain progress over the long-term. We can draw from the experience of the Funds and Programmes to develop shared guidelines on civilian capacity across a wide range of key actors. The UN needs to extend its partnerships to make full use of expertise in the global South.

The Civilian Capacity Review pointed to administrative and human resources hurdles which have made it difficult for the different arms of the UN to work effectively together. The undg and the HLCM are working to reduce such obstacles through an approved joint work-plan. Progress must be made on aligning procurement, ICT, and human resources practices. We have jointly funded an initiative to incorporate the Harmonization of Business Practices into the UNDAF process. Continuous support for these initiatives is needed, and we principals must lead calls for additional reforms as needed.

To continue improving the capacity of the UN system to be more nimble and effective in its operations, we need the support and engagement of Member States. Making better use of available resources to meet the significant challenges to development requires more effective partnerships at all levels, between states and citizens, and across the diverse range of multilateral, bilateral, NGO, and private sector actors.

Improving our ability to respond quickly and effectively to local realities and to make the best use of development resources, is not just an opportunity for the UN; it is an imperative for reaching the goals we all share of accelerating MDG progress, expanding peace and security, and achieving sustainable human development.
