

Deputy Secretary-General

Remarks to

**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP**

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Virtual meeting, 29 May 2020, 10.00am – 1.00pm

**Your Excellency Mr. Jukka Salovaara, Permanent
Representative of Finland to the United Nations and
President of the UN Women Executive Board,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,**

It is my pleasure to participate in this Joint Meeting.

**Over the last two weeks, we have had excellent
discussions in the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment.**

**Member States took stock of progress on reform, voiced
their support for the reforms, and shared clear guidance and
perspectives on areas that require further attention.**

**I am confident that I speak for all of my colleagues
present today when I say that we emerged reenergized from
this operational activities segment, and ever-more
determined to forge ahead.**

**Now, with the holding of this Joint Meeting of the
Boards only two days after the conclusion of the ECOSOC
segment, we have an opportunity to ensure that the system-
wide guidance by Member States lands effectively in each
governing body.**

You are leading the way. The discussions in the boards of New York have and will continue to reverberate and influence discussions in governing bodies in Geneva, Rome, Vienna, Nairobi and beyond.

This level of leadership by each Member State, and ownership across governing bodies, is one of the defining features of this reform process.

And it will continue to be crucial for success as we move ahead as the world recovers from COVID-19 and enters a Decade of Action for the SDGs.

Excellencies,

Data from the ground, the ECOSOC discussions, and accounts we heard from the field are all telling a consistent story: the repositioned UN development system is starting to take off and results are becoming palpable.

I have absolutely no doubt that this progress was only possible thanks to the commitment of Executive Heads and their entities.

Working together, all members of the UN Sustainable Development Group have stepped up to help co-create new mechanisms, guidance and support for a new generation of UN country teams.

Within their entities, they have led the realignment of internal policies and tools to reflect the new structures and new levels of accountability.

They have helped strengthen the role of the Resident Coordinator, for example by ensuring that RCs now have access to the performance assessment of UN country team members.

And every single member of the UNSDG has provided financial contributions to the Resident Coordinator system.

The way these Principals have carried along their large entities and staff at all levels throughout the process reflects a heavy lifting.

I want to place on record our appreciation for these efforts.

But as we all know, the job is not done.

With the COVID-19 pandemic bringing new urgency to our work, let us use this Joint Meeting as an accelerator for reforms.

Any step you take here will have significant effect across the system.

After all, the six Funds and Programmes you govern represent more than half the footprint of the UN's operational activities for development.

Today you will hear from my colleagues their perspectives and examples on how our UN country teams are working together to help countries win the battle against COVID-19 and recover better.

I want to draw your attention to specific areas where the leadership of our agencies – and their respective governing bodies – will be critical.

Let me flag five specific areas:

First, help us consolidate the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as the main planning instrument for UN country teams.

We are making strides in rolling out the new Cooperation Framework globally.

Yet, adjustments are still needed by individual agencies to make sure we make the most of it.

We must ensure, in particular, that Country Programme Documents derive directly from Cooperation Frameworks.

Some agencies have started using the outcomes of the Cooperation Framework, verbatim, in their Country Programme Documents.

This is welcome, but not enough.

Alignment cannot be a cosmetic exercise and, while Resident Coordinators are at the center of our planning process, Boards are the most effective space to reinforce this shift.

The timelines and procedures for the development and endorsement of individual Country Programme Documents also need to be streamlined, to align with the UN Cooperation Framework process – which reflect fully the priorities of host governments.

COVID-19 of course adds complexity to the local planning process and this will require some flexibility down the line.

Second, we must continue to ensure alignment on results reporting.

It is critical that we continue to harmonize reporting indicators across entities, and do not get lost in the process of creating new, overlapping indicators.

This is important to ensure we can aggregate results. It is also a necessary step for us to be able to automatically pull out data from the reporting systems of different entities, reducing transaction costs for our agencies.

The data platform UN INFO, which is being rolled out in all UN country teams, should progressively become a primary tool for the system at large.

Third, we must anchor the new Resident Coordinator system in strong and sustainable foundations, including through a sustainable funding base for the coordination function.

I want to thank Member States for their contributions to date, and for enabling cost-sharing contributions by all entities in the Executive Boards.

I am also grateful for the support and flexibility shown by agencies and donors to make the 1 per cent levy an early success.

The levy shows that much can be achieved when Member States join forces to find creative solutions to complex issues.

Moving forward, we must bridge the gap in voluntary resources.

I encourage all Member States that have not yet done so to consider a contribution to the Special Purpose Trust Fund for the RC system.

A broad funding base is critical to safeguard wide ownership of the coordination function across the membership.

It is also an imperative to ensure we can continue to run at full capacity at a time when the world is fighting COVID-19 and striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fourth, we count on Executive Boards to continue to support the full implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework -- the MAF.

The data we have presented to ECOSOC confirms that the MAF has taken root.

I am grateful to all of you for being among the first agencies to make adjustments to comply with the new MAF.

While the MAF implementation has been successful so far, some provisions are lagging behind, in particular the agreement for stronger coordination of fundraising efforts in country.

While it is critical that agencies retain the ability to fundraise for their own programmes and initiatives, we continue to hear repeated calls from Member States for coherence and coordination of resource mobilization.

What we want to see is that all resources entrusted to us – regardless of the strand – are pulling in the same direction to get results at scale.

It is important that we work together to adjust this in the boards, and in the relationship between donors and UN agencies on the ground.

Executive Boards can also play an enabling role as we work with agencies to make our pool of Resident Coordinators even stronger and more diverse.

Agencies are already taking steps to ensure that their best and brightest can consider a career as Resident Coordinator. In some cases, this may require changes to internal incentives, which will require your support.

Fifth, I would like you to consider putting a spotlight on the mutual commitments enshrined in the Funding Compact.

As I said to ECOSOC last Wednesday, few reform elements better illustrate our spirit of mutual responsibility than our Funding Compact.

And the success of the Funding Compact will ultimately determine whether the funding base of the UN development system incentivizes coordination or competition.

The Compact is off to a good start and the majority of indicators are on track.

I am concerned, however, by the steady decrease in the share of core budgets of entities of the UN development system.

This really affects the quality of our support to the 2030 Agenda.

Reversing the current trend will require significant work from all sides; but together we can do it.

The structured funding dialogues you held recently have been helpful.

I hope these will continue and will provide entry points to accelerate progress on all indicators of the Funding Compact.

You can count on the commitment of all entities of the UN development system to deliver on our commitments in improving transparency and results reporting.

I am also pleased with the progress to date on efficiencies, under the able co-leadership of WFP and UNHCR.

We now have the foundations in place to start generating, monitoring and reporting on efficiencies achieved in our UN country teams.

This is unprecedented.

But we need leadership from the Executive Boards to help take our efforts to the next level. Individual agencies will need support, encouragement and investment to maximize the opportunities offered by Common Back Offices and Common Premises.

We count on you.

Excellencies,

Let me close with two words. Gratitude and recognition.

***Gratitude* to Member States for their leadership in transforming the United Nations.**

***Recognition* to my colleagues present today for their commitment, passion for our work at country-level, and for the efforts of their colleagues in UN country teams, day-in and day-out, on the front lines of sustainable development.**

We all realize that this is only the beginning.

With the new systems and tools now in place, it is time to maximize the benefits of our reforms precisely when the world needs it the most.

Working together, I know we can do it.

Thank you.

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