

7 February 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Informal Meeting of the Plenary on System-wide Coherence**

Excellencies,

May I welcome you to this informal meeting of the General Assembly to launch fresh consultations on System-wide Coherence.

First of all I would like to express my thanks to the Co-Chairs - Ambassador Augustine Mahiga of Tanzania, and Ambassador Paul Kavanagh of Ireland - for the work they have already conducted.

I am confident that Member States will offer the Co-Chairs your full support and cooperation to enable substantive progress to be made this session.

Before we hear from the Co-Chairs I would like to offer a few thoughts of my own on the way forward.

Excellencies,

It is clear that without ambitious and far-reaching reforms the United Nations will be unable to deliver on its promises and maintain its position at the heart of the multilateral system. Despite its unique legitimacy the United Nation's status as a central actor in development is undermined by a lack of focus on results.

This fails more than anyone else, the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and children. This situation is just not good enough.

If the United Nations is to play its full part in achieving the Millennium Development Goals we must recognise that change is inevitable.

Particularly, because we have reached the mid point to achieve the MDGs and progress has been slower than expected. Some leaders have described this situation as a 'development emergency' and called for decisive action.

The United Nations - more than any other body - is uniquely placed to take a leading role in achieving the MDGs. But in order to do so, and like any other organization, it must renew and retool itself to respond to emerging challenges.

The very name of our consultations is in itself a recognition that at some level the system is incoherent.

Fortunately, we all share a common conviction in a more effective United Nations.

The United Nations operational development system must be fit for purpose. Better coherence across the system is an integral part of the broader aid effectiveness agenda, including ongoing efforts to strengthen the United Nations gender architecture.

Let's also be clear: the UN is working in a competitive environment – more and more organizations are joining the fight against poverty. This can only be welcomed.

However, the United Nations will only continue to attract resources if it can demonstrate its effectiveness and deliver results.

Reform and continuous improvement are an intrinsic part of any successful organisation. The United Nations is no exception.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The report of the High-level Panel on the System-wide Coherence of the United Nations operational activities contains recommendations on a number of important policy areas. Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon has endorsed the report as part of his vision of a UN fit for the 21st century.

The recommendations were comprehensively considered during consultations in the 61st session. The Co-Chairs that led this exercise - Ambassador Hoscheit of Luxembourg and Ambassador Hackett of Barbados - produced a thorough report suggesting next steps.

Since then there have been a number of encouraging developments:

- The TCPR was adopted. It contains many elements that will promote better coherence across the United Nations operational activities for development.
- At the recent annual board meeting of UNDP/UNFPA India and Sweden made a strong statement in support of greater coherence based on the experience of the pilot countries. I would encourage the membership to follow this example and begin our discussion by focusing on areas of convergence and agreement.
- During the past year there has been considerable progress so that the various components of the UN system can deliver more coherently on cross-cutting issues.
- The importance of strengthening action to address the multi-faceted affects of climate change has put greater emphasis on coherence.
- And, in my talks with delegations and on my visits overseas I have heard strong support and a clear willingness to find the best consensus solution to deliver better coherence.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

So far 8 pilot countries are testing the 'One UN' approach. The results of these pilots should be an essential element for the intergovernmental consultations on operational effectiveness.

The Panels report clearly states that a 'one size fits all approach' is not the way to go. Should they wish to I would encourage other Member States to develop the 'One UN' approach to support national development strategies, in partnership with the UN country team, and based on the principle of national ownership.

In order to move forward, the constructive and collective efforts of the UN system, and, of all Member States will be necessary.

We need to take a pragmatic and considered approach. One that focuses on substance and the broader strategic issues to ensure that;

- the UN plays its full role in delivering the MDGs;
- that development remains at the heart of the UN system's activities;
- and, that the system is performing well enough, not only to maintain current levels of voluntary funding, but also to attract additional resources in the fight against poverty.

Excellencies,

I look forward to the in-depth intergovernmental consultations on these and other important coherence issues.

In the months to come, we have an opportunity to reassert the role of the General Assembly in strengthening the United Nations system for the benefit of all.

I appeal to all of you, to enter into the consultations in the best possible spirit with the aim of making concrete progress this session.

The need for change is compelling. Now it is time for the General Assembly to "deliver as one".

Thank you.