06 August 1996

The Administrator, United Nations Development Programme
Sustainable human development

Dear Colleague,

Subject: Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) in the context of the Programme Approach

I am pleased to attach herewith for your appropriate attention the texts of two notes adopted by the ACC Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Activities (CCPOQ) on the above subject:

(a) Guiding Principles for a Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology in the context of the Programme Approach;

(b) Operational Guidance Note for the application of the Guiding Principles.

The Guiding Principles were developed in response to the General Assembly’s request, under resolution 47/199 para. 13, for the development of an "effective methodology for evaluation" along with a common interpretation of the programme approach. Following extensive preparatory work by CCPOQ and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation (IAWG), the common principles were approved in February 1995.

It should be noted that guiding principles for a M & E methodology were developed, rather than the methodology itself. Given the experimental nature of the programme approach and the variations in national M & E capacities, it was felt that allowance must be made for future experimentation, flexibility and refinement. In order, however, to promote as structured a field approach as possible, CCPOQ decided to accompany the principles with some operational guidance for their application. The resulting "Operational Guidance Note" was developed during an inter-agency workshop on the programme approach in Turin in October 1995, reviewed by the IAWG in November and approved by CCPOQ at its 8th session in March 1996.

It is recognized that numerous issues, such as the relationship of accountability to M & E or the relevance of the principles to regional/subregional programmes, require further work and clarification. Clearly, too, effective M & E in the context of the programme approach will be largely dependent on the validity of the national programme as well as on national M & E capacities. However, it is essential that M & E, as part of management functions, should be intrinsically associated with the rational development of the programme approach itself and integrated into the programme design process.

I would welcome any comments or information the UN country team can provide in due course on its experience with the application of the guidelines, with a view to improving their focus and utility.

Yours sincerely,

James Gustave Speth

LETTER TO ALL RESIDENT COORDINATORS