

Check Against Delivery

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to the United Nations Environment Programme
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Repositioning of the UN development system

Madam Chair, Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Excellencies and Colleagues:

Thank you for having invited me to attend this Committee of Permanent Representatives Meeting, on the important topic of “Mainstreaming UN Development System Reform”. We see this invitation as another sign of the strong commitment and engagement of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Environment Assembly to the Secretary-General’s reform vision. I am conscious that today also marks the beginning of the new Executive Director’s leadership and I am happy to bring the best of greetings and well wishes from the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, who was keen for me to be here today.

When the SG launched his reform agenda, he did so in the firm belief that investment in sustainable development - including its environmental dimension - forms the basis for peaceful and prosperous societies that provide access to opportunities for all **without harming the planet**.

We are, by now, well advanced in our transformative journey, a journey that will deliver in the lives of people and leaving no one behind, while addressing the urgent need for climate action.

We are continuing to charge ahead, with a focus on the 2030 Agenda, guided by the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and the General Assembly (GA) resolution on UNDS repositioning. We need to sustain the momentum - our shared sense of urgency - and maintain the pace and ambition of reform.

The Secretary-General (SG) has just reported to the Operational Activities Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - on all measures we are taking to ensure a coherent, effective, efficient and accountable UN development system (UNDS). We are now eagerly waiting the ECOSOC resolution, hoping it will endorse the direction of travel as outlined in the SGs recommendations.

We will continue to work closely with Member States in the operationalization phase of proposed reforms and we are grateful to all Member States for their leadership and to the entities of the UNDS for their active engagement.

We are grateful to UNEP for now taking such a pro-active role in the roll-out of the reforms and seizing the opportunity to deliver on its environment mandate – with UNCTs – and within the 2030 Agenda.

It is only through collective action that we can tackle increasingly complex global challenges. And only in the spirit of mutual trust these reforms can succeed.

Let me now turn to the key reform work streams, based on the General Assembly mandates, and the SG proposals. Starting with the **reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system**, the GA decided to create a dedicated, independent, impartial and empowered coordination function, separating the Resident Coordinators from the UNDP Resident Representatives (RR) and strengthening the RC authority and leadership.

We have smoothly transitioned to a reinvigorated RC system as of January 1st this year:

- We now have RCs fully focused on coordinating UN's support for Member States' efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda.
- We are working to strengthen **RC system capacities, tools and skillsets**, including through improved RC recruitment, training and induction, to ensure an increased ability to respond to context-specific challenges.
- New and strengthened **RC Offices** are being rolled out in line with core functions and posts agreed by Member States.
- And, a stand-alone **Development Coordination Office (DCO)** has been established in the Secretariat to assume managerial and oversight functions of the RC system, as mandated by the GA.

Clear accountability lines between RCs and UNCT members have been defined in the new **Management and Accountability Framework**, founded on the dual accountability system, defined by the GA. The regional and global dimensions of the MAF are expected to be finalized by the end of 2019, in line with Member States' decisions on the regional review.

Funding for the RC system has been mobilized for 2019 through voluntary contributions and the doubling of the UN agencies cost-sharing. Some multi-year pledges have been made. However, a gap of USD 86 million still remains to be filled. The 1% levy on tightly earmarked non-core contributions is now operational and we count on its revenues. Ensuring adequate, predictable and sustainable funding is critical, including to attract and retain the best human resources. As the RC system belongs to all Member States, everyone must own it and contribute to it and no contribution is too small.

The GA requested the Secretary-General to lead efforts for a new generation of UNCTs, built on the basis of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and with needs-based tailored country presence. It welcomed the SG's efforts to make the UNDAF the most

important instrument for planning and implementation of UN development activities in each country. And it reiterated that the UNDAF process and UN country presence would need to be fully consulted and agreed with national governments. It also requested to review and improve UN multi-country offices.

The transition on 1 January to a reinvigorated RC system began the transformation towards a new generation of UNCTs.

We are working with Governments and other partners to identify needs and capture priorities through a much more robust and accountable joint planning process, and aligning the system's capacities with countries' expectations to realize the 2030 Agenda. To that end, we have redesigned the UNDAF and renamed it UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (in short "**Cooperation Framework**"), shifting from assistance to cooperation and developed a set of internal guidelines that will ensure a coherent approach across UNCTs, when preparing a Cooperation Framework under the leadership of the host government.

The new Cooperation Framework will allow for a robust dialogue, facilitated by the RC, between UNCTs and the host Government on whether **UNCT configuration and entity presence** remain responsive to national needs, or if changes will be needed to ensure that the full range of UNDS capacities is leveraged, regardless of location, to implement and deliver on the Cooperation Framework commitments.

Efficiency gains are also being achieved and continuously pursued, including through common offices and improved business operations, mindful to enhance - rather than diminish - the quality of the support provided.

We have reviewed the **Multi-Country Offices (MCOs)** and suggested measures at country, regional and global level, based on national development needs and vulnerabilities as well as the number of countries covered by MCOs and their connectivity. The MCO repositioning will improve delivery of services in each and every country and territory covered by MCOs. We will move into the implementation phase in full consultation with all countries covered by MCOs, once ECOSOC has pronounced itself on the SG's proposed direction of travel.

The GA had also requested to optimize functions and enhance collaboration at regional level, while also reviewing the UN regional assets for a longer-term reprofiling and restructuring, mindful of the different regional contexts. A **mapping of regional functions and capacities** had been carried out in 2017 and complemented last year by a group of experts from different regions, under the independent leadership of a think tank from the South – CEPEI. An Internal Review Team with all Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) and UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) entities was also put in place.

Based on the review outcome, the Secretary-General has proposed **five measures** to strengthen coordination, reporting and efficiencies, and most importantly ensure relevant, accessible and quickly deployable knowledge in support of country needs.

They include: the establishment of Regional Collaboration Platforms; of knowledge management hubs; of annual reporting on system-wide results at regional level; the launch of a region-by-region change management process for consolidation of data; statistics and other analytical functions; and common back-offices and common premises at regional level.

We will continue the work through a **third phase technical track** (pending a decision by ECOSOC) to dive deeper into region-by-region solutions, comprising both the UN development system and Member States.

The proposals of the Secretary-General aim at ensuring that the work of the UNDS at regional level is both relevant and responsive to country needs, through capacities, that are easily accessible and quickly deployable including through better coordination, some consolidation and more efficient services.

The GA had also asked to increase transparency and accountability of operational activities for development, by strengthening independent system-wide evaluation. Member States asked to address gaps, overlaps and build on comparative advantages and capture measures to do so in a system-wide strategic document.

A new **system-wide strategic document** has been presented to Member States. This has in some ways been one of the most challenging work streams of the reform, both because the UNDS is complex, diverse, accountable to different boards and mandates, and dependent on funding imperatives, and because of the different views and expectations towards the document. However, it has proved beneficial for extensive collective discussions and a frank assessment on the way we operate collectively and next steps to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda.

The **UNSDG** set up has been reviewed and strengthened to enhance its ability to support and provide oversight to UNCTs. Measures have been taken to strengthen synergies across **development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts**, in line with the QCPR, including through the establishment of a Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration and the revitalization of the Peacebuilding Support Office. Integrated responses serve to mitigate risks, prevent crises, and build resilience, thus bringing sustainable development back at the center of our efforts.

The reform of the **Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)** is also ongoing and Member States will be briefed, by mid-year, on measures being taken to reposition it, including on proposals for its reorganization to optimize its structures and reporting lines. A revitalized DESA will strengthen the interface of the UN normative, analytical and operational work at regional and global level.

In line with the calls in the QCPR and the Funding Compact, we are developing a new independent system-wide evaluation strategy, working closely with UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) and in consultation with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), which will clarify roles and responsibilities across the system, strengthen engagement with governing and legislative bodies and identify options for a new

mechanism to further mobilize evaluation capacities and resources across the system. Independent system-wide evaluation will strengthen oversight, transparency and accountability as well as joint work and collective learning.

We are also enhancing the ability of the system to **partner** with all relevant stakeholders, through the review and repositioning of our capacities in the Global Compact and UN Office for Partnerships (UNOP), the development of a system-wide approach to due diligence for private sector partnerships, strengthened cooperation with IFIs and intergovernmental organizations, and reinvigorated support to South-South cooperation.

Strengthening partnerships will strengthen our ability to leverage and drive all assets required to deliver on the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, while also managing risks and ensuring appropriate oversight of partnership efforts.

The success of the UNDS reform is a shared responsibility of the system and Member States alike. A UNDS that is more integrated and capacitated to rise to the ambition of the 2030 Agenda is also contingent on a shift in funding practices to foster collaboration rather than competition among entities.

The **Funding Compact** that the system and Member States developed together through the Funding Dialogue is a testament to what the system and the Member States can achieve working closely together. We now must deliver on our mutual commitments. The system is committed to do so and already acting upon its commitments.

So - What are the next steps?

The SG will continue to move forward, in consultation with the UNSDG, in advancing measures already mandated by the GA in resolution 72/279. This includes the consolidation of the reinvigorated RC system (finalize recruitments, reform the recruitment process, reform RC training, sustain funding, operationalize the levy, etc.) and the progressive advent of a new generation of UNCTs (operationalize the guidelines for the new Cooperation Framework, roll out the new MAF, continue the work on efficiencies, etc.).

Subject to the outcome of the ECOSOC resolution, **we will also move ahead in the operationalization of new reform proposals and other measures**, this includes:

- Operationalizing the measures to improve the MCOs, in full consultation with covered countries and in cooperation with UN entities;
- Development of region-by-region implementation plans for the repositioning of the regional assets, along the five areas of the SG report and in full consultation with countries of each region;
- Implementation and tracking of Funding Compact commitments;
- Strengthening of system-wide evaluation mechanisms.

Tracking of results will also be critical as **next year reporting to ECOSOC** will have to show the concrete impact of reform efforts on the ground.

So, what can Member States do to advance the reform agenda?

We must jointly maintain the reform momentum and the overarching support for the direction of the SG reforms, as mandated by the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

Member States' **clear signals and guidance** are also needed **in all of the governing bodies** of all UNDS entities to fully implement the path of reform, particularly by:

1. Firstly, ensuring that respective reporting systems and country programme documents are guided by and in line with the UN Cooperation Frameworks, new accountability systems of UNCTs, and efforts to increase the share of common premises and common services;
2. Secondly, guiding entity-specific discussions on the Funding Compact, especially regarding commitments for core and pooled funding;
3. Thirdly, by maintaining support to ensure sustainable cost-sharing contributions to the new RC system and adequate collection of the 1% levy;
4. Fourthly, encouraging and inspiring all entities to put forward their best candidates for the new Resident Coordinators pipeline, and review human resources procedures to ensure country team members have the right skillsets and incentives, bearing in mind the imperative for parity and geographic balance.

It is encouraging to know that not only has UNEP been party to designing many of the reform streams now being rolled out but it also has produced a substantive roadmap to play an increasingly important role - as the leading global environment authority - in the repositioned UN development system.

I thank you for your time.