



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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Second regular session of 2019

Manhasset, New York, 15 and 16 November 2019

Summary of deliberations

I. Introduction

1. The second regular session of 2019 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 15 and 16 November 2019.
2. Held entirely in retreat format, the session consisted of three segments, on the following themes: (a) “State of the world”; (b) “Decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals”; and (c) “Communicating with purpose: the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations”. The Board also held a lunch discussion on cybersecurity.
3. In the present summary, the main points of the session are highlighted.

II. Segment 1 State of the world

4. The Secretary-General presented an overview of the current state of multilateralism in the context of escalating political and trade tensions across and within regions.
5. In the ensuing dialogue, the Board members discussed the state of human, civil and political rights and the interconnectedness between those rights and global economic and political realities. They highlighted the ways in which increased inequalities adversely affected societies across the world, leading to disruption in social cohesion and, ultimately, to social unrest.
6. Noting that the upcoming seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations would provide an opportunity for reflection on the changing circumstances of today’s reality, the Board underscored the importance of the multilateral system in upholding the Organization’s values and principles. Taking full advantage of the unique convening power of the United Nations was deemed essential to the continued engagement of all sectors of society in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to providing space for discussion of regulatory mechanisms, wherever they were lacking.



III. Segment 2 Decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals

7. The Board recognized that, four and a half years after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the 2030 Agenda, the context in which the Goals were being pursued had changed. The rise of populism, deepening inequality, and a lack of trust in leaders, government institutions and, by extension, multilateralism, reinforced the need for the Goals but made their implementation all the harder. Despite the progress that was being made in many areas, the world was not on track to achieve the Goals, which were therefore at risk as a unifying global framework. Failure to achieve the Goals would have a significant human, economic, political and environmental cost and could have deep implications for peace and human rights.

8. Recognizing the need for ambitious, accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, world leaders at the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (Sustainable Development Goals Summit), held in September 2019, had called for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, and had pledged to mobilize financing, enhance national implementation and strengthen institutions. In response, the Secretary-General had issued a global call for a decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and had appealed to all sectors of society to mobilize for that purpose, calling for global, local and individual action.

9. In order to deliberate on what it would take for the world to achieve the paradigm shift and societal transformation at the core of the Goals, and the implications for the United Nations system and its respective entities, CEB held a discussion dedicated to the decade of action. The Board was invited to consider how to maximize the potential of the decade of action, focusing on possible global game changers and discussing areas for integrated responses that would help to achieve sustainable development by leveraging the collective capacities of the United Nations system.

10. Opening the discussion, the Secretary-General stressed that the decade of action was central to the leadership role of the United Nations system in the international community and the multilateral system, and that achieving the Goals was the common objective of all Board members. Noting the opportunity to capitalize on the positive reception and acceptance of the 2030 Agenda by stakeholders around the world, the Secretary-General emphasized the need for the United Nations system to facilitate the continuous support of decision makers and the public for the mobilization of the necessary human, physical and financial resources and capacities to support the acceleration of the implementation of the Goals.

11. Recognizing the urgency of correcting the world's current trajectory and bringing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda back on track to achieve greater peace and prosperity, the Secretary-General welcomed the decade of action as both a significant challenge and an opportunity for the United Nations system to deliver for people and planet alike. To that end, he underscored the importance of a united and fully aligned United Nations system that made use of its unique convening role and powerful networks to build coalitions and that was an effective platform for raising awareness and generating political momentum and accountability, following the reform and invigoration of the United Nations development system.

12. Board members were provided with a snapshot of current facts and figures related to the status of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, to frame the discussion. The Deputy Secretary-General then made introductory remarks and gave a presentation. Recalling the inception of the Goals and underscoring the

transformative, comprehensive and global nature of the 2030 Agenda, the Deputy Secretary-General noted the need, after four years, to reconnect with the core objectives of the Agenda and fully appreciate the scale required to achieve the Goals within a decade.

13. Noting the extraordinary nature of the 2030 Agenda, a global product and framework that was intended to achieve a universal, global transformation, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Achim Steiner, as moderator of the discussion, introduced some of the key themes, game changers and levers that would accelerate the achievement of the Goals. Mr. Steiner emphasized the need to further drive climate action; invest in resilience to prevent conflict, support transitions, and tackle crises, insecurity, and displacement; reorient the financial system and flows towards Goal achievement; harness digitization and the potential of technological change; and capitalize on changing demographics. Mr. Steiner invited CEB members to share their views, ideas and guidance in order to inform the narrative and direction of the decade of action with the aim of accelerating and reinforcing efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

14. In the ensuing discussion, CEB members observed that tackling inequality, as a cross-cutting challenge that was central to many of the Goals and opportunities for acceleration, would need to be addressed more thoroughly by the United Nations system and Member States in order for people to accept the necessary transformations inherent in the 2030 Agenda. The Board emphasized the importance of the inequality narrative in terms of connecting developing and developed countries and repairing the fracturing social contract around the world. Members further reiterated that unlocking the potential of women and girls through gender equality would be imperative for the decade of action and the achievement of the Goals.

15. The fundamental importance of addressing the macroeconomic dimension, including fiscal space, access to finance, and public and private investment, was a recurrent theme. Board members noted with concern the large shortfall in financing for the achievement of the Goals in developing and developed countries in the current strained global environment and macroeconomic situation. Strengthening trade and regional integration, transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy and moving to a circular economy while systematically engaging the private and financial sector were identified as possible levers to accelerate the achievement of the Goals. The need for the United Nations system to drive frugal innovations and support a conducive environment for entrepreneurs was underscored.¹ The Board noted the need to modernize education systems and the important role of young people in propelling the decade of action. CEB members agreed that the United Nations system would need to continue to support Member States in their efforts to shift towards more sustainable and Goal-oriented macroeconomic, industrial and fiscal policies.

16. Board members recognized the need to harness the full potential of digitization and the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, while effectively mitigating the risks associated with such technologies. To that end, the importance of “connecting the unconnected” and strengthening people’s digital literacy was emphasized. Members agreed that the United Nations system should support Member States in their efforts to develop national digitization strategies. The Board further acknowledged the power of data and analytics in support of evidence-based policymaking and the need to enhance the data ecosystem within the United Nations system and at the country level. The integral role of forecasting, nowcasting and strategic foresight in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was underscored, and a

¹ Frugal innovation or frugal engineering is the process of reducing the complexity and cost of producing goods. The term usually refers to the removal of non-essential features from durable goods, such as cars or telephones, in order to sell them in developing countries.

short presentation was given on the efforts of the High-level Committee on Programmes to advance predictive analytics by leveraging available data and analytical capacities across all pillars of the United Nations system.

17. Board members underscored the tremendous risks of climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity for the well-being of the planet and its people, and the achievement of the Goals. The Board emphasized the urgency of Member States' agreeing on an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in 2020 and preceded by a summit on biodiversity at the level of Heads of State and Government. Members also drew attention to the links between the collapse of ecosystems, migration, and peace and security. The Board reiterated that peace and security were vital for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and stressed the need for prevention and proactive United Nations system engagement through early warning systems. CEB members noted the importance of resilience in preventing conflict and underscored their commitment to continuing to strengthen the United Nations system's work to support transitions from crisis, insecurity and violent conflict to sustainable development.

18. The Secretary-General thanked CEB members for an interesting and rich discussion, which had provided clear guidance related to the narrative and direction of the decade of action and to the United Nations system's role in the promotion and implementation of the decade. The Secretary-General underscored the importance of effective and coherent United Nations country teams functioning as a catalyst for Goal implementation by helping Member States to develop comprehensive government programmes and sectoral policies based on the Goals and by helping Governments to establish links with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector; such functioning had been the underlying premise of the reform of the United Nations development system.

19. The Secretary-General noted the need for effective, interoperable management of data at the global, country and United Nations system level to enable evidence-based policymaking. He welcomed the development of a common system of identifiers for the Goals, targets and indicators,² with the aim of promoting an ecosystem of machine-readable documents based on the principles of linked open data. The important initiative had been completed under the aegis of the High-level Committee on Management, and led jointly and adopted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. Noting that the identifiers laid the foundations for the automatic retrieval, processing, and integration of Goal-related information, the Secretary-General urged all United Nations system entities to sign the statement on Sustainable Development Goals linked open data identifiers, and to use the identifiers to map their Goal-related resources.

20. In closing, the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of further strengthening the United Nations system's work to implement the 2030 Agenda and underscored the need to communicate effectively with various target audiences by promoting the Goals as a response to those audiences' fears, anxieties and challenges, and as a way for their hopes to be materialized.

² The common identifiers for the Goals, targets and indicators are available at metadata.un.org/sdg. The portal is provided by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which also hosts the United Nations Bibliographic Information System Thesaurus.

Conclusion

21. **The Secretary-General emphasized the role and leadership required of the United Nations system in support of the achievement of the Goals by 2030 and highlighted the clear guidance provided by the Board on the elements and narrative of the United Nations strategy for the decade of action, which would be developed under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General.**

22. **The Secretary-General encouraged Board members to use the new common system of identifiers for the Goals, targets and indicators to map their Goal-related resources. He also encouraged them to sign the statement on Sustainable Development Goals linked open data identifiers.**

23. **Further, the Secretary-General tasked the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme to lead an effort to more systematically pursue frugal innovation, and urged CEB members to contribute to that effort.**

IV. Segment 3

Communicating with purpose: preparations for the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations

24. At previous sessions of CEB, Board members had reflected on the importance of effective communication messages and methods in engaging a wider range of stakeholders and partners, including young people. Effective communication was seen as imperative in order to ensure that the United Nations system was seen as a leader in key issues facing the world, such as climate change, gender equality, human rights and technological development for good, and to stimulate engagement by the public with the United Nations system, particularly in light of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in 2020.

25. Recognizing the crucial role of communication in ensuring engagement with a wide range of audiences and stakeholders, the third segment focused on communicating with purpose and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. The first part of the session was moderated by the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, Melissa Fleming, who gave a presentation to the Board on how to design communications that served to inform as well as to make people care about the causes that the United Nations served. The Board welcomed two external speakers, Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms, who shared an innovative perspective on the importance of communicating effectively. Two representatives of the Young United Nations network also joined the discussion as an informal focus group invited by the Secretary-General.

26. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General noted that the communication methods used by the United Nations were not entirely in line with the modern world and that, at times, the Organization appeared to be communicating without purpose in a language few people understood. The United Nations needed to modernize its methods of communication to make it more effective. There was a need to work in close cooperation across the system to make sure that, while the identity of each entity was maintained, there was convergence and strategic alignment in the messages that the United Nations wanted to convey.

27. During her presentation, Ms. Fleming shared her views on the ways in which the United Nations system could design its communications not only to inform the world but also to encourage people to care about the work of the United Nations and

the causes it served. Research had suggested that the traditional approach of presenting issues without potential solutions resulted in the general public increasingly avoiding news. Communications should instead focus on illustrating solutions and providing hope, including by accompanying statistics with human stories. She shared various methods to engage audiences, including through constructive journalism focused on presenting ways of solving problems highlighted in articles, in order to make those solutions feel more attainable.

28. Recognizing the potential for United Nations system entities to cooperate more closely to develop a unified vision and to capitalize on the strong United Nations brand, Ms. Fleming proposed that, instead of the narrative of awareness-raising, the Organization should focus on capturing people's imagination. One important tool for achieving this was storytelling. While many United Nations system entities had already applied those techniques, all entities should to do so more systematically and strategically.

29. During the ensuing discussion, CEB members reflected on the current position of the United Nations in the world, and the Organization's predominant focus on using traditional methods to communicate with and engage stakeholders. The importance of modernizing the methods of communication to engage people was stressed, as was the identification of a clear and consolidated story.

30. Engaging a wide range of the stakeholders, including the Member States and the wider public, that were served by the staff of the United Nations was a common theme throughout the discussion. Board members spoke of the importance of building trust and alliances between old and new power structures, and of combining old power with new power, and noted that the United Nations was well-positioned as an effective channel and platform for dialogue. The use of new technologies and modern methods of communication could also support direct engagement with an organization's constituency, build relationships and allow the Organization to move beyond communication towards the consultation of stakeholders. CEB members said that, by adopting such an approach, the United Nations would be more responsive and serve needs more effectively, and would allow constituencies to relate more directly to it.

31. In his concluding remarks, the Secretary-General noted that the concept of storytelling was extremely important, provided that it was done in an authentic manner. To establish such authenticity, the United Nations must combine rational and emotional approaches. Moreover, in addition to sharing information, the United Nations should improve its ability to listen and to respond by changing its opinion and strategy. United Nations staff also needed to be more knowledgeable about technology and its applications in communication.

32. The Secretary-General emphasized that, in order to be more effective, the United Nations must be a platform on which everyone felt comfortable expressing their views; it must care about everyone's opinions and change as a result of that interaction. The Organization must change in order to be more effective, and needed to address its staff and improve its internal communication by making use of the new technologies available, while continuing to adhere with authenticity to its values. That task was not only for the communications departments, but for all staff across the United Nations system.

33. Building on the Board's discussions, in the second part of the session, the Special Adviser on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, Fabrizio Hochschild, provided the Board members with an overview of the progress made in the preparations since the Board's first regular session of 2019.

34. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General noted that the objective for the celebrations was to use the seventy-fifth anniversary to establish two-way communication with all possible audiences and listen to them about their vision for the future of multilateralism and the ways in which the Organization could move in that direction.

35. Mr. Hochschild noted that the preparations were focused on partnerships and the development of a communication toolkit. The commemoration activities would be launched in early 2020, and a final report would be submitted by the Secretary-General at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, to be held in September 2020. The Board members expressed their support for the initiative. They welcomed the new approach to engaging the wider public and the collaborative approach taken in the preparations.

36. The Secretary-General concluded by emphasizing his aims of creating an emotional link between people and the United Nations, forming a link with the general public and other stakeholders, and creating new networks that could also be used for future interaction, to refer back to the outcomes of the current process. He encouraged the Board members to incorporate the various commemoration initiatives at their organizations and to use the anniversary to promote the work of the United Nations system.

V. Lunch discussion on cybersecurity

37. The Board was addressed on the current situation with regard to cybersecurity by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, who outlined the status of ongoing intergovernmental and inter-agency processes concerning cybersecurity and related issues. CEB members were provided with an overview of the various dimensions of cyberthreats, and several opportunities were mentioned for the United Nations system to strengthen its leadership role vis-à-vis challenges in the area.

38. In the ensuing discussion, the Board underscored the importance of greater coordination and coherence across the United Nations system. Members reflected on the vital role of the good offices function of the Secretary-General and the need to further strengthen the internal capacity of the system to deal with cybersecurity. The United Nations Legal Counsel, Miguel Ferreira de Serpa Soares, briefed CEB members on the ongoing discussions on the application of international law to issues related to cybersecurity. The members recognized the risks of cyberattacks and cybercrime resulting in instability, insecurity and concrete consequences in the physical world. The Board further noted with concern the growing cyberresilience divide between and within States.

Conclusion

39. The Secretary-General noted the need for the United Nations system to take a leadership role and develop a unified position on cybersecurity and related threats, while serving as a convening platform for Member States and other stakeholders to discuss cybersecurity in its various dimensions. The Secretary-General further emphasized the importance of strengthening the United Nations system's own capacity to protect itself from cyberattacks.

VI. Other matters

A. Tributes to Board members

40. The Secretary-General paid tribute to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Yury Fedotov, who was attending a CEB session for the last time; and the former Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, who had left her functions in September 2019.

41. The Secretary-General also paid tribute to the former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Yukiya Amano, who had passed away on 18 July 2019; and to the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, who had been a member of the Board from 1991 to 2000 and had passed away on 22 October 2019.

B. Endorsement of documents

42. The conclusions of the High-level Committee on Management at its thirty-eighth session, held at the United Nations System Staff College, Turin, Italy, on 15 and 16 October 2019 ([CEB/2019/5](#)), and the report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its thirty-eighth session, held at the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, Turin, Italy, on 10 and 11 October 2019 ([CEB/2019/6](#)), were endorsed electronically by CEB after the session.

C. Date and venue of forthcoming sessions

43. The Board members were reminded of the dates of the first regular session of 2020, namely, Thursday and Friday, 14 and 15 May 2020, to be hosted jointly in Nairobi by the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Office at Nairobi.
