Summary of the informal consultations and briefings of the General Assembly on United Nations System-wide Coherence, 6 and 20-22 June 2007

1. On 25 May 2007 the President of the General Assembly sent a letter to all Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the United Nations informing them that she had appointed Ambassador Christopher F. Hackett, Permanent Representative of Barbados, and Ambassador Jean-Marc Hoscheit, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, to co-chair, on her behalf, the consultations on the report of the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence (HLP) in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

First informal consultations (6 June 2007)

2. At the launch of the informal consultations, the Co-Chairs proposed to establish a programme that would allow for discussion of the various issues contained in the HLP report and to this effect identified eight topics: (i) Delivering as one at the country level; (ii) Humanitarian issues and recovery; (iii) Environment; (iv) Governance and institutional reform; (v) Funding; (vi) Gender; (vii) Human rights; and (viii) Business practices. It was noted that virtually all these issues would require intergovernmental negotiations and decisions. Some of them were, however, already being addressed in various UN fora and in such cases the General Assembly consultations would benefit from being briefed by representatives of those forums.

3. In their statements, Member States expressed general support for HLP report and reiterated many of the views already expressed during the General Assembly debate on 16-17 April 2007. It was underscored that reform should not be confined to developing countries and that the opportunity should be seized to do away with any mistrust between developed and developing countries. The common goal should be more effective deliverance to people in need as identified by the HLP through their focus on national ownership and people-centred approaches. In order not to reinvent the wheel, support was expressed for utilizing existing processes and to avoid duplication. Some Member States supported a multi-track approach while others were not so favourable. Differences were also expressed regarding whether the HLP recommendations should be considered as a whole or on the basis of their own merits. Member States, further, stressed that no artificial deadlines should be set.
4. In his briefing at the informal consultations of the General Assembly on humanitarian issues and recovery, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Humanitarian Relief Coordinator, Mr. John Holmes, announced that a reform of the humanitarian system had already been launched in 2005, aimed at greater coherence, more predictability, timeliness and effectiveness. In his report, he drew attention to the progress that had already been made with regards to the HLP’s eight recommendations on humanitarian assistance.

5. Mr. Holmes said that the UN humanitarian agencies were working with governments to strengthen capacities and improve the predictability of response. The UN was also working with Member States to improve rapid operations and logistics during humanitarian emergencies. In 2006, forty leaders of UN humanitarian organizations, NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, the IOM and the World Bank had attended a meeting on Dialogue between UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations on enhancing effectiveness of humanitarian action and had now come together in the Global Humanitarian Partnership. Another facet of partnerships was the cluster approach. 11 clusters had been established at global level, each led by a lead agency. At the country level, the cluster approach served to strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian action between agencies, NGOs and non-UN organizations. It allowed for a more structured and predictable dialogue with national authorities and local institutions in managing humanitarian crises. With regards to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Mr. Holmes was reasonably optimistic that it would be fully funded to its three-year target of US$ 500 million. Since its launch on 9 March 2006, the CERF had committed US$ 431 million for over 513 projects in 45 countries and had demonstrated its value as a shared tool of the humanitarian community in sudden-onset and rapidly deteriorating crises and under-funded emergencies. Concerning the world’s 25 million IDPs, Mr. Holmes was of the view that in order to strengthen the collective response, UNHCR should be identified as the clear lead agency in the previously under-covered areas in conflict situations of camp coordination/management, emergency shelter and IDP protection. UNHCR was in the process of seeking clarity on mandate issues from the membership of its Executive Committee. Turning to the suggestion to reposition UNDP in becoming the United Nations leader and coordinator for early recovery, Mr. Homes pointed out that UNDP had already set up and was leading the IASC Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery. As regards the need to ensure adequate funding for the United Nations role in early recovery, UNDP’s thematic trust fund for crisis prevention and recovery had, further, been reorganized and a dedicated early recovery window had been established which allowed donors to provide unearmarked funds or to fund early recovery activities in a particular country. Funding for transitions and early recovery were currently sourced through a number of existing humanitarian mechanisms, including Flash Appeals and the Consolidated Appeal Processes. The Peacebuilding Fund had, furthermore, been designed to address critical gaps in peacebuilding and was meant to operate as a catalyst and prepare for a more sustained investment by donors. In addressing the cooperation of the three Rome-based United Nations agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) in building long-term food security, Mr. Holmes pointed to the Food Security Theme Groups that the three agencies had set up at country level. Comprehensive regional approaches to addressing food insecurity were also being developed with WFP and FAO working on multi-country consultations on food security in the Horn of Africa. The Sahel Agricultural and Rural Development Initiative (SARDI) that the three Rome based agencies had launched together with regional and sub-regional bodies in March 2007 was another example of their collaborative efforts. With regards to enhancing the United Nations efforts on risk reduction, it was highlighted that this was a major
priority at all levels of the United Nations system. It was brought to attention that the 1st session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Geneva on 5-7 June 2007, had, in this connection, reiterated the importance of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction systems in implementing the Hyogo Framework for action. Finally, as concerns the United Nations efforts at building innovative disaster assistance mechanisms, WFP’s pilot humanitarian insurance policy in Ethiopia was currently being evaluated. OCHA would continue to be in discussion with WFP and other innovative mechanisms which could help provide contingency funding for natural disasters.

6. Member States thanked USG Holmes for his briefing and noted that the process of reform of the humanitarian system was already under way. As many of the recommendations in the HLP report were on the agenda of either ECOSOC or the General Assembly, and as duplication should be avoided, it was suggested that it would be appropriate to consider the value added of the current consultative process. Clarification was also sought on its expected outcome. The view was, further, conveyed that there was no need to discuss the HLP recommendations outside existing forums.

7. It was stated that certain recommendations in the HLP report, while relevant, lacked in the specificity and clarity required for Member States to fully understand and consider them. Concerns were also expressed that humanitarian assistance might be misused to introduce new conditionalities on international development assistance which may not be acceptable to developing countries. It was underlined that the One UN at country level pilot projects had not been selected because of humanitarian issues, but from development concerns. It was, further, underscored that the role of UN agencies, funds and programmes in emergency response and humanitarian assistance should not reduce, replace or eliminate their role in support of development programmes and projects.

8. In the view of one delegation, the international system for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance was handicapped by its fragmentation and that it was better at responding to humanitarian needs than to preventing them from arising. There was considered to be a need for moving away from a reactive approach to humanitarian disasters towards more integrated approaches that identified and addressed the complexities of risks.

9. Several Member States pointed out that General Assembly resolution 46/182 from 1991 on the Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations provided the premise for United Nations humanitarian assistance. The resolution stressed that national governments had the primary responsibility for humanitarian assistance within their territories. The recommendations in the HLP were considered to go beyond this premise.

10. Concerning funding for humanitarian support, it was stated that more attention should be accorded to strengthening financial mechanisms and that the HLP did not address the provision of additional funds. Support was extended for the CERF and it was noted that it was likely to be fully funded by its target date. While the breadth of the donor base for the CERF was welcomed, with more and more developing countries becoming contributors to the CERF, it was important to take account of the views of recipient countries and to be cautious in expanding the use of the CERF beyond its original mandate.

11. The reference to private risk insurance markets and building innovative disaster assistance mechanisms in the HLP report were thought to need further clarification, assessment and evaluation. WFP’s efforts to promote innovative mechanisms to help provide funding for natural disasters was,
at the same time, welcomed. Based on lessons learnt, preparedness was in the view of one Member State considered to be key to mitigating the effects of disasters. Establishing and funding early warning mechanisms was, therefore, critical and the view was expressed that investment in preparedness was equal to investment in people. Support was, in this connection, provided for the work being undertaken by UNESCO to establish a global early warning system to detect tsunamis before they strike.

12. As natural disasters are in general on the rise worldwide, not least due to climate change, disaster risk reduction was considered to remain key to reducing poverty and to achieving sustainable development. The recent progress made in this area within the UN framework and its International Strategy for Risk Reduction was, therefore, welcomed. It was drawn to attention that the first meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva had allowed stakeholders such as governments, United Nations agencies, regional bodies and civil society to assess the progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action and to identify the way forward.

13. It was emphasized that national lead efforts to respond to emergencies would benefit from a better coordinated United Nations system and the necessity of strengthening partnerships was highlighted. It was further pointed out that the United Nations had a critical role in increasing response capacities and it was felt that the cluster approach within the IASC should be enhanced. The United Nations role in enhancing partnerships to deal with relief to development also needed to be strengthened. Ensuring smooth transition from relief to development remained a challenge and hope was expressed that the Peacebuilding Commission would come to play an important role in this regard.

14. With regards to UNDP’s role in early recovery, Member States were both of the view that UNDP had a clear role to play in supporting the coordination of the transition to development and that the proposition that UNDP should take a lead role in early recovery needed to be clarified as it went beyond the existing mandate of UNDP.

15. The view was put forth that it was not necessary to broaden the scope of United Nations agencies mandates on IDPs, and it was pointed out that it was up to States to protect their own citizens and to determine if humanitarian assistance was necessary. Support was, however, at the same time also expressed for the HLP recommendation that the humanitarian agencies should clarify their mandates and enhance their cooperation on IDPs. It was pointed out that the HLP had not provided a clear definition of IDPs. The issue of IDPs was, further, considered to be a difficult and pressing issue for the international community to address. As a number of challenges remained it was, moreover, considered important that the General Assembly continue to make progress on the mandates of different agencies with regards to IDPs. Appreciation was further expressed for the efforts of UNHCR, but it was questioned whether these were sufficient and highlighted that United Nations agencies coordination on IDPs needed to be enhanced.

16. Support was provided for work of FAO, IFAD and WFP on Food Security Theme Groups at country level and that the three Rome based agencies should continue to strengthen their coordination.

17. Attention was also drawn to several national efforts at promoting humanitarian assistance: (i) The OCHA Donor Support Group Partnership Meeting held in Seoul on 12 and 13 June. The meeting had provided an opportunity for OCHA donor countries and the countries of
the Asia-Pacific region to pool their wisdom and explore ways to enhance cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance.

(ii) One June 13, the European Commission and adopted a Communication paving the way for a European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. The Consensus would be the first joint document on the European Union’s humanitarian aid policy and would boost the impact of its humanitarian aid. The process stresses the central role of the United Nations in promoting a coherent response to humanitarian crises.

(iii) Regional consultations on food security in the Horn of Africa were to be held in Nairobi on 25-26 June. The consultations would be chaired by Former Norwegian Prime Minister and current UN special Humanitarian Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Kjell Mange Bondevik.

18. Finally, it was stated that the inter-governmental consultations on humanitarian assistance should result in a better United Nations response to humanitarian disasters and that “building back better” should be the major goal of United Nations humanitarian reform.

Informal consultations on gender (21 June 2007)

19. In her opening remarks, at the informal consultations on gender, the Deputy Secretary-General thanked the President of the General Assembly for organizing the informal debate last April, at which many delegations had supported a stronger, more coherent and well-resourced United Nations gender entity. She recalled that the Preamble of the United Nations Charter proclaimed the equal rights of men and women. Over the past 12 years, this principle had been repeatedly re-affirmed in political and policy documents adopted by the Assembly, ECOSOC and the Security Council. These included the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 related to gender mainstreaming, outcomes of the UN major conferences and summits, Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the Millennium Development Goals, and the 2005 World Summit which reaffirmed that gender equality is essential to development, peace and security. This broad framework was further complemented by normative work on gender equality in human rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Despite these universally agreed mandates, the gulf between policy and practice remained vast. Continued gender inequality and discrimination hindered global efforts to promote economic growth, sustainable development, peace and human rights. Around the world, women continued to bear disproportionate burdens of poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS. They were denied full access to credit, land and new technologies. They had fewer educational and employment opportunities. They were marginalized in decision-making. A new United Nations gender architecture was needed as the current one had not kept up with the times. Firstly, it was ill-equipped for system-wide work on gender mainstreaming. Secondly, it was under-resourced for its broad mandates. Thirdly, none of the existing entities had either the mandate or resources to lead the UN system in gender equality and women’s empowerment. Taken together, the current gender related efforts suffered from an absence of strategic leadership. The Deputy Secretary-General informed that the United Nations system had, against this backdrop, and without prejudice to the current intergovernmental deliberations, through a broad series of consultations in late 2006 involving all UN gender entities and interested Departments, Funds and Programmes, given some thought to how to strengthen the UN system gender capacity. What had come out of these consultations was the outline of a hybrid model entity that would: (i) combine operational and normative activities; (ii) act as catalyst, advocate, coordinator and interlocutor with Member States on policies and strategies;
(iii) report to the Secretary-General directly on normative and analytical activities funded from assessed contributions, and through and executive board or another inter-governmental body on operational activities financed through voluntary contributions; (iv) be closely associated with and service intergovernmental policy making processes; (v) be equipped with real capacity on the ground at both the country and regional levels; (vi) have the mandate and capacity to provide technical assistance to Member States upon their request, and finance gender-related activities, in a manner that is country-driven, in partnership with Government, civil society and the private sector; (vii) be capable of promoting system-wide gender mainstreaming and enjoy operational flexibility and autonomy; (viii) participate in major interagency coordination bodies, including CEB and the Policy Committee; and, finally, (ix) be provided with sufficient and predictable resources, for the effective implementation of gender-related mandates. To support the current deliberations, The Deputy Secretary-General had, furthermore, reactivated an inter-agency Gender Task Force bringing together 15 entities of the UN system.

20. In their statements Member States observed that many commitments had been made over the years to advance gender equality that had clearly not been met at a resource, leadership or institutional level. Lack of coordination, duplication and inefficient use of resources was considered to plague the current United Nations gender architecture and there was, hence, a need to strengthen and consolidate it. Before rushing to conclusions it was, however, considered important to carefully review the existing structure.

21. Streamlining and consolidating the United Nations gender architecture was, moreover, not considered to be a goal in itself, but a means towards achieving results for half of the world’s population. The importance of gender equality in socio-economic terms, as an issue that had real impact on people’s lives was stressed. There was broad agreement that gender equality and the empowerment of women was key to the advancement of development, peace and security and human rights for all. Promoting gender equality was considered to be an essential part of the United Nations mandate and was viewed as important for the achievements of the MDGs.

22. It was suggested that the HLP recommendation to create a new entity needed to be developed before its impact could be assessed as the HLP’s recommendations had been broadly formulated. Clarification was sought on the goals that were being pursued and it was proposed that the structure of the new gender entity should follow from what it was expected to achieve. It was further suggested that it should support national implementation and have a positive effect at the global, regional and country level. If the intention was that the new entity should preserve existing mandates, then the research and training capacities of INSTRAW should, in addition to OSAGI, DAW and UNIFEM, also be merged in the new entity. It was asserted that reform would not be successful if it diluted the functions of the existing gender entities. While the HLP recommendation to consolidate the normative and operational functions in the new proposed gender entity was supported, it was also felt that there was need for careful analysis of this entity in relation to ECOSOC, the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, etc. in order not to create more fragmentation. The new gender entity, further, needed to be adequately staffed and funded. It was proposed that the two Co-Chairs, Ambassadors Hackett and Ambassador Hoscheidt, might wish to develop and table a draft resolution establishing the function, mandate and full financial implications of the new entity.
23. It was highlighted that the creation of the new gender entity should take account of General Assembly resolution 61/143 on *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women*. The recommendations provided in the Secretary-Generals report on *Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (E/2007/64)* also deserved full consideration. It was, furthermore, pointed out that resolution 59/250 provided guidance in strengthening the pursuit of gender equality in agencies country programmes, and that the HLP recommendations needed to be considered in regard to the TCPR, which sometimes provided stronger guidance. It was also stressed that the distribution of responsibilities between Member States and the UN should be preserved.

24. The recommendation to create a post of Under-Secretary-General, elected on merit in an open and transparent manner to lead the new gender entity was general supported. It was, however, underscored that political will flows from the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General and it was, in this regard, questioned what additional benefit the proposed Under-Secretary-General would provide.

25. It was commented the solution proposed by the HLP was greater centralization. A structural solution might, however, not be the solution if the problem was financial and lack of political will. It was suggested that careful consideration should be given to the change that was to be effected. Cosmetic changes would not have an effect on real lives. Additional attention should, therefore, be devoted to the implementation and impact of projects and focus should not only be on institutional mechanisms.

*Briefing on Delivering as one at country level (21 June 2007)*

26. The informal consultative session on delivering as one at country level focused on briefings by the One UN country level pilot countries. Presentations were provided by seven of the pilot countries, with representatives of the Tanzania, Albania and Rwanda speaking from the podium and the representatives of Cap Verde, Uruguay, Mozambique and Pakistan speaking from the floor. As the first speaker at the consultations, the UNDP Administrator stressed that the One UN at country pilot projects should be viewed as pilots, not as models that would automatically be transferred to anywhere else. The Administrator also expressed firm belief that the United Nations development family could be more efficient and respond better to countries. Better links between the normative work at headquarters and what is happening at country level could furthermore be developed.

27. Ms. Joyce Mapunjo, Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Planning, Economy and Empowerment of Tanzania, informed that a medium term strategy for growth and poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs had been developed in Tanzania quite some time ago. From the monitoring mechanisms that had been put into place, it was very clear who was responsible for what. As Tanzania was dependent on ODA, its development partners were considered very important. The partnerships were, however, all about government-led priorities and about division of labour. A joint assistance strategy for Tanzania that would focus on how the government of Tanzania could lead the process, and work dynamically with development partners, to reach the MDGs would be finalized shortly. Tanzania was considered very fortunate in the sense that a 2005 review of the UNDAF had already led to a focus on many of the recommendations in the HLP report. UN reform was seen as complementing the ongoing reform in Tanzania and Tanzania was very favourably inclined to the “delivering as one” concept. “The United Nations delivering as one with the government of Tanzania” was, however, viewed as a more correct interpretation of this concept. Tanzania was in
favour of “delivering as one” even without any increase in resources as it sought to avoid fragmentation. It was stated that the United Nations normative, analytical and operational expertise could be better utilized when delivering as one and this was something for the United Nations to capitalize on. A joint steering committee to avoid parallelism, led by the government of Tanzania, had been set up and had engaged in active consultations. As regards the way forward and the challenges ahead, readiness and commitment to change was considered crucial. There was a need to consider how the capacity of both the United Nations and the government of Tanzania could be strengthened. Making things happen was viewed as a real challenge. It was stressed that there must be readiness to move to the next step. Joint ownership was considered to be very important for this process. Other key concepts were flexibility, dialogue and inclusiveness.

28. Ms. Albana Voksh, Head of Strategic and Donor Partnerships in the Office of the Prime Minister in Albania, provided a macro view of developments in Albania. The new government had come to power in 2005. A new national strategy for development and integration outlining priorities in all sectors was to be finalized by the end of the year. An external assistance proposal for the next three years was also expected to be available by then. UN reform and the One UN pilot project was viewed as being fully compatible with Albania’s integrated planning system that would lead to better and more efficient use of funds. It was in this context that the Prime Minister of Albania had sent a letter to the UNDP Administrator volunteering Albania as a candidate country for the One UN pilot projects. It was expected that the One UN programme would be based on priorities in Albania, on the comparative advantage of United Nations agencies as well as on the capabilities of the government and other actors in Albania. It was further expected that the programme would lead to better quality of basic services such as health, more balanced regional development, better public participation and enhanced gender equality. It was informed that a Government Modernisation Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister and with participation of five other Ministers, was the highest decision making body in Albania with regards to the One UN. The Committee was currently discussing an internal strategy paper on the One UN programme that was expected to be finalized by mid/end October. Important elements of this strategy included measurable results; national priorities; more flexibility in funding, programming and resources; harmonization and simplification of UN missions to Albania (over 400 mission last year); fewer reports from the United Nations – one report from the United Nations system rather than one report from each agency; and joint analysis, monitoring and evaluation. The pilot nature of the One UN project that would be implemented during the course of the next two to three years was further stressed.

29. Mr. Moustapha Soumaré, Resident Coordinator in Rwanda, underscored that the One UN country pilot projects was not a process where “one size fits all”. However, there were, of course, also commonalities. He explained that his role in participating at the informal GA consultations was to share the main achievements and challenges encountered in Rwanda. He provided four examples of what had worked well: (i) the government leadership and ownership of the process had been strengthened tremendously and the United Nations accountability and alignment to government priorities had been more clearly defined; (ii) the One UN programme document would become the operational document, the government would not need to sign separate agreements with individual United Nations agencies; (iii) several of the tools developed through the TCPR were now being used more systematically, e.g. the UNDAF; (iv) there was enhanced coherence in how the United Nations system was being addressed – not as agencies but as “the UN”, but also in how the system was working – harmonization of business practices and common services, integrated and harmonized monitoring and evaluation programmes, common premises with both the United Nations
and the government having expressed a willingness to move to carbon free buildings. As regards challenges, four difficulties were identified: (i) there was uncertainty as regards how detailed the one programme should be – while the programme should be focused it should also bring together expertise; (ii) it was unclear how best to capture normative aspects in the strategic framework; (iii) it was questioned how best to articulate the need for the accountability framework to be more inclusive vis-à-vis the government; and (iv) it was also unclear how to define success in evaluating the One UN pilots and how to determine their impact.

30. The representative of Cap Verde informed that her country had long ago recognized that reform was necessary. The current United Nations reform process fit well with Cap Verdes’ own reforms which sought a more sustainable model for private sector development and export, as well as improvements in the education, health and security sectors. The situation in Cap Verde was special in the sense that a joint United Nations office (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) had already been set up one year ago. While the positive so far outweighed the negative, one year was not considered sufficient time for any conclusive evaluation. The experience so far, however, pointed to swifter and more systematic dialogue between the United Nations and the government and enhanced efficiency of delivery by the four participating agencies in the joint office project with a 93% financial execution rate. In addition, there had been a 20% increase in savings as compared to the figures prior to the launch of the joint office. The experiences so far had underscored the importance of flexibility and inclusiveness; national ownership and guidance; and alignment of strategic tools. It was pointed out that inclusiveness was not only about encouraging agencies to join the joint office, but also about mobilizing internal, bilateral and multilateral partners. The willingness to change the way business was done was, furthermore, considered to be key. The programme in Cap Verde was based on the national priorities of good governance, capacity development and environment. As there was need for additional operational coherence and as the joint programme was still not very systematic, a meeting between national authorities and the United Nations had been held in July to discuss how the one programme could lead to a single budget. It was stressed that the changes that were taking place in Cap Verde should be replicated at headquarters level – there was need not only for horizontal reform, but for vertical reform as well. It was further stressed that the One UN at country level pilot projects should not be a cost-cutting exercise and that additional resources were needed. It was, moreover, important to set realistic evaluation criteria for assessing the success of the pilots, which should be based on real impact and should be jointly defined by the government and the United Nations. The importance of flexibility and enhanced accountability capacity was also stressed. It was felt that the implementation of the One UN would enhance the United Nations delivery at country level.

31. Uruguay stressed that the One UN should be adapted to national needs and that there should be no “one size fits all”. Health, education and housing were priority issues in Uruguay. A domestic consultation process had been initiated between the government and the United Nations Country Team and had lead to the identification of three pillars around which the pilot programme should be shaped: (i) reform of the state; (ii) decentralized development; and (iii) fighting poverty and inequality. The intention was now to proceed with establishing various working groups to strengthen coherence between government institutions and the United Nations (including non-resident agencies) and to identify resources. The programme would be designed, implemented and evaluated by the government and the United Nations in consultation with civil society. Implementing the One UN concept was a challenge for both the government to lead and for the United Nations that was not used to working in this way.
32. Mozambique felt honoured to have been selected as one of the eight pilot countries. The One UN at country level pilot programme was expected to be launched in Mozambique as soon as its details had been finalized. The most important lesson to date was the need for the One UN to respond to national development priorities. Mozambique agreed with the UNDP Administrator that the pilot projects should be treated as projects and underscored that one size did not fit all. It was informed that UNDP had created a Country Director post in Mozambique in 2006 to relieve the Resident Coordinator. Through the Country Director the United Nations was able to speak with one voice. In the coming days, a High Level UN Steering Committee consisting of the Resident Coordinator and representatives from the government, UN agencies and civil society, would be meeting to approve a terms of reference and timetable for the implementation of the One UN pilot project. As was the case in Rwanda, the representative of Mozambique was happy to report an early lesson that the leadership role and ownership by the government had already been strengthened through the One UN process. In addition, the United Nations had better aligned itself to national priorities.

33. Pakistan stated that its One UN pilot project was still in an embryonic stage and that it was not yet in a position to share any experiences.

34. In the ensuing discussion, Member States welcomed the lessons learnt that were already coming out of the pilot projects. While the eight projects were at different stages of development, Member States were pleased at their overall progress. They took note of efficiency and administrative gains highlighted in the presentation and were encouraged that the pilots had corresponded to national priorities. While it was underscored that there should be no “one size fits all”, the “four ones” (one leader, one programme, one budget and one office) were considered to be a key concept for all the pilots. The view was also expressed that any savings associated with implementation of the One UN concept at country level should be reinvested in the concerned country. It was, furthermore, said that while General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the TCPR should remain the central document for UN operational activities, the General Assembly should at the same time be kept informed about the pilot projects. It was further noted, that the CEB had endorsed the One UN a country level pilot projects at its spring meeting.

35. Member States sought additional feedback on what could be done at headquarters level to further support implementation of the eight One UN country pilot projects. As regards the assessment and evaluation of the pilots, it was questioned whether it would be possible to have a common assessment when the countries came from such different benchmarks and circumstances. It was, furthermore, unclear how the One UN concept would lead to more and better funding.

Informal consultations on governance and institutional reform (22 June 2007)

36. In initiating the consultations on governance and institutional reform, the Co-Chairman informed that there would be no briefing by any representative from the United Nation Secretariat and drew attention to the recommendations on governance and institutional reform in the HLP report.

37. Member States suggested that the recommendations on governance and institutional reform were some of the most controversial in the HLP report. They thus deserved careful consideration. It was suggested that discussion of these issues should as far as possible be conducted in existing forums and should not result in additional layers of governance. The existing structures should be reviewed
before taking further action in order to have a better sense of what needed to be strengthened. It was proposed that the best way forward might not be to create new mechanisms, but rather to make better use of existing ones. Clarification was, in this connection, sought regarding the proliferation of proposed new units and groups in the HLP report and their possible overlap with existing structures. In general, support was expressed for the HLP recommendations that could be implemented by the Secretariat and concern was expressed about those that proposed to create new mechanisms. While appreciating that global governance structures were necessary to ensure functions at country level, it was suggested that some of the HLP recommendations went beyond the TCPR.

38. Member States were of the view that the proposals to establish a Sustainable Development Board needed to be carefully examined. It was proposed that a review of existing structures should be undertaken prior to any decision with regards to the Board. A number of questions were also raised as regards the Board’s relation to the strengthened ECOSOC, to the governing boards of United Nations agencies and to the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was stated that General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of ECOSOC should be thoroughly reviewed in this connection. Clarification was further sought on the relationship between the Board, the Global Leaders Forum, the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. It was felt that a clear chain of command and oversight needed to be established between the Board and ECOSOC. It was thought that due consideration should be given to its composition and legitimacy. It was equally considered important that the Board not duplicate and add to the complexity and incoherence of intergovernmental governance, rather than improving it, and it was, therefore, suggested that it supersede the joint UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP board meetings. In addition to the above, the view was also expressed that the Sustainable Development Board would provide a solution to the current, and unacceptable, situation where countries had to seek approval from executive boards of several United Nations organizations.

39. Member States considered it important to debate the function and necessity of the Global Leaders Forum. It was suggested that this proposal should be discussed as part of the ongoing ECOSOC reform. It was felt that there was need to see how the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum would function before taking any decision on the Forum, and it was reiterated that there was no point in simply adding layers of governance. It was suggested that if established, then the Forum should replace other structures that were not functioning. The added value of the Forum was questioned as the General Assembly was already considered to be a global leader’s forum that had the benefit of universal membership. It was moreover thought that the Global Leaders Forum might have distorting and disorganizing effects on the work of ECOSOC and could lead to the establishment of a first and second class membership tier that would further politicize ECOSOC.

40. The suggestion to establish a Development Policy and Operational Group under the aegis of CEB was welcomed, but it was at the same time stressed that its mandate needed to be thoroughly considered so as not to duplicate the work being done in the TCPR and by UNDG. It was also recommended that a review of existing structures should be undertaken prior to any decision with regards to the Group. It was further stated that closer coordination and cooperation within the CEB or the UNDG might not produce positive results in themselves, unless there was some mechanism for intergovernmental oversight and monitoring of such cooperation and coordination.
41. As regards the recommendation to mainstream sustainable development in the work of ECOSOC, the view was expressed that there should be careful consideration of the extent to which this was possible and the effects that it would have on compromising the mandate of the Commission on Sustainable Development and its multi-year programme of work adopted in Johannesburg, as well as the impact it would have on the functioning of the Second and Third Committees. The view was also expressed that rather than being the focus of a separate segment, sustainable development should be part of all segments.

42. Support was extended for the suggestion of improving the coherence and cooperation between the United Nations, civil society and the IFIs, and it was suggested that the Secretary-General take the lead in this effort. It was, however, questioned whether the Bretton Woods institutions were willing to participate in the envisage cooperation and coordination and if bilateral donors were willing to coordinate and align their assistance programmes within comprehensive national development strategies. The recommendation regarding annual meeting of the Secretary-General and the participation of the Bretton Woods Institutions to review cooperation within the international development structures was, furthermore, suggested to be too broad and rather vague.

43. Supported was provided for the HLP recommendation that the Regional Commissions should focus on normative and analytical work, where they had a comparative advantage. Support was further provided for the standardization of regions and the location of regional offices. It was suggested that improved coherence at the regional level would require strengthening existing United Nations regional mechanisms for horizontal coordination, and ensuring a vertical link-up and alignment in the United Nations development and coordination architecture at the global, regional, and country levels.

44. Surprised was expressed that no briefing was being provided by the United Nations Secretariat at the consultations, as many of the HLP recommendations were directed at the Secretariat and the Secretary-General, e.g. the establishment of an independent task force to take the HLP recommendations forward. With regards to the task force, it was underscored that its suggested functions should have been carried forward by the HLP itself and the view was put forth against any institutionalization in this regard.

45. In summing up the discussions at the session, the Chairman stated that the consultations had revealed a need for more information on the recommendations in the HLP report on governance and institutional reform and the need to review existing mechanisms before moving ahead with setting up new structures.