



JAPAN

Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

866 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017 Phone: (212) 223-4300 - www.un.int/japan/

Press Release

(check against delivery)

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. TOSHIRO OZAWA
AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAPAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON PROMOTION OF SUSTAINED GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA

INFORMAL CONSULTATION OF THE PLENARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON MANDATE REVIEW

8 May 2006

Mr. Co-Chair,

Japan recognizes the essential role the United Nations is playing in the area of development. In terms of financial resources, however, UN activities constitute only about ten percent of all such activities worldwide. Despite that, we see a fragmentation of actors within the UN system and also fierce competition amongst them pursuing duplicative work. These are some reasons why our current system is not regarded as being efficient and effective enough to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

It follows that the UN system should be transformed into a system that is more relevant to today's world and that can effectively address the increasingly diverse development agendas, making full use of its comparative advantages. The UN system will be receiving much more development-related funding in the years to come as a result of last year's large-scale commitments made by the donor countries. By revitalizing itself through reform, the UN system would be able to make more positive impacts on the ground through more effective and efficient use of that funding. In this regard, Japan believes that the merits of programmatic shifts through mandate review will benefit all Member States. Also, we wish to reiterate our thinking that our main goal is not cost-cutting per se.

In order to make the UN development activities more effective and efficient through mandate review, we believe that the assistance and cooperation of the UN Secretariat is critical. Because mandate review will be beneficial to the entire UN system, including the Secretariat, we strongly encourage the Secretariat to give its full support to the review by providing us the necessary information, including both raw material and in-depth analyses, and also by formulating concrete proposals and suggestions, not limited to those contained in the SG's report.

It goes without saying that ECOSOC's mandates must also be discussed, and that ECOSOC's review mechanism should commence expeditiously. Mandate review should be an ongoing process aimed at revitalizing the entire UN system, and as such, mandates stemming from the subsidiary bodies should also be examined at a later stage of this exercise.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Japan fully endorses the overall recommendation of the SG on the consolidation and simplification of reporting obligations. This is a promising and fertile ground for reform, and we feel that much more can be accomplished by eliminating the duplication and overlapping of the reporting requirements of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. Japan requests the Secretariat to formulate concrete and detailed proposals on this matter so that we can achieve "tangible and immediate outcomes."

Achievement of development should be assessed on the ground. Thus, Japan agrees with the SG report's basic argument that duplicative efforts should be eliminated in order to maximize the efficiency of resources and their impact on the ground.

Japan also supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General that all relevant UN entities be requested to review their priorities and programmes in the light of the World Summit Outcome. We urge the Secretariat to provide the Member States with a compilation outcome of such reviews. We also urge the Secretary-General to encourage the heads of relevant departments and entities to provide concrete options for possible programmatic shifts.

In the area of development, the UN simultaneously performs three functions--normative, analytical and operational--at three levels--global, regional and country-level. With the growth of diversity and complexity of our development activities,

each UN body has come to assume a number of functions at different levels. This is one factor which has often led to overlap and duplication of efforts.

We concur with the report that there is overlap and redundancy amongst DESA, UNCTAD, the regional commissions and the Funds and Programmes, including UNDP and UNEP. The overlap and redundancy covers the areas of trade, macroeconomics and finance, sustainable development, human settlements and population issues. Clearly there is significant room for improvement in the division of responsibility amongst these bodies. Although they differ in geographical scope, DESA and the regional commissions, in particular, address many of the same issues. It should be worthwhile to pursue improved division of labor and rationalization of the work in the regional committees. We must identify rationalization measures which could bring tangible results in the short term. Because we will need to take into account the recommendations of the High-level panel on system-wide coherence, which is expected to come out in September, we should look at these matters in a medium and long term range as well.

Having said that, a serious review of regional commissions needs to be conducted. Many regional cooperation frameworks have developed in each of our regions. There can be no doubt that the role and mandates of regional commissions must be reviewed and altered in response to current requirements. Although circumstances differ with the regions, we believe that the work being done at the regional level is becoming increasingly redundant owing to the strengthening of the activities of the UN Secretariat as well as the Funds and Programmes.

Looking at UNCTAD, we notice that UNCTAD has stretched its work beyond its original mandate in the area of trade and development. We think it would be more appropriate for UNCTAD to concentrate on its core competence, including capacity-building and investment analysis.

Furthermore, Japan supports the assessment in the SG report that further improvements are needed in the division of labor for analysis amongst DESA, UNCTAD, regional commissions, UNDP, and the other Funds and Programmes. Individually, each entity has established its own capacities in the areas of statistics, analytical work and information technology systems. The net result is duplication in work and procedures across the UN system. We think it essential that effort be initiated immediately by DESA to enhance complementarity and to avoid unnecessary overlap within the UN system.

On the regular programme of technical cooperation, we are compelled to say that we have concerns. This programme has long failed to meet the basic requirements for oversight, performance review, accountability and budget procedures. The proposed decentralized system of operation under one programme manager is clearly insufficient. We believe a fundamental reform is required to address our concerns. A possible solution could be to combine this programme and the development account into a single section.

Japan has studied carefully the GA mandates which, we believe, deserve serious consideration. For example, we think that there is a need to reform some committees of experts, such as the committee on public administration, whose activities fail to live up to expectations with regard to their relevance and utility. We believe that these committees should engage in more valuable activities, such as sharing information on good practices.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Africa could be the primary beneficiary of any programme-shift. Japan agrees with the SG's analysis on the current mismatch between the mandates and their actual impact on the ground, and shares the SG's sense of urgency about addressing the special needs of Africa. To achieve the MDGs, UN activities for African development need to be more efficient and action-oriented. We acknowledge the fact that further efforts are required to enhance coherence and coordination amongst UN entities for that purpose. We support the recommendation that priority be placed on the implementation of NEPAD and on sustained support for the African Union. In this regard, we welcome the proposal to rationalize and simplify pre-NEPAD mandates into the context of NEPAD and request the Secretariat to provide concrete proposals to make this happen. In this regard, Japan believes that, in enhancing its activities in Africa, the Secretariat, including the ECA, should also make assessments on what their comparative advantages are vis-a-vis other multilateral organizations such as AU, NEPAD and AfDB.

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.