



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

Distr.: General
22 January 2025

Original: English

Second regular session of 2024

Manhasset, New York, 7 and 8 November 2024

Summary of deliberations

I. Introduction

1. The second regular session of 2024 of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), chaired by the Secretary-General, was held at the Greentree Foundation in Manhasset, New York, on 7 and 8 November 2024.
2. The Secretary-General welcomed the incoming Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, who was attending a CEB session for the first time.
3. The session consisted of three segments, on the following themes: (a) state of the world; (b) multilateralism: priorities for the next two years; and (c) the future of humanitarian action: whole-of-United Nations-system responses to the needs of a world in crisis.

II. Segment 1: state of the world

4. The Secretary-General presented an overview of the current state of the world, reflecting on the gravity of ongoing crises and multiplication of conflicts; growing impunity; the ramifications of critical global deficits in trust, justice and peace; and the persistence of historical inequalities. He underscored the critical role of the United Nations system in upholding universal values and principles amid increasing geopolitical tensions, economic divides and the fragmentation of the multilateral system. He emphasized the urgency of addressing the rising challenges of polarization and ideological divides and their damaging impact on international cooperation. He called for collective action to bridge those divides, support the most vulnerable and seize strategic opportunities, using the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of the Summit of the Future as concrete frameworks to address those pressing issues.
5. In the discussion, Board members considered global economic trends and prospects, including international trade, the mounting challenges faced by low-income countries, in particular those in debt distress, and deepening global economic inequalities. They reflected on challenges to global governance and the increasingly



fragmented international system, notably in relation to the climate change agenda, as well as global trade. They discussed geopolitical shifts and tensions, including the implications for severe humanitarian crises and peacekeeping operations. They also reflected on the opportunities and risks posed by emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and the effects of misinformation and disinformation on societies.

6. The Secretary-General concluded by appealing to Board members to uphold together, and with resolve, the principles of the United Nations and international law in challenging times. In a world increasingly beset by crises and divisions, he reaffirmed the United Nations core agendas that had been agreed by Member States and emphasized the need to restore trust in multilateral institutions. The Secretary-General called on Board members to strengthen collective action, leveraging the United Nations system's convening power to promote peace, trust and justice.

III. Segment 2: multilateralism: priorities for the next two years

7. Opening the segment, the Secretary-General noted that the multilateral priorities for the next two years had been defined by Member States, including through intergovernmental agreements such as the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Pact for the Future, and that the United Nations system had to focus on implementation. First, a collaborative approach was needed to accelerate country-level action to achieve the Goals with strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and other stakeholders, in particular the international financial institutions. The Secretary-General stressed that it was necessary to support, in parallel, the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit of the Future in an integrated, cross-pillar manner. He foresaw the whole of the United Nations system working together through an inclusive, flexible and transformational approach at the country, regional and global levels.

8. Furthermore, the Secretary-General pointed to the need to accelerate the implementation of his vision for a "United Nations 2.0" based on the quintet of change (innovation, data, digital, foresight and behavioural science), including through greater investment in human resources. More progress also needed to be made on promoting gender equality and diversity in all its aspects across the United Nations system and enhancing youth mobilization and youth engagement. Finally, the Secretary-General highlighted policy areas on which he felt the United Nations system needed to engage strongly, namely: the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss; inequalities; threats posed by new technologies, in particular artificial intelligence; and culture.

9. Delivering framing remarks in her role as moderator, the Deputy Secretary-General underscored the priorities of accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the outcomes of the Summit of the Future that had been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his opening remarks. She stressed the need to leverage coordination mechanisms to develop collective solutions to advance implementation through a cross-pillar approach, which demanded a sense of urgency and action at scale. Calling for ideas and reflections on how to support implementation, she invited members to address the geopolitical context within which the United Nations was operating, how to advance the inclusion agenda and the commitment to leave no one behind, and country- and community-level implementation.

10. In the discussion, members reflected on the significant impacts on and challenges to multilateral priorities and the work of the United Nations due to the geopolitical context, building on the Board's reflections in the previous segment. A

number of global trends had fundamentally reshaped the world order, including: the end of the post-cold-war era and the emergence of new global powers and a multipolar order; the erosion and questioning of long-standing normative frameworks; a lack of trust, hindering collective action on urgent issues that threatened humanity; a high level of discontent with the current multilateral system among Member States from the global South; and an increase in political polarization and populism. Criticism of the values and institutions of the United Nations was increasingly being expressed. The credibility of multilateral institutions was being questioned. Very few of the Sustainable Development Goals would be met, and many people and countries were being left behind. Developing countries, in particular in Africa, faced major challenges, including the residual effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, high debt burdens and low or no economic growth, and the impact of climate change, leading to diminished trust in the multilateral system.

11. The view was expressed that the circumstances required an emergency response to rally the world behind the United Nations and defend multilateral solutions. The outcomes of the Summit of the Future had demonstrated convergence among Member States and reaffirmed the value of multilateralism. A new narrative, focused on opportunities for positive change, was needed, along with standing firmly together as the United Nations system to uphold international norms and standards.

12. Concern was expressed about the large number of ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises across the globe and the widespread disregard for human rights and international humanitarian laws. Members reflected on actions that the United Nations system needed to take to reduce human suffering and promote peace and security, including in support of the implementation of the Pact for the Future, which had brought a new focus to peace and security issues and conflict prevention. More effort was needed in conflict prevention and resolution, in particular through horizon-scanning, preventive diplomacy, mediation and dialogue. Recognizing that many entities made contributions to conflict prevention, it was stressed that the United Nations system needed to coordinate better in that area. Furthermore, the human rights pillar needed to be strengthened, and every entity had a part to play in advocating and advancing human rights. More coordination across United Nations system entities and with external partners was also needed in that regard. Disconnection between the normative standard-setting work of the United Nations and policy and operational efforts had to be overcome.

13. Members observed that the funding environment had changed significantly in recent years. Notably, many traditional donors had drastically reduced aid budgets and voluntary contributions and attached conditions, and there was a lack of new donors, creating serious challenges. Among them, funding constraints significantly hampered the ability of the United Nations to support developing countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and to meet humanitarian needs. The United Nations needed to adjust to this funding environment, including by developing different funding models and finding more opportunities for collaboration. It was noted that the United Nations could play a role in catalysing a blend of public and private finance and promoting innovative financing. In addition, a longer-term view needed to be taken on concessional financing, private sector participation, the role of multilateral development banks and the use of carbon markets to mobilize additional funds.

14. Members felt the need to act with a strong sense of urgency. A range of potential actions was identified, including:

(a) Upholding United Nations norms and values, ensuring that standards were maintained, and leveraging the entire United Nations agenda in areas such as human

rights, sustainable development and climate action to facilitate positive change in peoples' lives;

(b) Bolstering multilateralism, including by supporting the implementation of the Pact for the Future, which could serve to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and provide opportunities to engage with a range of stakeholders, including parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector and young people;

(c) Increasing the impact and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future by supporting ambitious outcomes of intergovernmental events to be held in 2025, including the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Summit for Social Development, the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(d) Focusing on critical areas that could help to restore trust in multilateralism, such as debt restructuring for developing countries, and increasing their representation in the international financial architecture and the Security Council;

(e) Recognizing conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy as a whole-of-system responsibility and pursuing greater coordination in that context;

(f) Finding more effective ways to protect marginalized and vulnerable people and populations at risk as a contribution to preventing conflict and human rights violations;

(g) Strengthening the focus on culture as an integral component of sustainable development and as a contribution to the collective United Nations agenda;

(h) Demonstrating the value proposition, effectiveness and relevance of United Nations system entities, including by better responding to countries' needs, offering practical solutions to problems that mattered to communities, and appealing to a broader spectrum of people;

(i) Enhancing United Nations communications to be more strategic, respond faster to disinformation and help people – especially younger people – to better understand what the United Nations does and what it stands for; reorienting its narrative to focus on solutions, outcomes, achievements and successes; and conveying information in a more compelling, understandable and authoritative way;

(j) Strengthening organizational culture to ensure that United Nations system organizations demonstrate ambition, leverage their strength and expertise, and are strategic, agile and adaptable to meet new challenges and respond to countries' evolving needs;

(k) Improving operations, including realizing efficiencies, focusing on results and outcomes, strengthening delivery and accountability, sharing innovations and accelerating the implementation of "United Nations 2.0".

15. Concluding the segment, the Secretary-General reiterated the need to continue to uphold the principles, values and norms of the United Nations. It was important that United Nations system organizations stay the course in advancing and implementing the Organization's agenda and to take measures necessary to promote multilateral solutions.

IV. Segment 3: the future of humanitarian action: whole-of-United Nations-system responses to the needs of a world in crisis

16. In introducing the segment, the Secretary-General highlighted that humanitarian action was a key area of work of the United Nations system but its traditional role in providing life-saving assistance to people in need was increasingly challenged. Humanitarian needs were growing exponentially while funds were decreasing and being further constrained by donor conditions. In this context, the United Nations had to become more effective and sustainable by finding a way to meet people's needs without creating a dependency on humanitarian assistance. He stressed that investing in the social institutions of communities in conflict and fragile situations was key to helping them to become more self-reliant. Linking efforts in humanitarian response with efforts in early recovery, more often associated with prevention and sustainable development, could build the capacity of beneficiaries to move forward with their lives. Equally important were efforts to repair basic infrastructure, such as sanitation, health centres and schools, to create conditions in which social relations and institutions could thrive.

17. The Secretary-General suggested that making better use of existing coordination structures and flexible tools could help the United Nations system to address these interlinkages effectively. For example, enhanced collaboration between United Nations country teams and the strategic use of the Peacebuilding Fund could be good starting points. Regarding the funding shortage and the increasing interest in expanding the role of the private sector in the humanitarian space, the Secretary-General cautioned against using efficiency as the only measure of success and underscored the importance of abiding by humanitarian norms and guiding principles.

18. In delivering framing remarks, the moderator for the segment, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, emphasized that many of the challenges facing humanitarian action were not necessarily new: the humanitarian space had always been politicized, resources had always been scarce, and coordination had always been a challenge. However, the unprecedented scale and complexity of humanitarian crises exacerbated each of these elements, creating a perfect storm and amounting to an existential risk for the United Nations system. The perfect storm was composed of three main pressure points. First, the funding gap was widening as funds failed to keep up with demand and demand continued to grow exponentially. Second, aid was increasingly politicized and restrictive, risking compromising the ability of the United Nations to adhere to the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. Third, parties to conflicts were not complying with international humanitarian laws and norms, further inhibiting the United Nations system's ability to deliver life-saving assistance and eroding trust between people in need and the Organization.

19. The High Commissioner made several suggestions to deal with this reality. The United Nations needed to speak with one voice to donors as well as the public and strengthen alliances with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations. Closer cooperation between the humanitarian and human rights pillars could help to push back against non-compliance with international humanitarian laws and norms and the politicization of accountability, with outspoken criticism for breaches of laws and norms being perceived as selective. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the humanitarian-development nexus and greater engagement with non-traditional humanitarian actors, such as the World Bank Group, could play a pivotal role in making humanitarian action more effective. Better

understanding of the interlinkages with climate change could also open new avenues for action, including through climate financing.

20. The acting Emergency Relief Coordinator, Joyce Msuya, opened the discussion by stressing that the humanitarian system was almost at a breaking point. Humanitarian actors were overstretched, providing a diversity of basic services in contexts in which development partners were absent, and they were increasingly challenged by access restrictions and perceptions of bias, requiring reinvigorated efforts to build trust and gain access to communities. Donor dependency exacerbated the vulnerability of humanitarian action, with a reduction in aid provided by top donors risking bringing the whole system to a halt. The acting Coordinator suggested that more could be done to engage new donors, avoid competition and address donor conditionalities through existing coordination mechanisms. She emphasized that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee – as the highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations system – would be an appropriate space in which to address issues related to advocacy, donor relations and community resilience, and that the reinvigorated Joint Steering Committee provided opportunities to shift the needle on key nexus issues.

21. The incoming Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Fletcher, shared initial observations, expressing appreciation for the opportunity to hear first-hand from leaders across the United Nations system about key challenges facing humanitarian action, and concurred that the system was overstretched, underfunded and under attack. Particular attention was needed to enhance the delivery of humanitarian assistance, defend its values, connect with communities and harness the potential of innovation and technological advancements.

22. In the discussion, members addressed the challenges facing the political, development, operational, preparedness and funding dimensions of humanitarian action. On the political side, members discussed the impact of actors in the humanitarian space – including conflict parties, de facto authorities and criminal networks – who exploited humanitarian prerogatives, such as access, to pursue their own agendas and politicized humanitarian action. Non-compliance with international humanitarian laws and norms, followed by a lack of accountability, further complicated political dynamics and eroded trust in the international legal order. Members stressed that international accountability mechanisms needed more political support from the United Nations system and Member States to be effective. They observed that greater support for court rulings and opinions, and fact-finding efforts, including through enhanced cooperation between humanitarian and human rights actors on data-sharing for case preparation, could have positive effects on accountability and deter non-compliance. Members also noted that donor conditionalities and sanctions complicated humanitarian action and isolated vulnerable communities, in particular in the context of the humanitarian-development nexus, for example when support for social infrastructure and basic services were perceived as supporting de facto authorities and were outlawed by a donor's counter-terrorism legislation. These constraints diminished the United Nations system's delivery of timely and adequate humanitarian assistance and eroded trust. More efforts were therefore needed to engage directly with communities in need and dispel perceptions of political bias.

23. On enhancing the linkages with sustainable development, members discussed strengthening collaboration between humanitarian, development, human rights and peace actors to leverage all tools available in the United Nations system to meet people's needs in an increasingly difficult financial and operational environment. Members emphasized that a fundamental reason underpinning the need for greater cross-pillar collaboration along the peace-humanitarian-development nexus was to help societies to escape the cycle of crisis and avoid aid dependency. Members noted

that in order to find durable solutions, the United Nations system had to save livelihoods as well as lives. Recent work on internal displacement carried out under the High-level Committee on Programmes and led by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement, was cited as a good example of bringing the system together to address political, financial and operational issues and find durable solutions to humanitarian needs. Investing in social institutions and infrastructure was also essential to ensuring the humanitarian principle of “do no harm” in the long term.

24. Members discussed the need to enhance the efficiency of humanitarian efforts and improve cross-pillar collaboration, noting that enhanced coordination and flexibility were key in this regard. They proposed more cross-pillar data-sharing to better map vulnerabilities, build common analyses and identify system-wide strengths to deliver more efficiently and develop a more compelling narrative for donors. The Black Sea Initiative was noted as a good example of bringing capacities together to leverage the broader United Nations system in response to an impending humanitarian crisis.

25. Members discussed the deterioration in the quality of funding to the United Nations system, as well as how to respond to the significant shift from non-earmarked to earmarked voluntary funding, and the impact that this was having on the political and operational landscape of humanitarian action. They noted that conditions attached to funding agreements had become more complex, posing challenges to United Nations operational standards and creating the political risk of donor influence overshadowing the Organization’s impartiality and neutrality, as enshrined in Article 100 of the Charter of the United Nations. Members highlighted recent efforts by the High-level Committee on Management and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to devise harmonized policy and operational solutions to these challenges as a positive and strategic development. Members also considered how to address the funding shortage by building partnerships with multilateral banks, including the World Bank, and exploring the interlinkages between humanitarian action, the peace-humanitarian-development nexus and climate action. These could potentially unlock new funding opportunities, including for middle-income countries.

26. In concluding, the High Commissioner highlighted that humanitarian action was a core mission of the United Nations system and a vehicle for promoting a culture of compassion, which was dwindling but was needed more than ever in the current political landscape. He called for preserving the value of life-saving work, which was at the heart of humanitarian action. He recalled that members had expressed interest in navigating and addressing the increasing risk aversion and political conditions placed on funding by donors, including by adopting a coordinated approach. To address the challenges of politicization, members had suggested enhancing political support for accountability mechanisms and increasing cooperation between humanitarian and human rights actors, while preserving their independence. Members also noted that negotiations by humanitarian actors to gain access to, or find durable solutions for, vulnerable communities often overlapped with political efforts. It was therefore important to define what was meant by humanitarian space in the current circumstances and ensure that humanitarians remained impartial, while political and development efforts considered the needs of vulnerable communities in their efforts to find long-lasting solutions. The incoming and the acting Emergency Relief Coordinators expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General, as Chair of CEB, for creating a space in which candid conversations on sensitive topics such as this could take place, and committed themselves to taking on board issues raised in the discussion, together with relevant United Nations system entities.

27. Concluding the segment, the Secretary-General emphasized the need for the United Nations system to deliver as “One United Nations” and break down silos to

work more flexibly and in solidarity with one another. He advocated for a culture in which entities in all three pillars would talk to each other, bring staff together at different levels and build increasingly collaborative, cross-pillar ways of working.

V. Other matters

A. Endorsement of documents

28. The report of the High-level Committee on Programmes ([CEB/2024/6](#)) on its forty-eighth session, the report of CEB on proposed normative foundations for international data governance: goals and principles ([CEB/2024/2/Add.1](#)), the report of the High-level Committee on Management ([CEB/2024/5](#)) on its forty-eighth session, the framework for a model policy on the responsible use of artificial intelligence in the United Nations system, and the report on the operational use of artificial intelligence in the United Nations system were endorsed electronically outside the CEB session. The Board also took note of the United Nations system-wide approach to internal displacement ([CEB/2024/6/Add.1](#)).

B. Date and venue of the forthcoming session

29. The Board members were informed that the first regular session of 2025 would be hosted by the United Nations Office for Project Services in Copenhagen on 8 and 9 May.
