
UNDG meeting

30 June 2016, 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM (EST)

DC1 – 21st Floor, Hank Shannon Conference Room

Meeting Report

Opening remarks by the UNDG Chair

1. The UNDG Chair, Ms. Helen Clark, opened the second UNDG meeting of 2016 by noting that the midpoint of the year presented a timely opportunity for the UNDG to reflect on the results achieved to date and to determine the priorities for the second half of the year. The UNDG Chair noted that the UNDG had been pursuing two overarching priorities - supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and driving system-wide reform through implementation of the 2012 QCPR and by working with Member States in the context of the ECOSOC Dialogue on the preparations for the 2016 QCPR and the longer-term positioning of the UN development system.
2. With regard to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the UNDG Chair noted that there had been strong demand from Governments and that 95 UN Country Teams had reported receipt of requests to support the integration of the SDGs into national frameworks and budgets, alignment of national strategies, as well as SDG measurement and reporting, including identifying critical data gaps. The UNDG Chair noted that the requests for integrated support called for leveraging the joined-up expertise of the whole UN development system under the UNDG Mainstreaming Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) approach.
3. The UNDG Chair highlighted four key observations from experiences at the country level in the initial implementation phase of MAPS: First, work on mainstreaming the SDGs in national plans and frameworks was critical, whereby focus should lie on those places where UN system had received requests from Governments. Second, the 2030 Agenda had opened up space for an inclusive dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, including youth and women. Third, measuring progress against the 2030 Agenda presented a major challenge and quality and disaggregation of data were just as important as access to data. Fourth, some of the most innovative examples of early action came from countries experiencing fragility or those which had emerged from fragility. Sierra Leone, for example, had already mainstreamed all SDGs into its national budget despite the Ebola crisis, and Somalia had aligned its National Development Plan with the SDGs, with the support of a multi-stakeholder National Development Council. These and other case studies would be made available for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in the UNDG publication ["The SDGs are Coming to Life – Stories of Country Implementation and UN Support."](#)
4. The UNDG Chair noted that the UNDG had taken a number of measures at the global level in support of UNCT activities under the leadership of the UNDG Sustainable Development Working Group: The acceleration and policy support pillars of the MAPS approach were in the process of being finalized and would need to be a top priority for completion in the second half of the year. Guidelines for country-led national SDG reporting were currently

under preparation. The Multi Partner Trust Fund Office was in the process of leading inter-agency discussions for setting up a pooled funding mechanism in support of integrated UN policy work in the context of the MAPS approach.

5. The UNDG Chair noted that the roll-out of new UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) in 39 countries in 2016 would be an important opportunity to firmly align UN country programmes with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The UNDG Chair noted that the UNDG was seized with further improving the quality of this next generation of UNDAFs. To this effect, the UNDG Programming Working Group had released interim UNDAF guidelines to ensure it was firmly aligned with national needs and priorities, grounded in solid data and analysis, and firmly focused on results and impact, with robust monitoring and reporting.

3. The UNDG Chair noted that the Delivering as One Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for UNCTs, which had been under implementation for about 18 months, provided the backbone of the kind of joined-up support demanded from the UN development system. The SOPs were proving their value in helping UNCTs to deliver results together, with 90 out of the 131 UNCTs now organized around issue-based results groups with joint work plans.

6. **The UNDG Chair noted that it would be important to scale-up implementation of the SOPs across all countries and stated her intention to request the Chairs of the Regional UNDG Teams to lend their full support to this initiative, including by reflecting progress regarding SOPs implementation in the performance assessments of RCs and UNCTs. The UNDG Chair noted that together with the HLCM, the UNDG had also made good progress in addressing some of the key remaining bottlenecks at headquarters through the SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters and called upon all UNDG members to lend their full support to the implementation of its follow-up plan.**

7. **With regard to UNDG efforts to strengthen the Resident Co-ordinator system, the UNDG Chair noted that the UNDG Leadership Working Group was preparing the global roll-out of the new performance appraisal tool for RCs and UNCTs, called the Assessment of Results and Competencies (ARC), which the UNDG had endorsed in December 2015. The UNDG Chair noted that the ARC was an important tool in support of the implementation of the Management and Accountability System of the RC system at the country level and called on UNDG members to convey to their field representatives the importance of this exercise and to instruct them to fully engage in and comply with the new ARC protocols. The UNDG Chair noted that she would also write to UNDG Principals in this regard.**

Item 1: “The UN We Want for the SDGs” - UNDG Proposals for the 2016 QCPR and the ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer-term Positioning of the UNDS

8. The UNDG Chair noted that with the new QCPR due to be adopted in December, Member States had the opportunity to agree on an ambitious reform agenda, which could steer the UN development system towards greater integration, coherence, and impact over the next four years. She thanked the UNDG ASG Advisory Group and all members of the UNDG who had represented the UNDG at the various sessions of the ECOSOC Dialogue over the past few months, particularly Jan Beagle, Chair of the UNDG ASG Advisory Group and John Hendra, Senior UN Coordinator “Fit for Purpose.”

9. The UNDG Chair noted that many of the UNDG core messages had been echoed by Member States throughout the Dialogue, including the need for any reform of governance and organization to be designed from the “bottom up” and guided by what enables the UN development system to deliver results on the ground. She noted that there was considerable scope for building on existing reform initiatives, including through scaling up Delivering as One based on the SOPs, with due recognition of the unique expertise and operating conditions of individual UN entities. She noted that reform proposals should be firmly based on evidence, real life experience and on what it takes to deliver successfully.

10. Mr. Thomas Gass, ASG for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in UN DESA, briefed the UNDG on the ECOSOC Dialogue and the QCPR preparations. He noted that the ECOSOC Dialogue was due to be concluded by the ECOSOC Formal Session on 7 July and that the Independent Team of Advisors (ITA) had put forward its [findings and conclusions](#). While there seemed to be broad agreement among Member States around much of the problem analysis, there was not yet a consensus with regard to the recommendations on the way forward. Mr. Gass noted that Member States were therefore looking to the UN development system to put forward concrete proposals and options for system-wide reform in the context of the next QCPR.

11. Mr. Gass noted that the update of the report of the Secretary-General for the 2016 QCPR represented a critical opportunity in this regard and invited the UNDG to contribute to its drafting in two upcoming rounds of consultations on 1 and 13 July.

12. On behalf of the ASG Advisory Group Chair, John Hendra, Senior UN Coordinator “Fit for Purpose” presented the *“Summary of Key UNDG Proposals for a More Strategic and Dynamic QCPR Policy Response to an Ambitious and Transformative 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.”* The set of common UNDG messages had been prepared by the UNDG ASG Advisory Group and was endorsed electronically by the UNDG to inform the recommendations put forward in the Secretary General’s report on the QCPR.

13. Mr. Hendra noted that the proposals reflected the *“CEB common principles to guide UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”* and complemented the two sets of messages the UNDG had developed to inform ECOSOC Workshop 5 on functions, impact and funding and ECOSOC Workshop 6 on governance, partnership approaches, organizational arrangements and capacity with a set of tangible, concrete measures.

14. Mr. Hendra noted that it was encouraging that the ECOSOC Dialogue had generated a number of ideas and proposals that were in line with the UNDG’s collective vision, including

- (i) a new kind of QCPR to serve as an overarching strategic framework for the wider system and that would both empower and help reposition the UN development system to increase its impact, especially at the country level;
- (ii) transitioning from UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) into more robust UN Sustainable Development Frameworks (UNSDFs) that facilitate integrated planning across the humanitarian, peacebuilding, human rights and development dimensions;
- (iii) moving away from measuring income to much greater focus on the underlying root issues incumbent in the new Agenda – inequality, vulnerability, and sustainability;



- (iv) scaling-up of Delivering as One and full implementation of the UNDG Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) across UN Country Teams, adapted to country context, and with corresponding alignment of Agency programmer and operational guidelines;
- (v) closer operational integration, resulting in more efficient and cost-effective common back office functions based on cost-benefit analysis and building on the experience and good practices of ongoing pilot initiatives;
- (vi) shifting towards more differentiated country office models and UNCT and regional presence and support in response to individual country needs across goals, sectors, and borders and based not only on income status but also on human development achievement, the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, vulnerability, risk and sustainability;
- (vii) strengthening the Resident Co-ordinator system by ensuring Resident Co-ordinators and UN Country Teams are empowered to fully carry out their respective functions and responsibilities, and that RCs are resourced with adequate capacities and sustainable funding; and
- (viii) predictable, sustainable, and more flexible funding that better incentivizes system-wide collaboration, including more emphasis on using pooled funding instruments at global, regional, country and thematic levels to help incentivize integrated programmatic approaches.

15. Mr. Vinícius Carvalho Pinheiro, Special Representative to the UN and Director of the ILO New York Office summarized the main points to be conveyed on behalf of the specialized agencies (FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO) at the ECOSOC Dialogue session on 1 July, in particular the commitments of the specialized agencies' governing bodies to align agencies' programmes and outcomes to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; the maximization of the normative agenda; the consideration of diversity as one of the greatest UN strengths; the need to improve the Resident Co-ordinator's impartiality and the functional firewall of the RC system; and the specialized agencies' strengths in addressing universality.

16. **The UNDG agreed that the ECOSOC session on 1 July presented an important opportunity to unbundle and discuss its proposals with Member States in greater detail, including by emphasizing that the collective strength of the UN development system lied in its normative and operational mandates at the country level. In response to the repeated calls from Member States for a comprehensive mapping of the country-level presence and activities of the UN development system, Kanni Wignaraja, the Director of UNDOCO, was requested to clarify what data was currently available across the system as part of her presentation to Member States. The UNDG reaffirmed its commitment to making all relevant data increasingly available in the public domain.**

Item 2: UNDG position paper: The Role of UN Business Operations for Enhanced Programme Delivery under the SDGs

17. Mr. Jens Wandel, Co-Chair of the UNDG Business Operations Working Group presented the UNDG position paper: *"The Role of UN Business Operations for Enhanced Programme Delivery under the SDGs."* Mr. Wandel noted that the position paper outlined a proposed UNDG vision regarding the potential for collaborative action in the area of business operations to be able to deliver joint operations support for programme delivery under the SDGs.

18. Mr. Wandel noted that building on the recently-adopted CEB Common Principles, the 2030 Agenda highlighted a set of focus areas that were of particular relevance to the role of Business Operations under the SDGs, namely (i) Universality – by providing support tailored to specific country needs and covering developed and developing countries; (ii) Diversity – by maximizing the different types of sustainable development knowledge, experience and thematic capacity present within different UN entities including in the context of preventing and resolving crises, sustaining peace and building resilience; (iii) Human Rights-based and People-Centred – by pursuing a strong human rights-based and people-centred focus so as to truly “leave no one behind” and focus on the most vulnerable and excluded people in society. In addition to these focus areas, the paper added integration, sustainability, data and partnerships as focus areas for Business Operations under the SDGs. Recognizing that operations could not be separated from programmes, simplifying and modernizing how the UNDG operated together both at headquarters and at the country level would strengthen the UN development system’s ability to deliver on its mandates.

19. The position paper highlighted that the SDGs demanded a re-examination of delivery models to continue to drive cost-effectiveness, timeliness and quality of services. The Standard Operating Procedures for UN Country Teams (SOPs) and the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) already provided a clear framework for harmonizing business practices across UN entities in the spirit of ‘Operating as One’. Going forward, the UNDG, in collaboration with the HLCM, intended to drive further harmonization and simplification of business models through the system-wide dissemination of best practice, mutual recognition of each entity’s best business practices and leveraging access to agencies’ institutional infrastructure through continuing adoption of compatible conceptual, contractual and procedural frameworks in different functions (e.g. a common Forex platform, joint global and local banking contracts, common HR recruitment framework, legal and audit etc.). Existing risk management controls that prevented or limited effective service delivery should be further harmonized, where feasible.

20. **The UNDG endorsed the position paper. The UNDG agreed on the need to support each other’s mandates strongly at the country level, including through shared services and recognizing each other’s assets, so as to ensure the UN development system is in a position to bring its collective expertise to bear in any given country context with minimal operational costs.**

Item 3: Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs) Plan of Action for Headquarters 2016-2017

21. Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, the Director of UNDOCO, presented the “Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs) Plan of Action for Headquarters 2016-2017.” She noted that the original Plan of Action for Headquarters, which the UNDG had developed together with HLCM in 2014 contained a number of issues that were considered essential accelerants to ensure that the SOPs had demonstrable impact on efficiency, coherence and development effectiveness at the country level.

22. Ms. Wignaraja noted that the Plan of Action for Headquarters 2016-2017 followed the same logic and objectives of the original Plan of Action by outlining 19 measures that had yet to be completed from the original plan as well as eight new actions for a total of 27 actions to be taken under the headings of the five SOPs pillars (One Programme, One Leader, Operating as One, Communicating as One, Common Budgetary Framework / Joint Funding) as well as “Coherence across the Charter.”

23. The **UNDG endorsed the SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters 2016-2017 to be implemented by the UNDG Working Groups in collaboration with HLCM. The Plan of Action will be issued with the addition of two clarifying footnotes to be inserted under Actions 3 and 8.**

Item 4: Update on UNDG Cost-sharing Agreement in Support of the Resident Co-ordinator System and Terms of Reference for its Independent Review

24. The UNDG Chair noted that for it to function as intended, the Resident Co-ordinator system would need to be properly funded. She noted that most of the eighteen UNDG member entities supposed to contribute were contributing in the 2016-2017 funding biennium, except for three entities with substantial dues. The UNDG Chair noted that the contribution from the UN Secretariat, which represented nineteen UNDG member entities and accounted for eighteen per cent of the total cost-shared budget, was still outstanding. She noted that the UNDG would undertake a final attempt to re-submit the budget appropriation request to the Fifth Committee in the fall. If this should not be successful, the UNDG would need to consider approaching the nineteen Secretariat entities individually for their contributions.

25. The UNDG Chair noted that as part of the continued outreach to donors to help cover the substantial funding gap of the RC system, DOOCO was in the process of preparing to re-launch the UN Country Coordination Fund as the “Delivering Together for Sustainable Development Facility.” The re-branded facility would streamline existing funding mechanisms in support of the work of RCs and UNCTs for UN system-wide results, including by merging the Human Rights Mainstreaming Trust Fund into one facility.

26. Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, the Director of UNDOCO, presented the terms of reference for the independent review of the UNDG cost-sharing agreement. She noted that the objective of the study was to review the implementation of the UNDG cost-sharing agreement during its initial funding biennium in 2014-2015 and to generate proposals on ways to further develop the cost-sharing agreement in order to address the effective needs of the system in the context of supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She noted that the review was expected to generate concrete proposals on how the RC system could be made more effective through a sustainable, transparent, accountable, predictable and cost-efficient funding model for the 2018-2019 funding biennium.

27. Ms. Wignaraja noted that the 2015 UNDG Results Report, which would report on the impact of the UNDG’s collective work and the use of resources, was currently under preparation. The drafting would take into account the constructive feedback provided by UNDG members in response to the first such report that had been issued in 2015. She noted that the report was due to be released in September and a draft would be shared with the UNDG for review in due course.

28. **The UNDG endorsed the terms of reference for the independent review of the UNDG cost-sharing agreement. The review will need to look into the implications of enhanced humanitarian/development co-ordination. DOOCO will launch the procurement process for the review. The study will be overseen by the ASG Advisory Group on behalf of the UNDG. The review is expected to be conducted from September to November 2016, in time to inform the QCPR.**

Item 5: UNDG Logo Usage Policy

29. Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, the Director of UNDOCO, presented the “*UNDG Logo Usage Policy*” by noting that the UNDG logo was an important part of the UNDG brand, which conveyed the collective views and positions of the UNDG membership. Ms. Wignaraja noted that in light of the increasing scope of engagement of the UNDG Working Groups and Task Teams it was time for the UNDG to codify the appropriate use and authorization of its logo. The UNDG Logo Usage Policy would provide an overarching guiding framework for the use of the UNDG logo by the full UNDG, the UNDG Working Groups, the Regional UNDG Teams, as well as the UNDG Chair and UN DOCO.

30. It was noted that there should be clear guidelines for the graphical standards of the UNDG logo as well as for the use of regional variations of the UNDG logo by the Regional UNDG Teams, which should not look too different and be consistently applied across all regions. It was further noted that there should be provisions against the UNDG logo being used for commercial purposes and that the use of the UNDG internet domain was to be considered as a separate issue.

31. **The UNDG endorsed the UNDG Logo Usage Policy. Some members indicated that they would be sharing suggested language with regard to the use of the UNDG logo in combination with agency logos, which will be considered for inclusion before issuing the policy. DOCO will develop a UNDG Branding Guide, which will stipulate the precise graphical and presentation standards for the use of the UNDG logo and its regional variations.**