



# Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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## Second regular session of 2025

Manhasset, New York, 30 and 31 October 2025

### Summary of deliberations

#### I. Introduction

1. The second regular session of 2025 of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), chaired by the Secretary-General, was held at the Greentree Foundation Estate in Manhasset, New York, on 30 and 31 October 2025.
2. The Secretary-General welcomed the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Diene Keita, 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) impact of the present disruptions in the global economy on the Sustainable Development Goals; and (c) state of play of the UN80 Initiative.

#### II. Segment 1: state of the world

4. The Secretary-General presented an overview of the state of the world, reflecting on shifting power relations and current geopolitical threats and challenges, notably a mounting disregard for international law and multilateral institutions and processes. Climate change and the rapid and largely unregulated advancement of technology also posed significant threats. The Secretary-General stated that the whole United Nations system had an important role to play, upholding its core principles and preserving its integrity, while seeking opportunities for cooperation.
5. In the ensuing discussion, Board members considered the global economic situation, marked by challenges to the rules-based trade system and a growing technological divide; notable developments in the area of human rights; evolving threats concerning peace and security, including recent developments in the nuclear domain, the proliferation of small arms and transnational organized crime. The weakening of multilateral cooperation and the erosion of legal norms and international law also continued to be grave concerns. In the area of sustainable development and humanitarian affairs, it was noted that food emergencies were on the rise and high levels of inequality, including gender inequality, persisted. Climate change, youth unemployment and the digital divide and the digital gender gap were

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identified as additional major challenges jeopardizing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The Secretary-General concluded by observing that despite the many challenges confronting the multilateral system, it remained critical to uphold United Nations values and principles and continue the essential work of improving peoples' lives. While severe financial constraints posed an immediate risk to institutional sustainability, strategically focused and principled action for the benefit of people and planet needed to endure.

### **III. Segment 2: impact of the present disruptions in the global economy on the Sustainable Development Goals**

7. Opening the segment, the Secretary-General noted that the global economic landscape was undergoing tectonic shifts, driven by rising tariffs, trade fragmentation, demographic changes and mounting debt burdens. He warned that these disruptions were placing the Sustainable Development Goals under strain and that more needed to be done, including by the international financial institutions, to address the scale of inequality. He emphasized the need to bridge the divide between “the big”, “the rich” and “the others”, noting that while some countries were experiencing economic expansion, many others faced severe challenges. The Secretary-General underscored the importance of South-South cooperation and called for the United Nations system to support Member States in translating the Pact for the Future and the Sevilla Commitment into tangible outcomes.

8. In framing remarks, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Rebeca Grynspan, provided a historical and systemic analysis of the global trade framework and noted that – while global trade had shown resilience and grown by five to six per cent – this was largely driven by digital services and investments related to artificial intelligence. Emphasizing the rise of South-South trade, which had reached parity with North-North trade, she described this development as a promising shift towards economic multipolarity. Looking ahead, Ms. Grynspan cautioned that resilience was not synonymous with prosperity and warned of potential negative trends in the years ahead, highlighting the decline in foreign direct investment and the concentration of digital investment in a few countries. It was important to reform the international financial architecture, to scale up the role of multilateral development banks, to have a more systemic discussion about enablers of growth and sustainability, and to pay greater attention to the structural obstacles faced by developing countries. The Sevilla Commitment represented a crucial framework for financing sustainable development.

9. Complementing these remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Li Junhua, observed that of the Sustainable Development Goals, only one third of targets were on track, with 40 per cent of the Goals stagnating and 18 per cent regressing. He described the global economy as in a state of flux, with geopolitical tensions, trade disputes, sanctions and technological bifurcation contributing to widespread uncertainty. The erosion of fiscal space and the projected decline in official development assistance were signals of a deepening development crisis, and if current trends persisted, many Sustainable Development Goals risked remaining unmet by 2030. It was therefore imperative to foster inclusive growth, build trust with the global South, harness the potential of artificial intelligence and deliver results that mattered, including to younger generations.

10. Focusing on the labour dimensions of the current economic disruptions, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Gilbert Hounbo,

emphasized the need to uphold the nexus between jobs, economic growth and rights. He stressed the importance of decent work, social protection and living wages, and called for these principles to be mainstreamed across all policy frameworks. Mr. Hounbo highlighted the growing inclusion of labour clauses in trade agreements, for example in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which had led to tangible improvements in labour conditions and called for strong labour institutions and greater capacity-building, also in countries of origin or transition of labour migration. He warned that current disruptions were exacerbating inequalities and that economic progress needed to be measured not only in terms of growth and job creation, but also in terms of rights and protections.

11. In the ensuing discussion, CEB members reflected on the complexity of the current economic landscape and its implications for the Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing that the disruptions under way were not only reshaping global trade and investment flows, but also challenging the very foundations of multilateral cooperation and sustainable development. Concerns were raised about the increasing uncertainty, fragmentation of global trade and the weakening of multilateral frameworks. While some regions were working to build resilience through regional value chains and trade diversification, the long-term consequences of a fragmented global economy were seen as deeply concerning. It was noted that countries with strong governance, inclusive institutions and coherent national development strategies were better equipped to navigate these disruptions and attract investments.

12. In their interventions, members recognized the potential of digital technologies as critical enablers of development, but also cautioned about growing risks posed by cyberattacks, satellite interference, undersea cable attacks and the weaponization of digital infrastructure. The increasing frequency of Internet shutdowns and the spread of misinformation were cited as threats to both economic stability and democratic governance. At the same time, the potential of digital tools to improve service delivery, in particular in social protection and humanitarian response, was highlighted. Electronic commerce and digital platforms were underlined as promising avenues for market access and improving livelihoods.

13. In the discussion, infrastructure was repeatedly identified as a key multiplier for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. Members stressed that investments in infrastructure, in particular in fragile and conflict-affected settings, had to be prioritized and de-risked to attract financing. The importance of spatial approaches to development was emphasized, with calls to better understand how migration, urbanization and demographic shifts shaped infrastructure needs and economic dynamics. Infrastructure also played a key role in supporting agricultural transformation and rural development, in particular in regions with untapped potential for job creation.

14. In advance of the Second World Summit for Social Development, social protection was a central concern in the deliberations, in particular in the context of rising inequalities and fiscal constraints. A call was made for targeted support for youth and informal sectors, and for innovative financing mechanisms to expand social protection coverage. The gendered impacts of economic disruptions were raised as women and girls were disproportionately affected by austerity measures and job losses.

15. Several members called for a shift in how development was measured and understood and expressed support for moving beyond gross domestic product as the primary metric of progress, and for adopting frameworks that better captured social, environmental and equity dimensions. The Pact for the Future and the Sevilla Commitment would continue to be important tools to guide that transition, and the

United Nations system was encouraged to act as a proactive and integrated partner in supporting Member States through that transformation.

16. In their reactions to the discussion, the three presenters welcomed the breadth and depth of the interventions and echoed many of the concerns that had been raised. Emphasis was placed on tackling barriers to development, reforming global financial and trade systems, and scaling up support from multilateral development banks. Attention was drawn to the importance of transitioning from planning to delivery, in particular through enhanced financing to implement the Sevilla Commitment and reducing capital costs for developing nations. Sustaining momentum for the Sustainable Development Goals and preparing for the post-2030 framework, both intellectually and institutionally, was deemed critical, as was collaboration with academia and civil society to continue developing new metrics for sustainable development. The labour market implications of the disruptions were underscored, including the necessity of investing in skills development and expanding social protection, especially within the informal economy. Strengthening labour institutions was identified as essential to uphold rights and ensure that economic growth translated into decent work.

17. Concluding the segment, the Secretary-General summarized the requirements for effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and called upon the United Nations system to support countries in identifying the right priorities in their development strategies. Noting that peace was the essential prerequisite for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, he named seven key conditions for countries to progressively improve upon: (a) good governance and countering corruption, building capacity and improving tax systems; (b) investing in high-quality education to enable sustained growth and development; (c) establishing strong, interlinked connections between the public and private sector to drive the economy; (d) investing in infrastructure as a generator of development; (e) advancing technology, digital and artificial intelligence capacities for development; (f) building resilience to confront the impacts of climate change on development; and (g) supporting efforts to reform the international financial system.

#### **IV. Segment 3: state of play of the UN80 Initiative**

18. Board members next heard an update on the UN80 Initiative. The Board had before it for discussion the Secretary-General's draft UN80 Initiative action plan, which provided a unified framework for action across all UN80 Initiative workstreams, describing both the action plan architecture and the work packages corresponding to actions derived from the reports of the Secretary-General on the UN80 Initiative. The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the contributions of CEB members to the UN80 Initiative since the previous CEB session, in particular on programmatic realignment and the mandate review. He highlighted the strong engagement of Member States in the initiative, including through the creation of the informal ad hoc working group on mandate implementation review.

19. The action plan includes a proposed approach combining broad participation with targeted responsibility to ensure transparency and align technical execution with ongoing consultation processes, both internally and with Member States. The Secretary-General appealed to CEB members to engage in the internal consultation mechanisms, as well as to support deliberations with Member States and other stakeholders. He observed that moving the UN80 Initiative forward would be challenging but it was necessary to ensure that the United Nations system became more efficient, cost-effective and able to work as one.

20. The moderator for the segment, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy and Chair of the UN80 Initiative Task Force, Guy Ryder, underscored the rapid progress since the launch of the UN80 Initiative in March 2025, attributing its advancement to collective efforts and stressing the need for continued collaboration given the demanding process ahead. The action plan reflected the convergence of the three UN80 Initiative workstreams based on an integrated logic where efficiencies and improvements, mandate review and structural reforms were interdependent. It consolidated over 80 discrete actions from the three workstreams into 31 work packages. Designated Principals would lead each work package and report on progress to a reconfigured UN80 Initiative Task Force, which would meet weekly. The Task Force would coordinate delivery of all work packages and make recommendations to the Steering Committee. Chaired by the Secretary-General, the Steering Committee would convene monthly to ensure overall strategic direction and coherence. The Under-Secretary General for Policy invited CEB members to join the work packages to which they were interested in contributing. Recognizing the decision-making authority of Member States and their corresponding need for information, he underscored that transparency and communication were embedded in the methodology. Work package leads were expected to support engagement with Member States.

21. The Chair of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Catherine Pollard, provided an overview of the suite of far-reaching efficiency initiatives, designed and launched by the Committee to simplify operations, reduce duplication and maximize programmatic impact. The work was being advanced through coalitions of the willing, leveraging the United Nations system's diversity, and creating scale where readiness exists, without forcing uniformity. She encouraged CEB members to support the initiatives, most of which were ready for implementation and well-placed to contribute to the UN80 Initiative through advancing the consolidation of shared services in a broad range of areas such as finance, supply chain, procurement and digital treasury services.

22. In the ensuing discussion, members recognized the leadership of the Secretary-General, were supportive of the Action Plan and committed themselves to contributing to the actions relevant to their work and to advancing reform efforts more broadly, drawing from their experience. The need for the United Nations system to pursue reform proactively was underscored. It was recognized that Member States did not want one-off change and that it would be important to institutionalize an organizational culture that was able to manage continual evolution while preserving service delivery and impact.

23. It was recognized that inter-agency mechanisms would play important roles in supporting the UN80 Initiative actions and work packages. Under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group would take forward a number of actions, including the regional reset and United Nations country team reconfiguration. The Business Innovations Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group had already taken responsibility for some of the far-reaching efficiency measures identified by HLCM. In that context, members were reminded that the application of the CEB-adopted mutual recognition principle would help lower organizational barriers to service delivery. It was highlighted that the HLCM Supply Chain Network was ready to guide and support the realization of the vision of the Secretary-General for unified support services. In addition, the High-level Committee on Programmes was well-positioned to contribute to broader reform efforts by leveraging the Committee's policy and programmatic expertise and cross-pillar coordination and collaboration. It was further noted that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee was engaged on the UN80 Initiative-related humanitarian

actions, ensuring coordination with the broader humanitarian reset to address the sector's critical situation.

24. The importance of internal and external communications and stakeholder engagement was reiterated throughout the discussion. Members appreciated the key messages on the UN80 Initiative and multilateralism prepared by the Department of Global Communications. The need to frame the financial measures as a strategic part of the larger reform process intended to position organizations to deliver at scale and better meet the needs of people was stressed. Going forward, tangible achievements emerging from the UN80 Initiative should be reflected in system-wide messaging to demonstrate the results of reform and the ensuing impact for the people the United Nations system served. Moreover, coordinated outreach efforts in duty stations beyond New York, such as Geneva and Nairobi, would better facilitate communication among Member States during the intergovernmental process. The importance of internal engagement with staff was also emphasized, including through town halls and targeted consultations.

25. Reflecting on the discussion, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy acknowledged members' commitment to continue collaborating to respond to the pressures facing the United Nations system as a whole. He affirmed that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General would activate the architecture to support the UN80 Initiative action plan and encouraged members to contribute to relevant work packages. Reiterating the important role of communications, he acknowledged the need for greater engagement with Member States across duty stations.

26. In his concluding remarks, the Secretary-General commended the unity and commitment shown by CEB in the context of the UN80 Initiative. He recognized the resilience and adaptability of the organizations of the United Nations system, which had demonstrated their ability to maintain operations and deliver results despite reduced funding. The Secretary-General reaffirmed the need to move quickly and continue consulting with Member States as the intergovernmental process on the UN80 Initiative advanced. Going forward, messaging would shift to better reflect how the UN80 Initiative reform would improve delivery, effectiveness and capacity to adapt to changing demands. To that end, the Secretary-General requested the Department of Global Communications to prepare additional messages, articulating the expected achievements of the UN80 Initiative in terms of improved outcomes for populations and Member States. In closing, the Secretary-General reiterated his deep appreciation for the efforts to develop the reform proposals and for the solidarity demonstrated across the United Nations system.

## **V. Other matters**

### **A. Tributes to Board members**

27. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, Zurab Pololikashvili, to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, to the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Philippe Lazzarini, and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ghada Fathi Waly, who were attending a CEB session for the last time.

**B. Endorsement of documents**

28. The report of the High-level Committee on Programmes on its fiftieth session (CEB/2025/6), including the United Nations System Common Messages on Policy Responses to Demographic Change (annex III); the United Nations System Common Approach to Prevent and Address Transnational Organized Crime (CEB/2025/2/Add.1); and the report of the High-level Committee on Management on its fiftieth session (CEB/2025/5) were endorsed electronically outside the CEB session.

**C. Date and venue of the forthcoming session**

29. The Board members were informed that the dates and location of the CEB first regular session of 2026 would be announced at a later stage.

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