



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

30 September 2005

English only

Summary of the High-level Committee on Programmes retreat held at the Greentree Foundation in Manhasset, New York, from 19 to 21 July 2005

I. Introduction

1. Two years after its first retreat at the Greentree Foundation (from 27 February to 1 March 2003), the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) held a second retreat to take stock of its accomplishments and draw conclusions to help guide its future orientation and work programme.

2. In his introductory remarks, the Chairman noted the growing level of trust and openness among members of the Committee, which had been critical in forging system-wide approaches to a range of cross-cutting economic and social issues facing the United Nations system. To help it take stock of its work over the last two and a half years, the Committee had before it the “One United Nations: catalyst for progress and change” report and an issues paper and accompanying summary table showing the concrete accomplishments of the Committee during the period from 2003 to 2005. The Chairman proposed that the discussion focus on a set of related questions:

- Does HLCP add value?
- Does it tap into the synergies that need to be harnessed?
- Has its work been useful to the respective organizations?
- How could its work be made more useful, and how should the results and impact be measured?
- What guidance should HLCP set for the future work of the system?

3. In the ensuing discussions, the participants highlighted the positive evolution of HLCP over the past two and a half years. They mentioned, in particular, the Committee’s work in preparing strategic and policy documents for Chief Executives Board (CEB) deliberations and in pursuing policy coordination on its behalf; the “One United Nations” report, which showed how far the system had progressed in working together for common and shared objectives; the establishment of UN-Energy and UN-Water; the dialogue that had been initiated with the Department of Political Affairs on the synergies between political and development issues; the increased visibility of CEB in the Economic and Social Council; the conceptual work on the triple crisis and its impact on United Nations operations, especially in

southern Africa; and the improved dialogue and interaction with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The participants thanked the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman for their leadership and noted that their commitment had helped promote greater coherence and collaboration among the United Nations system organizations.

4. Participants highlighted the value of HLCP discussions on substantive policy questions and its ability to translate these into concrete actions, including at the field level. To maintain and build on these initiatives, it was necessary to incorporate in the future work programme modalities that would clearly identify the expected outcomes and the approaches needed to achieve them. Identifying matters of concern to the United Nations system was important, but in selecting themes for its attention, HLCP needed to focus on what specific contribution it could make. Two fundamental questions that remained pertinent were how the United Nations system should position itself to respond to challenges to multilateralism and how the system as a whole was better equipped to address issues than individual organizations separately and on their own. Members underscored the importance of coherence among the governing bodies and pointed to “ossification”, fragmentation and earmarking of resources as problems that remained to be tackled. The challenges and way ahead outlined in the “One United Nations” report thus needed to be followed up within the framework of the Committee’s work and the central message of the report, namely that of “One United Nations”, needed to be disseminated throughout the system. Towards that end, it was agreed that the Chairman would send out copies of the “One United Nations” report to executive heads for it to be shared with their senior managers.

II. Exercise on 2020 scenarios

5. As a contribution to its reflections on the challenges facing the United Nations system, the Committee engaged in a “scenario” exercise, led by Enrique Rueda-Sabater of the World Bank, on how changes in the global alignments might challenge multilateral organizations. Three different scenarios, which focused on geopolitics, pace and distribution of growth and the role of non-State actors and mapped out differing economic, political, environmental, social and other consequences, were presented to the participants with a strong reminder that they did not, in any way, constitute projections, but simply scenarios to stimulate debate. Members were tasked with identifying challenges and the needs of developing countries in terms of global problems as well as the strengths and weaknesses of multilateral institutions under the different scenarios. The discussion that followed centred on the role of the United Nations system as a proactive, forward-looking agent of change. As the focus of the exercise was on responding to external challenges in the years ahead, the multilateral system was seen as having an important stabilizing role. This exercise served to stimulate a reflection on the “think tank” role of HLCP, which should be geared to both defining what the system needs to commit to and guiding how it should implement such commitments over the longer term.

III. Briefing on the preparations for the 2005 World Summit

6. Navid Hanif of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs briefed the Committee on the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document for the World Summit.

IV. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review

7. Massimo D'Angelo of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs introduced the draft terms of reference for the task group on the implications of General Assembly resolution 59/250. This resolution identified areas of collaboration between CEB and UNDG (including simplification and harmonization, the Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, the resident coordinator system and knowledge management) and called on CEB to play a specific role in a number of areas, including capacity-building and evaluation. While distribution of responsibilities and modalities for CEB/UNDG collaboration remained, in most cases, to be defined, one of the implications of the resolution was that CEB itself would be held accountable for actions to be promoted or advice to be provided in several areas. This consideration should be taken into due account by HLCP in defining the work ahead.

8. Mr. D'Angelo also gave a briefing on subsequent Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/7, which called for an updating of the matrix for the management process of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/250, with more quantifiable targets, measurable benchmarks and a defined timetable at the system-wide level. Several donors had expressed keen interest that the initiatives that CEB would be taking in the follow-up to the General Assembly resolution should be fully spelled out in the matrix. For its part, the Group of 77 had reiterated the special interest it had in capacity-building and a system-wide engagement, including of the regional commissions, in country-level activities, thus pointing to areas of priority in the contribution of CEB to the implementation of the resolution.

9. The terms of reference prepared by the HLCP task group outlined a number of initiatives for HLCP as a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 59/250. These were divided into three categories: (a) actions for which the General Assembly had called for close collaboration between HLCP and UNDG; (b) actions in specific areas for which the General Assembly had explicitly requested the contribution of CEB; and (c) other areas for which a possible role for CEB and HLCP could be identified.

10. In the discussion that followed, concern was expressed about, inter alia, the possible misunderstandings created by the concept, being advanced by some, of "two speeds" in the reform process — one by the members of the UNDG Executive Committee and the other of the rest of the system. While the harmonization of processes obviously arose in a different way among United Nations programmes within the United Nations itself and the wider system, the concept carried the mistaken implication, which all should cooperate in correcting, that the system as a whole is trailing behind in the commitment to reform.

11. The Committee approved the terms of reference for the task group on the triennial comprehensive policy review and reiterated that the group should be open-ended. It was agreed that the task group should begin its work by focusing on the areas identified by General Assembly resolution 59/250, which explicitly requested a contribution by CEB. A progress report outlining relevant activities to be carried out by HLCP, ensuring complementarity with the efforts of UNDG, would be provided to HLCP by the task group at its session in October 2005. At the same time, UNDG would provide information to HLCP at its October session on actions being taken by it, including in particular areas requiring consultations with CEB and in which the General Assembly sought a contribution from CEB.

V. Knowledge-sharing and management

12. Ken Herman of the CEB secretariat gave a presentation on this subject, explaining the reasons behind implementing a knowledge-sharing and management initiative (retaining expertise and driving innovation). He noted that most knowledge-sharing and management activities fall into one of two categories: documentation or communication. The key to the efficient use of documented material lies in its classification and categorization, leading to the easy retrieval of required information. In addition, open communication channels must exist for effective knowledge-sharing to take place, both between individuals (where most knowledge-sharing occurs) and between individuals and the documentation they seek.

13. Mr. Herman underscored that it is not possible to provide the United Nations system with a knowledge-sharing and management capacity merely through the purchase of a specific software product. Knowledge-sharing and management must therefore be viewed as a process, rather than a one-time event. Four different steps for the United Nations system were outlined in this regard. First, the system as a whole needed to gain a better understanding of what “knowledge-sharing” and “knowledge management” meant. It needed to decide on the knowledge that was necessary to capture and on the mechanisms that were suitable for this goal. Secondly, the system should strengthen its existing inter-agency efforts in this area. Current activities within the Secretariat and UNDG could benefit from enhanced financial and administrative support. Third, the United Nations should create, through an inter-agency working group, a system-wide strategy for knowledge-sharing and knowledge management. Finally, the system would also need to decide on the priority areas upon which to focus its efforts.

14. The discussion that followed centred on some of the best practices for implementing knowledge-sharing and knowledge management programmes in the system. It was reiterated that there was no single approach that an organization should take to achieve its knowledge-sharing and management goals and that implementing such a programme would usually need to include a review of existing business practices. The Committee agreed that next steps should include the elaboration of terms of reference for a knowledge management task force to develop a system-wide knowledge-sharing strategy, and that such a strategy should include an overview of the best knowledge-sharing practices in use across the system. It was decided that the strategy developed must address the requirements of both the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) and HLCP and be geared to enhancing the system’s capacities to advance the objectives of the Millennium Declaration, particularly its development goals.

VI. Identification of priority issues for the High-level Committee on Programmes

15. The Committee's review of the key tasks for HLCP/CEB in the next years focused on the identification of issues for which the work of the Committee would bring a clear added value. Although it was stressed that getting the issues, or the "what", right was necessary, defining "how" the Committee would move forward on these issues was equally critical.

16. Three breakout groups were set up to identify the priority issues (the "what") for the Committee. The outcome of these groups' efforts showed a remarkable degree of convergence on both the priority issues that should be taken up by the Committee and the general approach required in addressing them. It was emphasized that in setting out a work programme for the Committee, which in the immediate term would need to draw upon the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, it would be necessary to review ongoing work in other coordination mechanisms within the system, to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that the modality that is being used represents the optimal arrangement for progress in any particular field. It was also considered important for the Committee to reflect on how it would relate to the new bodies likely to emerge at the conclusion of the High-level Plenary Meeting: the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. It was also stressed that it was important for HLCP to consider how it could best support the Economic and Social Council in relation to the three key dimensions of the new role envisaged for it in the reform proposals before the High-level Plenary Meeting: as the central forum to review and advance progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals; as a development cooperation forum; and in responding in real time to development challenges. The three cross-cutting issues that the "One United Nations" report had highlighted — deepening understanding and better managing knowledge; achieving an inclusive, purposeful mobilization of all resources and capacities; and increasing transparency and accountability — should serve as the framework to guide different aspects of this work.

17. Following a full discussion and a straw poll participants agreed on a number of issues that would require the engagement of HLCP in the near future. Priority issues for the HLCP work programme included: (a) peacebuilding; (b) gender mainstreaming; (c) migration; (d) employment; and (e) sustainability (environmental valuation and economic compensation). Other issues or processes for HLCP to engage with included: (f) changing the Economic and Social Council; (g) knowledge management; (h) changing development architecture, implications of the triennial comprehensive policy review; (i) the New Partnership for Africa's Development; (j) culture and development; and (k) civil society dialogue.

18. In addition to the above, the Committee's work undertaken by task forces on curbing transnational organized crime and on economic development under the leadership of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, respectively, would be actively pursued. Furthermore, other issues, such as trade and innovative financing, were discussed, as was science and technology. Regarding the latter, the absence of some of the technical agencies was noted, and it was agreed that they should be given the possibility of conveying their views in writing to the Secretary on possible approaches. The issue of civil society dialogue was seen as cross-cutting, involving outreach and partnerships in all sectors.

VII. The way forward

19. On the basis of programme priorities identified during the first part — “the what” — of the exercise, a second round of breakout groups was set up to determine “the how” — how the Committee should address these issues in order to achieve the desired results. One group focused on peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming; another group on employment, migration and sustainability; and a third group on knowledge management and a range of other issues to which HLCP could add value through its work.

20. The presentations by the groups and a subsequent exchange of views in the plenary produced the following:

(a) *Peacebuilding*. In addition to continuing to build on its collaboration with Department of Political Affairs on conflict prevention, the Committee should be ready to support the work of the proposed Peacebuilding Commission. The Committee will revisit this issue at its next meeting, in October 2005, in the light of the outcome of the 2005 High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

(b) *Employment*. The Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development asserted the critical importance of employment in lifting people out of poverty. Although employment was not included among the Millennium Development Goals, it was highlighted as a key component of the United Nations development agenda presented in the most recent report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council. Attention was also drawn to the recent phenomenon of jobless growth that was now a reality in many countries. There was now a need to elaborate a common policy stance to further integrate the employment dimension in the system’s further work. The International Labour Organization offered to lead a small World Trade Organization group, which would include the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Trade Organization and the World Health Organization, to prepare a draft United Nations system policy position on employment for the Committee’s consideration at its spring session.

(c) *Migration*. The issue of migration is gaining growing importance at the international level. Although the United Nations and many agencies are dealing with its different dimensions, the issue has so far received little attention at the system-wide level. The International Labour Organization offered to take the lead in consulting with a view to preparing an issues note on ongoing initiatives and a possible course of action by HLCP, for consideration at the Committee’s first session in 2006.

(d) *Sustainability*. It was recommended that the United Nation system’s objective as regards environmental sustainability should be to highlight the economic cost of environmental degradation and to promote the mainstreaming of environmental degradation costs in economic policy. There was a need for more systematic exchange of information among the United Nation system organizations, leading to the elaboration of a possible United Nations system policy position. The United Nations Environment Programme offered to take a lead role in preparing a concept paper to be considered by HLCP at its spring 2006 session.

(e) *Gender mainstreaming*. The issue was raised concerning the extent to which a comprehensive gender strategy exists within the United Nations system. The United Nations Population Fund, in consultation with those concerned, offered to compile a

brief information note on ongoing processes within the system, taking into account in particular the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and relevant work in UNDG, to assist HLCP at its next session in determining possible future steps.

(f) *Knowledge management.* The CEB secretariat, in consultation with relevant United Nations system organization representatives, was requested to elaborate draft terms of reference for a knowledge management task force to be considered by HLCP at its October session.

(g) *Other issues.* Two cross-sectoral policy issues of growing significance for the system as a whole were also identified in the course of the discussion: (a) the shift in the aid paradigm, with an increase of funds going through national budgets; and (b) the links among the norm-setting, policy development and operational activities of the United Nations. It was suggested that these areas might be pursued at the CEB retreat in April 2006. The CEB secretariat was requested to put together a task force to draft a paper on these two issues for HLCP to consider at its spring session in 2006 and to finalize, if deemed appropriate and timely, a submission for the April 2006 CEB session.

VIII. Conclusions

21. The Committee succeeded in identifying five new priority issues (peacebuilding, gender mainstreaming, migration, employment and sustainability) for its work, as well as other issues that may require the Committee's attention at an appropriate stage. In the view of the Vice-Chairman, who acted as a facilitator, the outcome of the retreat had reaffirmed the critical role HLCP played in fostering coherence and collaboration among system organizations and in assisting CEB in addressing major policy issues confronting the United Nations system. The "One United Nations" publication had shown how well the system was working together and how determined it was to continue to work on transforming its diversity and complexity into a source of strength. The discussions at the retreat had also reaffirmed the directions adopted by the Committee at its first Greentree retreat. It was crucial for the Committee to maintain this momentum. Its success would depend on the commitment of its members and the substantive support from their organizations. The progress the Committee was making was self-evident from its work, but also from the perception that had emanated from CEB meetings and more recently from the Economic and Social Council during its consideration of the "One United Nations" report.

22. The eleventh regular session of HLCP would be held in Rome from 6 to 8 October 2005. At that meeting the Committee would review its new work programme, the monitoring of Committee decisions and criteria for sunset clauses. In addition, the Committee would also look more closely at the three themes in the concluding chapter and at the challenges identified in chapters two to four of the "One United Nations" report.

Annex I

Timetable

Tuesday, 19 July

19.30 Dinner, hosted by the Chairman, HLCP
(Informal discussion led by Vice-Chairman)

Wednesday, 20 July

09.00-10.30 (Plenary) Taking stock: How far have we come and where do we now stand?

10.30-13.00 Exercises on 2020 projections

13.00 Lunch

14.30-16.00 (Breakout groups) The way ahead: Issues
– What are the key tasks for HLCP/CEB in the next two years?

16.00-18.00 (Plenary) Discussion of reflections from breakout groups for priority-setting: Decisions on issues

19.30 Dinner

Thursday, 21 June

09.00-10.00 Implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review

10.00-11.30 (Breakout groups) The way ahead: the means
How should HLCP/CEB position itself for the future?

11.30-13.00 (Plenary) Discussion of reflections from breakout groups for priority-setting: the means

13.00 Lunch

14.30-16.00 Plenary — conclusions and wrap-up

Annex II

List of participants

Chairman: Lennart Bage (International Fund for Agricultural Development)

Vice-Chairman: Mats Karlsson (World Bank)

Secretary: Phyllis Lee (Chief Executives Board for Coordination secretariat)

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Patrizio Civili Massimo D'Angelo Navid Hanif
International Labour Organization	Maria Angélica Ducci
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Florence Chenoweth
World Health Organization	Bill Kean
World Bank	Clare Fleming Enrique Rueda-Sabater
International Monetary Fund	Roberto Bräuning
World Meteorological Organization	Zamba Batjargal
World Intellectual Property Organization	Orobola Fasehun
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Uday Abhyankar
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Francisco Sercovich
World Tourism Organization	Dawid de Villiers
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Dan Deac
United Nations Development Programme	Mourad Wahba Bruce Jenks
United Nations Development Group Office	Sally Fegan-Wyles
United Nations Environment Programme	Adnan Amin
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Marjon Kamara
United Nations Children's Fund	Ado Vaher
United Nations Population Fund	Jana Simonova
World Food Programme	Allan Jury
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Ugi Zvekic
UN-HABITAT/United Nations Human Settlements Programme	Daniel Biau

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization	Bernhard Wrabetz
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	Eamonn Murphy
United Nations University	Ramesh Thakur
Chief Executives Board for Coordination secretariat	Qazi Shaukat Fareed Ken Herman Mikael Rosengren
