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25 July 2022–26 July 2023

Operational activities for development segment

## Summary record of the 21st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 24 May 2023, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Chimbindi (Vice-President) . . . . . (Zimbabwe)

## Contents

Agenda item 7: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

- (a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)

*Interactive dialogue: “Supporting integrated and transformative policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”*

*Panel discussion 1: a case study from Moldova*

*Panel discussion 2: a case study from Viet Nam*

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*In the absence of Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria), Mr. Chimbindi (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 7: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (continued)**

**(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (continued)**  
([A/78/72-E/2023/59](#), [A/78/72-E/2023/59/Add.1](#) and [E/2023/62](#))

*Interactive dialogue: “Supporting integrated and transformative policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”*

*Panel discussion 1: a case study from Moldova*

1. **Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana), moderator, said that advancing transformative action required abandoning siloed approaches, since meeting the Sustainable Development Goals would demand integrated policy-making that bridged different sectors and processes. The revitalized United Nations development system and the resident coordinators were well positioned to support such approaches at the national level. The panel discussion case studies would consider the value added of the United Nations country teams and of the resident coordinator system and how reforms could be harnessed to advance transformation for the achievement of the Goals.

2. **Mr. Buzu** (Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Moldova), panellist, speaking via video link, said that, in his experience, coordination worked, but it was important to ensure that all actors involved shared the same vision and each brought added value. To that end, the expectation of Governments and ministers was that United Nations agencies and resident coordinators should be willing to take risks and go beyond their comfort zones when dealing with crises.

3. The cost-of-living crisis had put pressure on the social protection system in Moldova and spending on social protection had increased from 11 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 to 15 per cent in 2023. In response to the eightfold increase in the price of energy, the Government had devised and implemented a support scheme to subsidize energy costs for low-income households. The project had been completed in less than six months and, in the period between November 2022 and April 2023, almost 65 per cent of Moldovan households had benefited from the scheme, with those in greatest need receiving a 50 per cent subsidy to their energy bills. The success of the

project had required digital solutions, policy solutions, research and fund-raising, which would not have been possible without the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Resident Coordinator in Moldova. The Government was now working with UNDP to expand the scheme to other parts of the social protection system.

4. **Ms. Gasparikova** (Resident Representative to Moldova, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that addressing the impact of energy poverty on vulnerable households in Moldova in a speedy manner had required significant coordination efforts across a number of public and private sectors. As a result, data from official statistics and from the databases of public utility providers had been harnessed and the necessary legal frameworks had been established. The resultant Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund had been inspired by comparable initiatives in other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

5. The Fund aimed to alleviate financial strain on vulnerable households and to foster a sustainable transition within the energy sector by directly addressing challenges of energy affordability. Eligible households, which were identified by indicators such as income thresholds and housing conditions, received financial support through direct deductions to their energy bills.

6. Collaboration between the Government and energy providers had been crucial to ensure the seamless integration of the Fund’s subsidy mechanism into billing systems, the accurate identification of eligible households and the smooth distribution of funds. Initial results of an ongoing impact evaluation were encouraging and showed significant reductions in energy poverty and infant poverty, including reductions of between 40 and 70 per cent in some cases.

7. The sustainability of such results in the medium and long terms would require an adequately funded framework and regular monitoring and adjustments to adapt to changing conditions. The Government’s integrated support in improving energy efficiency measures and ensuring the continued diversification of energy sources would be vital to long-term results.

8. The intervention by UNDP had required continued collaboration with the United Nations country team to deliver in various areas, such as policy framework improvement, service provision and infrastructure building.

9. The Fund had the potential to alleviate financial burdens for households, promote energy efficiency and

contribute to poverty reduction and social equity. Through careful planning and collaboration, Moldova could become a model for other countries in addressing energy vulnerability and building more inclusive societies.

10. **Mr. Springett** (United Nations Resident Coordinator in Moldova), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the investments made by Member States to strengthen the leadership, impartiality, accountability and effectiveness of the resident coordinator system were yielding clear returns in enhancing the United Nations development system. Well-configured country teams working in line with government ambitions had an unparalleled ability to provide the right support and the right expertise at the right time and speed to support government priorities. A well-resourced resident coordinator office was crucial for success in that regard.

11. More than 800,000 Ukrainian refugees had crossed into Moldova and more than 100,000 were currently seeking refuge in the country. The collective approach of the Government and the United Nations to the situation had been clear from the very beginning. The support provided to refugees and the families and communities that had welcomed them was based on the development and strengthening of national systems and would have long-term and sustainable benefits. The uniqueness of purpose of the Resident Coordinator and his office had been critical in that regard. He commended the Government for its foresight and leadership in its emergency response, which had also been supported by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

12. The ambitious social protection and labour reforms in Moldova were supported by 10 United Nations entities and a number of coordinated and mutually reinforcing programmes were being delivered under the leadership of the Moldovan Minister of Labour and Social Protection.

13. **Mr. Fifield** (Observer for Australia) said that, in challenging contexts, when there were many demands on donors' funding, it was particularly important that the United Nations could demonstrate its added value and that the system was working as effectively and efficiently as possible to achieve development and humanitarian objectives in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The efforts made in Moldova were therefore particularly worthy of recognition and it was inspiring to hear of the reforms under way in the country. Australia was particularly grateful to Moldova for hosting Ukrainian refugees, which could create additional challenges but was greatly appreciated by the international community.

14. **Mr. Pildegovičs** (Observer for Latvia) said that, as a long-standing development partner of Moldova, Latvia commended and encouraged the reform taking place there and the European integration process; in its experience, integration with the European Union was a long-term investment in stability, resilience and prosperity.

15. Latvia welcomed the focus of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 on strengthening the resilience of Moldova. Latvia particularly encouraged further work on Sustainable Development Goals 7 and 16.

16. He wished to know what efforts had been made to ensure that the measures developed in response to emergency situations promoted lasting transformation, particularly in the energy sector.

17. **Mr. Hill** (United States of America) said that the working relationship between the Embassy of the United States of America in Chişinău and the Resident Coordinator in Moldova was valuable and could be a model for the resident coordinator system in other parts of the world. He therefore called for resident coordinators to share best practices with one another on how to best coordinate with embassies.

18. **Mr. Nakagawa** (Japan) said that, in December 2022, the President of Moldova had visited Japan and expressed her commitment to democracy and membership in the European Union, for which Japan had provided support. In December 2022, Japan had disbursed \$27 million to support Ukrainian refugees in Moldova and, in February 2023, Japan had conveyed its intention to provide a loan equivalent to \$100 million to Moldova. Japan was confident that Moldova would use that assistance effectively to address the needs of the displaced people in its care, overcome its energy crisis and carry out the necessary reforms for its accession to the European Union. The United Nations support that had been coordinated by the Resident Coordinator in Moldova had helped to mitigate the impact of the crises that had developed in the context of the war in Ukraine, and Japan would continue its support of Moldova.

19. **Ms. Tarnutzer** (Observer for Switzerland) said that Switzerland appreciated the exemplary partnership between the Government of Moldova and the United Nations country team, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, and their successful coordination of development partners.

20. She wished to know how the United Nations country team and the Resident Coordinator in Moldova benefited from regional support and how they

contributed to knowledge management and transnational responses at the regional level.

21. **Mr. Koll** (Observer for Germany) said that Germany was not only the second largest contributor to the United Nations development system but also helped to enable the system to reach its full potential by providing sustainable and predictable support, providing multi-annual funding to the resident coordinator system special purpose trust fund and committing to high shares of core funding. It called on other Member States to do the same.

22. The role of the Resident Coordinator in Moldova had been crucial to the progress made in the country and the increased programmatic coherence illustrated by the work done there was key to ensuring that the reinvigorated resident coordinator system delivered. Germany welcomed the reforms under way in Moldova and had contributed substantially to them, including as the initial contributor to the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund.

23. **Mr. Springett** (United Nations Resident Coordinator in Moldova), speaking via video link, said that the development community in Moldova was working with the Moldovan Government to ensure that all reforms were coordinated and in line with the Government's ambitions. The contributions of Member States to initiatives such as the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund had made that coordination process much easier.

24. Moldova benefited from a United Nations multi-partner trust fund, the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. Those funds had been essential in giving him and the United Nations country team the scope and flexibility to push boundaries, work outside of traditional comfort zones and achieve the greatest benefit.

25. **Mr. Buzu** (Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Moldova), speaking via video link, said that the only way to deal with trying times was to work together and he encouraged other Governments and ministers to do so. Moldova was committed to advancing its anti-corruption and justice reforms and integration with the European Union.

26. **Ms. Gasparikova** (Resident Representative to Moldova, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), speaking via video link, said that the diversification of energy sources and the introduction of energy efficiency measures had been important in promoting a transition within the energy sector. The medium- and long-term energy efficiency reforms

triggered by the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund had included the introduction of energy standardization and the use of technology, such as smart meters, to reduce energy intensity and consumption.

27. With regard to regional knowledge management, Moldova would share its experience and lessons learned from the introduction of the Fund and introduce its next generation of social protection reforms at an international conference to be held in June 2023.

*Panel discussion 2: a case study from Viet Nam*

28. **Mr. Dang** Hoang Giang (Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations), panellist, said that, since 2012, the Government of Viet Nam had implemented many social protection policy reforms with a view to ensuring that all citizens had access to basic services. Viet Nam had received valuable support from agencies including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNDP and from the Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam in the form of policy recommendations, in the provision of resources, in facilitating consultations and in dialogues with stakeholders and ensuring that progress was in line with international standards. As a result, the number of social assistance beneficiaries had increased by 22 per cent between 2013 and 2020, social health insurance coverage had reached 90 per cent and the number of employees with unemployment insurance had increased by over 60 per cent between 2012 and 2020.

29. A key lesson learned from that process had been that it was the Government which was primarily responsible for implementing development strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals and for ensuring decent jobs and social protection for all by designing legal frameworks and policies, mobilizing domestic and international resources and ensuring synchronized implementation at all levels so as to leave no one behind. It was also necessary to encourage the general public to participate actively in the implementation process and to provide feedback on current policies.

30. As a pioneer country of the "Delivering as one" initiative, Viet Nam also recognized that international cooperation with the United Nations development system was crucial in order to implement national development strategies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and other international commitments. Resident coordinators played a crucial role in that regard, by coordinating relevant agencies to provide policy recommendations and mobilize resources in line with national needs and priorities.

31. Nevertheless, the implementation of social protection policies faced many challenges. Although Viet Nam aimed to become an industrialized country by 2045 and had committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, resources were limited due to the current economic downturn and the consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It was also difficult for Viet Nam to assess external finance and assistance as a middle-income country. Furthermore, coordination among relevant agencies, ministries and bodies governing the social protection system in Viet Nam and coordination between the Government and United Nations agencies needed to be improved.

32. A number of recommendations had therefore emerged from the experience of Viet Nam. Firstly, the Government should ensure that people were at the centre of its policies, particularly social protection policies, and actively involved in their implementation. Secondly, national legal frameworks and institutions for social protection should be improved with the support of relevant United Nations agencies. Increased investment, the mobilization of additional technical assistance and capacity-building were also required in order to expand social protection systems, develop a digital economy and to meet net-zero commitments. Strong coordination and alignment in the design, governance and implementation of social protection programmes were advisable. Coordination among relevant agencies and coordination between national Governments and United Nations agencies on the ground, including resident coordinators, was particularly important in order to avoid an inconsistent approach to development. It was also important to have adequate, sustainable and predictable funding for the United Nations development system and for the resident coordinator system, so that mandates could be fulfilled. Lastly, the United Nations development system and host Governments should establish indicative criteria to evaluate possible programmes and activities for United Nations country teams within their available operational and administrative budgets.

33. **Ms. Tamesis** (United Nations Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam), panellist, speaking via video link, said that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, an existing United Nations joint programme focused on accelerating transition towards inclusive and integrated social protection in Viet Nam had been repurposed to connect technical support and policy advice to the Government in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable. The initiative had been led by ILO, with the participation of UNICEF, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and financed by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

34. The programme had promoted a shock-responsive social protection system and had supported the Government in using the pandemic response to address different types of shock and to prevent people from falling into poverty. The technical assistance provided had contributed to a set of decrees and guidelines, issued to help meet the country's target of achieving income security for 60 per cent of the population by 2030, and had facilitated digital transformation by modernizing the administration of social protection services.

35. The United Nations country team in Viet Nam was therefore currently well-positioned to collectively advance inclusive social protection and employment policies, which was one of the priorities of the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Viet Nam 2022–2026.

36. Following that success, the Government of Viet Nam had requested the United Nations to provide technical support for the development of a new resolution that would guide the long-term development of social policies, including on poverty reduction, access to basic services, social protection and social security. A coordinated response to that request had allowed her, as Resident Coordinator, to mobilize expertise and assets from other United Nations agencies and convene a national seminar on social policy in Viet Nam. It had also allowed the United Nations to provide evidence-based analysis in the development of the resolution. According to United Nations estimates, an investment of 1 million dong in social policies had led to an expansion of 3.2 million dong in GDP.

37. The leadership of the Vietnamese Government in pioneering the “Delivering as one” initiative in 2006 had provided long-term perspective and valuable experience and had built strong foundations for the country team in Viet Nam to pioneer and model the United Nations development system reforms in order to achieve greater coherence, effectiveness and efficiency in making a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable. That pioneering and enabling environment was needed for the United Nations to support Viet Nam in its journey from middle-income to high-income country by 2045.

38. **Ms. Christensen** (Director of the International Labour Organization in Viet Nam), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the Resident Coordinator Office in Viet Nam had provided ILO with invaluable support in the implementation, reporting, evaluation and visibility of the repurposing of United Nations joint programme during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such support ensured smooth overall delivery and coordination and allowed agencies such as ILO to focus on providing technical support.

39. Joint work provided a broader perspective on the work done by United Nations agencies at the country level and helped to identify scope for further synergies and collaboration. Resident coordinator offices could also open doors that single agencies could not, for example, by obtaining high-level commitments from country leadership and ministries or by establishing partnerships with international financial institutions.

40. Joint programmes also allowed other issues related to the mandate of ILO, such as employment, decent jobs, wages and workers' rights, to be incorporated into discussions on social protection policy. Together, active labour market policies and social protection were powerful tools in addressing poverty and enhancing living standards.

41. Coordination to combine the network that each agency had with its social partners could enhance the joint work of the United Nations, ensure a larger outreach and inspire further coordination in a number of areas. United Nations agencies working together could achieve more than the sum of single agencies working alone. Their collective knowledge and expertise could provide a stronger foundation to build on and could provide more coordinated, holistic and quality support to the countries they served. Nevertheless, challenges to the success of that work included differing priorities, a lack of harmonized administrative procedures and competition between agencies.

42. ILO would continue to work closely with resident coordinators and other United Nations agencies to ensure streamlined support to national stakeholders. Initiatives such as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, for which Viet Nam could be a pathfinder country, could help to maximize joint work on just transitions to ensure that as many people as possible benefited from transitions while leaving no one behind.

43. **Ms. Pindera** (Canada) said that her country had been proud to be a partner with Viet Nam over recent years. It would be interesting to know what strategies the Vietnamese Government and the United Nations country team had put in place to enhance partnership with financial institutions, including international financial institutions, and the private sector to address difficulties in terms of accessing financing and other particular challenges faced by middle-income countries.

44. **Mr. Sapkul** (Observer for Thailand) said that he would be interested to know what kind of challenges had been faced and what lessons had been learned by Viet Nam in the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Thailand had adopted its own Cooperation Framework

in 2022. He wished to know how coordination could be enhanced in that regard and what the long-term prospect of partnership was between the United Nations and the United Nations country team.

45. He wondered how competition among United Nations agencies was managed by the country team and the Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam.

46. **Mr. Phimmasone** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that he wished to know what support package had been offered by the United Nations to Viet Nam, especially with regard to social protection, in the light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region and the numerous challenges faced during recovery efforts.

47. **Mr. van der Straaten** (Kingdom of the Netherlands) said that the signing of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Viet Nam was a great achievement of the reformed United Nations development system and allowed all involved parties to have a comprehensive plan for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and to deliver based on their mandates and comparative advantages within the country.

48. He wished to know what the experience of Viet Nam had been in drafting the Cooperation Framework and how the common country assessment had been used. He wondered how the integrated national financing framework analysis had been used in that process and how it could be used in the future.

49. **Ms. Loe** (Observer for Norway) said that, as she understood it, the United Nations in Viet Nam had taken the ideal of common premises a step further than most other countries and had found a new way of integrating staff. It would therefore be interesting to learn how that system had affected the country team's ability to deliver integrated support to Viet Nam.

50. She wondered to what extent the country team was able to have joint resources in mobilizing funding or whether there was still strong competition for resources between agencies.

51. **Mr. Abdelhamid** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that he wished to know what additional challenges had been faced in strengthening coordination between the Resident Coordinator Office and other United Nations entities during development operations in Viet Nam.

52. **Mr. Dang Hoang Giang** (Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations) said that the United Nations had been present in Viet Nam during the most difficult period of the country's recent history and had

been its only international partner as Viet Nam had recovered and reconstructed after the war there. Even as Viet Nam moved towards becoming an industrialized and high-income country, the United Nations country team still had a crucial role to play in ensuring the country's inclusive development and that no one was left behind. The "One United Nations" and the "Delivering as one" initiatives were making a tangible difference in Viet Nam, through improved coordination and greater mobilization of financial resources and technical assistance. It was for those reasons that Viet Nam continued to be a pioneer country in working and coordinating with the United Nations and supported any initiative enhancing effective coordination among United Nations agencies and between the United Nations and host Governments.

53. In order to address the challenge of ensuring sufficient resources for the country's ambitions, it would be necessary to carefully design strategies and to mobilize all available resources, including resources from Western partners. The United Nations would play a crucial role in that process by identifying relevant partners, supporting the country's priorities, and acting as mediator with other international partners. For example, during the negotiation of the Just Energy Transition Partnership, the United Nations and the Secretary-General had been essential in setting out the final agreement between Viet Nam and its development partners in order to implement the country's commitment to climate action. With the support of the United Nations, Viet Nam would be able to achieve and mobilize the necessary resources for the next steps of its development process.

54. **Ms. Tamesis** (United Nations Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam) said that, as a middle-income country, Viet Nam no longer had access to large official development assistance grants. Therefore, in the transition from a low-middle-income country to a high-income country, the United Nations country team in Viet Nam would need to work closely with the Government to ensure greater scope for development financing, to allow for honest conversations, to learn from the best practices and experience of countries which had already made that transition and to identify various financing mechanisms which would enable the acceleration of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and of the Government's ambitions. Conversations were already under way regarding fiscal policies that would create additional options for development financing, but other financing options still to be explored included private financing and blended finance, which would require more developed legal frameworks and policy options.

55. Viet Nam had received support for its integrated national financing framework, which had kickstarted key development financing assessment and diagnostic research. Further work needed to be done to see how that analysis could help to expand fiscal policy options in the future.

56. In order to establish a resource mobilization strategy as part of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the country team was focusing on ensuring that policy space was available to build partnerships and establish new financing flows to support the country's development priorities. To that end, shifts in mindset, behaviour and leadership culture would be required to allow risk-taking and innovation to flourish.

57. With regard to a post-pandemic support package, the United Nations was now in a position to provide Viet Nam with joint technical support on social policies, including through high-level technical seminars, high-level political dialogues and additional research to set out various policy options that would allow the Government to learn from the experience of other countries.

58. The United Nations had also recently created a technical working group at the request of the Ministry of Labour to support the social assistance agenda over the coming four years. The United Nations agencies involved included ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); there was scope for the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to also contribute.

59. The most recent lessons learned from the "Delivering as one" and "One United Nations" initiatives had been included in a blog post on the website of the Development Coordination Office. The 15 United Nations agencies with common premises now had shared information and communications technology services, which had allowed for upgraded and integrated services, financial savings and a reduced carbon footprint. Hybrid working models had also been adopted in January 2022 to ensure smarter use of the workspace and to anticipate future changes in the world of work.

60. The United Nations building in Viet Nam was an ecological frontrunner, and a platinum LOTUS certification had been awarded in recognition of commitment of the United Nations in Viet Nam to environmental responsibilities and sustainability. Notably, 16 per cent of the building's energy needs were met by renewable energy and 100 per cent of the

building's wastewater was treated in-house. Since 2015, \$2.5 million in efficiency gains had been generated.

61. Nevertheless, key challenges that remained were piloting the next generation of administrative operations and ensuring that Viet Nam was able to deliver all 66 mandatory services; at present, only 43 were being delivered.

62. Working together in common premises and delivering services jointly meant that agency-based teams needed to be strengthened and that the country team needed to continually evolve and adapt to needs on the ground. In order to continue to incentivize and create momentum for delivering on United Nations development system reforms, a collaborative leadership culture was needed, which took time and required individual investment in the process, trust-building across agencies and with the Government and demonstrations of value added.

63. The United Nations country team in Viet Nam was breaking ground that others had not and thus needed to model the behaviours and systems that it wanted to see. Experimentation, risk-taking and an ability to fail were part of the learning process and would allow further innovation in the future.

64. **Ms. Christensen** (Director of the International Labour Organization in Viet Nam) said that a number of United Nations agencies in Viet Nam received funding from the private sector. The Better Work Programme was a joint partnership between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation that was operational in a number of countries, including Viet Nam. It worked with the garment, textile and footwear industry and was piloting in the electronics industry to ensure they were compliant with national labour laws and international labour standards, including with regard to social protection. A large part of the programme was funded by its private partners.

65. ILO also had a partnership with the Central Committee, the main governmental advisory body, and the United Nations had provided input to discussions that had been held with the Committee and the National Assembly on issues such as social protection, jobs, labour and the general economic outlook.

66. There was often healthy competition between United Nations agencies and, although coordination was sometimes imperfect, those agencies were brought together in their common premises. Furthermore, the work of ILO in Viet Nam was not impacted by 75 per cent of its workforce being based outside of those premises.

67. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework contributed to the design of specific agency programmes. For example, ILO and its tripartite constituents had recently signed a decent work country programme that was fully aligned with the Cooperation Framework.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*