



**Helen Clark, UNDG Chair  
Statement prepared for  
Conclusion of the ECOSOC Dialogue  
on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system  
in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Formal Session  
10.10am -10.30am, 7 July 2016  
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The United Nations Development Group thanks the Vice President of ECOSOC and his two predecessors, the Permanent Representatives of Argentina and Colombia, for their leadership of the ECOSOC Dialogue.

The UNDG has appreciated the opportunity to engage closely with Member States throughout the Dialogue on the longer term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

We thank UN DESA for its efforts to ensure that UNDG could be fully engaged throughout the Dialogue process, and now in the preparations for the Secretary-General's report on the QCPR. We also acknowledge the input of the ITA to the Dialogue.

**The Opportunity of the 2030 Agenda**

The 2030 Agenda is big and bold in its ambition to end poverty and significantly reduce inequalities. All countries have committed to sustainable development



which leaves no one behind. This requires new approaches: the challenges our world is facing are interlinked – as are the Sustainable Development Goals the world aspires to meet. We must work more effectively across stakeholders within and beyond the UN system, and across the peace and security, development, humanitarian, human rights, and environmental spheres. The focus on conflict prevention and risk mitigation will be high on this shared agenda.

To realize this ambitious Agenda, we all need to re-think how we respond. We need high-level political commitment, bold leadership, high-calibre talent in the UN development system, and a renewed global partnership for development. National and local governments will have to plan and deliver differently. Donors will need to commit to finance differently. We will need an earnest appraisal of our respective roles and capacities to support progress being made. Institutions – including the United Nations – must adapt and become more fit for this purpose.

### **The Emerging Vision for the UNDS**

The vision emerging from the Dialogue is for a strong UN development system which rises to the challenge of doing business differently and delivers the joined up support which is essential for advancing sustainable development.

The UNDG embraces this vision and this moment as a window of opportunity for continuing to change the way we work and deliver together. We must deliver together across mandates, sectors, and institutional boundaries, and work across the UN Charter. Our operational activities must deliver on the 2030 Agenda.



## **UNDG Initiatives in Support of the New Vision and Agenda**

The UNDG has responded rapidly to the many requests from the countries we serve to help mainstream the SDGs into national plans, localize the indicators, and strengthen capacities on data, policy, local service delivery and reporting. We are currently doing this in 95 countries, across all regions. In support of joined up work:

- We have agreed on a common approach to SDG mainstreaming, acceleration, and policy support under the acronym MAPS. This helps us make the best use of our collective expertise, and can be adapted to all country contexts.
- There has been significant knowledge and thought leadership on issues such as universality, pooled financing, and the theory of change to support this integrated agenda with these UNDG products made available to all.
- To support and incentivize an integrated approach, the Multi Partner Trust Fund Office is leading preparations for setting up a global pooled funding mechanism. With the support of Member States, this will help us resource joint efforts in support of national SDG responses.
- We have issued Standard Operating Procedures for UN Country Teams which codify best practices and lessons learned from the Delivering as One



approach across programming, operations, leadership, and joint funding, These need to be fully implemented as best business practice by all UNCTs.

- We have just rolled-out new UNDAF guidance which demands much greater and more strategic programmatic and policy collaboration. This is complemented by UNCT Business Operations Strategies, including for joint administrative services such as the Joint Operations Facility in Brazil.
- We have strengthened the Resident Co-ordinator system by revising the RC Competency Framework, introducing a new performance management system for RCs and UNCTs, and implementing a system-wide cost-sharing arrangement in support of the RC system to ensure that RCs and UNCTs have the necessary stable and predictable resources to fulfil their mandate effectively. Member State commitment for the financing of the RC system is much needed at this time, particularly through the Fifth Committee and with a few agencies which have still to pay in full.
- We have developed and are implementing a Plan of Action for Headquarters to remove the bottlenecks which impede UN Country Teams from delivering as one effectively. Over thirty actions have been completed. A second generation action plan has just been approved by the UNDG for 2016-2017, and is being pushed hard this year.
- We have significantly improved UNDS data collection and analysis, and where possible are sharing this data in the public domain. A synthesis was



shared with you on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and provides an evidence base on which to base the QCPR going forward.

All of these are ‘young’ reform initiatives, having been introduced over the past two years. It will take some more time before their full benefit and impact will become more visible and measurable. These change initiatives do align with and support the global and national SDG agendas, and are a vital contribution to the UN development system lifting its game.

### **UNDG proposals for the QCPR**

The forthcoming QCPR is an excellent opportunity to build on what has been achieved to date. The UNDG agrees that the functions of the UN development system must be aligned to the requirements of the 2030 Agenda. The functions which yield high impact and valued results must define our core contribution.

Going forward, the UNDS will concentrate its efforts on those functions where it can add most value, drawing on the diversity, norms, and comparative advantages of the UN development system, namely:

- i. support for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting on global agreements, norms and standards across the three pillars of the sustainable development agenda;
- ii. integrated and evidence-based policy advice and thought leadership, to support countries to embed the SDGs into national and local plan and budgets;



- iii. delivering critical capacity development support and technical assistance, and, where the context calls for it, service delivery support, particularly in LDCs and LICs, and/or in countries in crisis or in phases of recovery from crisis;
- iv. investing in and prioritizing data and national statistical capacities, and thereby supporting the collection, analysis, and sharing of disaggregated data needed to inform evidence-based policy choices;
- v. convening stakeholders, facilitating knowledge-sharing, and leveraging partnerships, including through South-South and triangular co-operation, and doing so at global, regional and country levels.

Form should follow function. The UNDS is committed to deliver together on these core functions through more integrated approaches. We are not a single entity, and our strength lies in our diversity of expertise and experience. The SOPs ensure that we work together, and our SOPs tracker is in the public domain.

We look to the next QCPR to provide a strategic and dynamic framework which both empowers and repositions the UNDS to maximize its collective impact.

The concrete proposals the UNDG has shared with the Dialogue are informed by our firm belief that any reform of UN organizational arrangements should be guided by what can help the UN system deliver results on the ground more effectively and efficiently. We look forward to:



- **A new kind of QCPR** which sets out the role the UNDS should play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and would serve as an overarching strategic framework for the entire UN development system;
- **A new generation of UNDAFs** at the country level which are based on shared strategic development outcomes, root cause analysis, risk assessment and management, common financing strategies, and monitoring and reporting across the humanitarian, peacebuilding, human rights and development dimensions. We suggest that this new generation of integrated planning frameworks be titled “**UN Sustainable Development Frameworks (UNSDF)**”, to capture and incentivize the joined-up efforts required across the SD pillars and also across the UN’s areas of work, where relevant;
- At the heart of such a shared response is what the UN brings to the table on **the policy and normative agenda**. Our commitment to address the concerns of the most marginalized and vulnerable is a core function, both globally and locally;
- **Full implementation of the UNDG Standard Operating Procedures** across UN Country Teams requires alignment of agency programme and operational guidelines. This needs the approval of the governing bodies of the various UN entities, and we hope that member states will call for this across the system;
- Shifting towards more **differentiated country office models** with tailored support in response to individual country needs across goals, sectors, and



borders. Each and every entity of the UNDS would need to review its geographical coverage and working arrangements in countries, and possibly also at the regional level. The more we can plan this together, the more rational and cost effective renewed arrangements will be;

- Resulting from the above, **there would be closer operational integration**, to drive more efficient and cost-effective common operations. That includes the mutual recognition of each other's best practices. The early evaluative evidence shows that we can be more efficient and have significant savings when joining up some of our operational functions, so let us do more of this wherever it makes sense;
- Taking more steps to **strengthen the Resident Co-ordinator system** as the cornerstone of the UN development system's collective support for the 2030 Agenda. Resident Co-ordinators and UN Country Teams must have the authority to carry out their respective functions fully. This should include the RCs being able to call on the best capacities across the system; mobilize and distribute pooled funds; be the final decision-maker on strategic objectives in UNDAFs; and incentivize UN staff to contribute to shared UN results, including through performance management;
- The RCs must be the "best and brightest" from across the system, and need to be resourced with adequate capacities and sustainable funding. Let me add here that **UNDP is committed to full implementation of the functional firewall**, by ensuring that RCs delegate authority for the operational



management of UNDP Country Offices, including on UNDP-specific resource mobilization. Regional UNDGs will ensure a code of conduct which covers RCs and all senior leadership of UNCTs and which reflects the agreed mutual accountability framework; and the regional UNDGs will also ensure that there is a dispute resolution mechanism which can deal with any alleged breach of the ‘firewall’; and

- finally, we will actively pursue **new agreements and partnerships** with the IFIs, the private sector, and civil society entities, learning from the best precedents and expanding joint platforms for collective action on the SDGs at global, regional and country levels.

### **Member State Support for a Renewed UNDS**

Helping entities in the UN development system leave old institutional divides behind will require a strong commitment and consistent support from Member States. Governments which call upon the UN in their countries to act as one, and align behind shared results, are the primary drivers of ensuring we do so.

A close second, is donor commitment to predictable, sustainable, and more flexible funding which better incentivizes system-wide collaboration, including more emphasis on using pooled funding instruments. For example, issue based global and country level platforms to fund tackling horizontal issues which underlie a number of SDG would go a long way. So will Member State support for financing the SDG mainstreaming and acceleration initiatives and the strengthened development co-ordination which the new agenda calls for.



And then there is the UN system. We must be forward looking and be ready to embrace the transformations required of us, to build on what we have set in motion and to adapt fast where needed.

With the new QCPR, Member States have the opportunity to provide the system with a new strategic vision and framework. While this QCPR will not be able to resolve everything, it can certainly begin the process and lay the foundations of a renewed UNDS designed to operate as an effective system.

A year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement, Member States can rise to the occasion once again by charting the course for the United Nations development system in the SDG era through a dynamic and strategic QCPR. The UNDG looks forward to continuing its close engagement with Member States throughout this process. There is no looking back nor turning back on this journey.