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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 10 July 2007, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania), Mr. Jazairy (Algeria),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (A/62/73-E/2007/52, A/62/74-E/2007/54, E/2007/CRP.1
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High-level interactive panel discussion on the contribution and effectiveness of the
United Nations development system

The PRESIDENT said that during the segment on operational activities the Council would focus on how the United Nations system operated to maximize its impact on poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development. At the midpoint of the period leading up to the 2015 deadline, the international community must intensify its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with the United Nations system leading the way.

The debate's principal theme was the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The aim of the review, to be undertaken by the General Assembly that autumn, was to evaluate the work of the United Nations development system to see whether it was in accord with the major development goals set by Member States and major international conferences. It would also provide the opportunity to assess how far the United Nations system had adapted to the changing face of development cooperation, characterized by new forms of assistance and the increasing role of national policies as the framework for international cooperation. The review also evaluated the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system to ensure that the some \$15.5 billion received in 2005 in contributions for development cooperation activities were used to maximum effect in the developing countries. The Council would also consider the question of whether the system's resources were sufficient and adapted to country needs.

The report of the Secretary-General on the triennial review (E/2007/52) showed that the system had adopted new initiatives, adapted its working methods and strengthened collaboration and coordination among bodies, but that those efforts did not always measure up to the expectations of Member States and of the system itself. The debate on operational activities was the occasion to give new political impetus to the reform of the United Nations, to encourage

efforts already made and to enter into new commitments in support of the system's work. He urged delegations to put forward new ideas and suggestions in their interventions, which would provide the basis for the General Assembly's deliberations on the triennial review in the autumn and for the corresponding draft recommendations of the Secretary-General.

He drew attention to the two relevant reports of the Secretary-General (E/2007/52 and 54) and the in-session documents on the implementation of resolution 59/250 (E/2007/CRP.1 and 3), which provided useful background to the debate.

He invited Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to moderate the panel discussion.

Mr. KIM Hak-Su (ESCAP) said that the changing development cooperation environment had prompted the United Nations system to question and assess its contribution, effectiveness and relevance. Due to its multilateral nature and comprehensive mandate, the United Nations system supported development in ways that differed from that of donors and other entities. The challenges the United Nations system faced were described in the report of the Secretary-General, containing a statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities (E/2007/54).

The 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities provided Member States with the opportunity to make suggestions on areas for further adjustments in the work of the United Nations system.

The Council's discussions would focus on four points. The first concerned what was considered the unique contribution of the United Nations system to assist Member States in pursuing their national policies and achieve the internationally agreed development goals. The second related to how effective the United Nations system was in contributing to national efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The third question referred to the extent to which the resident coordinator system and the Common Country Assessments (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) allowed Member States to fully benefit from the normative and operational activities of all funds, programmes, agencies and other global and regional entities of the United Nations

system. Finally, participants could make recommendations on how to harness the United Nations system entities at the regional level, including the regional commissions, in support of development.

Mr. KOENDERS (Minister for Development Cooperation, Netherlands) said that, although there had been some progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the pace remained slow, particularly in fragile States. While the United Nations had a special responsibility in that regard, realization of the Goals required the intensified contribution of Governments, the private sector and civil society in both developing and donor countries, as well as other relevant actors, including the World Bank. Development must be based on a holistic approach, as inclusive economic growth, security, the environment, good governance, rule of law, education and health care were all interlinked and could not be addressed individually. Similarly, development assistance must be accompanied by fair trade and predictable capital flows.

There was an urgent need to adapt international cooperation structures to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. The Security Council needed to become more representative of the world's nations. As the only organization with universal membership, the United Nations should play a leading role in securing global public goods for all the world's citizens. Unfortunately, the United Nations role in development had been declining in recent years, as it had often been perceived as being too slow, inefficient, fragmented, over-politicized and bureaucratic, resulting in the rise of other players. Those negative perceptions, combined with donor selectivity, had led to a major increase in earmarking at the expense of core contributions, which, in turn, had contributed to even greater fragmentation and inefficiency. If that vicious circle were to be broken, reform was essential.

Although its constituent bodies had unique normative and operational expertise in many fields, the United Nations was unfortunately too fragmented to translate that expertise into a coherent contribution to national development plans. In that regard, he expressed support for the proposal of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence that the United Nations should "deliver as one". He called on all Member States and all United Nations organizations to actively participate in the reform process.

It was essential to strengthen the resident coordinator system in order to create synergy and coherence. The resident coordinator must have the authority to take decisions and provide leadership and should be representative of, and accountable to, the whole United Nations system. That would require a clear demarcation between the resident coordinator's management responsibility and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) operational activities.

He expressed the view that the United Nations produced excessive paperwork and that it sometimes seemed that planning documents had become a goal in themselves rather than a means to an end. In his view, only three planning documents were required: a poverty reduction strategy, drafted by all the country's stakeholders, to replace the Common Country Assessment (CCA); a joint assistance strategy outlining the division of labour between all the different stakeholders based on their relative strengths and added value; and an integrated, coherent United Nations country programme to replace UNDAF. Those documents should be fully aligned with national planning processes and could not follow a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

He said the initial feedback from the Governments of the eight countries that had volunteered to participate in the Delivering as One pilot project was encouraging, and confirmed that United Nations reform was on the right track. In particular, he welcomed the fact that the pilot projects had resulted in greater ownership among the recipient countries.

He said that at the recent Regional High-level Consultation on United Nations System-wide Coherence within the Context of Development held in Nicaragua and co-sponsored by his Government, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean had agreed on the need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations, that the reform process should not be used to introduce new conditionalities for development assistance and that efficiency gains must benefit the country. The guiding principles should be ownership and flexibility. In that respect, it was necessary to define more clearly the role of the United Nations in middle-income countries, bearing in mind that they were home to two-third's of the world's poor. It had also been agreed that it was crucial to increase both the quantity and quality of development assistance. In his view, progress made by donor countries was disappointingly slow. He pointed out that for many years the Netherlands had been allocating 0.8 per cent of its national income to development cooperation, but still fell short in providing stable, multi-year,

non-earmarked funding. He undertook to increase multi-year core funding for United Nations organizations that performed well and, in the near future, for One United Nations country programmes, and called on other donor countries to do the same.

Mr. CHAPPATTE (Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation) noted that the global aid environment had changed rapidly in the past three years, with the development of new approaches aimed at reducing aid transaction costs and increasing aid quality and effectiveness, and the emergence of new funding mechanisms resulting in increasing competition among aid delivery channels.

The fragmentation of the United Nations operational system justified the continuing calls for drastically improved system-wide coherence. Although the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial review (A/62/73-E/2007/52) showed that progress had been made in that regard, the reality on the ground showed that shortfalls remained in the implementation of the 2004 triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR). The next TCPR needed to address unfinished business to help improve the relevance of the operational activities of the United Nations.

The United Nations operational system was the repository of a wealth of expertise in the sphere of social and economic development, was a recognized forum for global standard-setting, enjoyed a high level of trust among its recipient partners, and had a wide field representation network. Because of its universality and recognized neutrality, the United Nations system had a significant comparative advantage in terms of its capacity to provide sound policy advice and deliver relevant assistance for capacity-building.

In accordance with repeated calls by Member States to enhance its efforts at country level to support national capacity development, the United Nations system should consider policy advice and capacity-building to be the core functions of its operational activities. He believed that the primary responsibility of the specialized agencies was for capacity-building, and that their normative function should be fulfilled within that operational framework, while adjusting international standards to national conditions and developing the capacities required for their implementation. National capacities for the implementation of the development effectiveness agenda urgently needed to be developed and strengthened, including the delivery of services and the implementation of public financial management systems.

Progress in strengthening the United Nations system's delivery for capacity development had been too slow and uncertain. Agency-based project implementation patterned on regular administrative structures had militated against real capacity development. Yet the United Nations operational system had continued to assert its role in project implementation, probably in a bid to secure access to bilateral funding available at field level. In his view, the United Nations should move away from project implementation and refocus on its capacity-building role, retaining an implementation role only for those pilot programmes needed to identify and fine-tune policies and capacities relevant to the national environment.

To achieve increased effectiveness of the United Nations system at field level, it was necessary to eliminate duplication and simplify and harmonize United Nations operational and financial procedures, which currently translated into high transaction costs borne by recipient Governments. Progress had been made in recent years in improving the functioning of the resident coordinator system, for example by strengthening the authority of the resident coordinator and the appointing of country directors rather than resident representatives by resident agencies. However, much remained to be done, particularly the establishment of a convincing and transparent resident coordinators' accountability framework. The United Nations must speak as one at the country level through the resident coordinator, who should have the authority to allocate country-level resources to highest priority programmes and activities and to optimize the use of the technical capacity and expertise available within the country team and across the regional United Nations centres.

To bring about such a change would require the commitment of all funds, programmes and specialized agencies, which in turn presupposed a clear separation of the responsibilities of the resident coordinator and the UNDP country director and an unambiguous decision by UNDP to withdraw from all areas of work where other entities in the system could provide qualified services. He was not questioning that management of the resident coordinator system should remain firmly anchored within UNDP, but believed that no ambiguity should remain as to a possible UNDP bias of the resident coordinator function. Another measure which might contribute to system-wide acceptance would be the establishment of a single United Nations business support unit, responsible for implementation support and administrative services to the different agencies, funds and programmes, whose head would report directly to the resident

coordinator. In that way, the costs related to the office of the resident coordinator might be shared among all the resident agencies, since they would all benefit from services provided by that office.

Ms. MAIERA (Brazil) said that her delegation had some reservations concerning the advantages of the One United Nations programme. The document on which such a programme would be based would either be inefficient if overly generic, as was the case with UNDAF, or else would be inimical to the autonomy of recipient Governments if it were too detailed. Moreover, a unified programme would not resolve the problem of predictability of funds. The negotiation of a centralized programme would be very time-consuming due to the large number of local and external stakeholders involved. If a document for a centralized programme was drafted, it would be necessary to establish which multilateral body would act on behalf of all the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies. In view of the large number of organizations involved in the elaboration of the unified programme, the sphere of influence of the beneficiary Government might thereby be reduced.

Mr. HACKETT (Barbados) asked how better collaboration could be ensured between United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly at the country level, in order to improve cohesion.

Mr. KOENDERS (Netherlands) said that within the changing perspectives of the international development aid system, in which the European Union was playing an increasingly significant role, the strategic role of the World Bank was currently under discussion, the United Nations system was striving for greater coherence and coordination of its operational activities, and vertical funds and all kinds of private-public partnerships were developing, the comparative advantages and legitimacy of all of those players had to be taken into account. In that context, the relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was particularly significant, and merited urgent discussion between the United Nations Secretary-General and the new leadership of the World Bank.

The United Nations system consisted of too many organizations with too many different country programmes and too much bureaucracy, leading to excessive transaction costs and inadequate accountability. More should be done in the way of setting priorities and analyzing

where comparative advantages lay. Efforts were required from donor and recipient countries alike to produce strategic country papers and consider at the highest political level the role of the United Nations system as a whole. Developing countries' ownership of their development programmes would be enhanced, rather than reduced, by a "one United Nations" system. A harmonized United Nations system would be more effective in creating a unified policy for poverty reduction and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Greater coordination of operational activities would not mean the elimination of United Nations agencies or the imposition of new conditionalities on recipient countries; and the reduction of transaction costs should result in extra funds being available for programmes in developing countries. He believed that real progress required that the system at country level should work as one, with one leader, one programme, one budget and, if possible, one office.

Mr. CHAPPATTE (Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation) said that particular efforts were required to ensure that the potential problems mentioned by the representative of Brazil did not arise, and that the reform of the United Nations system would result in greater efficiency and increased autonomy for recipient governments. Rather than centralized programmes, one should speak of improved coordination.

All donors, as well as recipients, were insisting on the need for improved relations with the Bretton Woods institutions, not least at the country level. While there had been considerable progress in that regard over the past decade, much remained to be done. He noted in that connection that while UNDP had accepted an invitation to participate in the second round of the International Development Association (IDA) replenishment discussions held recently in Maputo, a similar invitation had been declined by the World Bank and a number of other donors.

The MODERATOR invited the recipient country representatives to give their presentations.

Mr. BOUPHA (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that for many years the United Nations had played a pivotal role in the Lao People's Democratic Republic's national development process, with particular reference to the transition to a market economy, poverty eradication and exiting the Least Developed Country status by 2020. A total of 10 resident and 14 non-resident agencies were operating in his country under the guidance of the resident

coordinator, and were supporting the Lao Government in activities that ranged from policy development and advocacy to community development initiatives. All United Nations development programmes and projects in the country were adapted to the Government's national plans for long, medium and short-term socio-economic development.

The United Nations round-table process had been particularly effective, and nine round-table meetings had thus far been held for the mobilization of resources for national development programmes. Since the eighth meeting, the Government had received approximately US\$ 1,153 million in financial assistance from donor countries in the form of grant aid and concessional loans. Along with domestic resources, those funds had been used to implement national socio-economic development plans, which had resulted in an increase in GDP to US\$ 500 per capita by 2005. At the ninth round-table meeting development partners had pledged to increase their support for the Government's national development objectives and to step up efforts, in keeping with the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, to promote national ownership in the development process, the alignment of aid with national priorities, harmonization and simplification of partners' operational procedures, and mutual accountability between the Government and development partners.

The Lao Government had integrated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into its national growth and poverty eradication programme, which emphasized the development of four key sectors, namely agriculture and forestry, education, health and infrastructure. The Government's strategy aimed to achieve sustainable poverty eradication through accelerated economic growth, by giving priority to the 47 poorest districts in the country in order to integrate them into the national economy. To that end, the United Nations development projects had been, and remained, primarily focused on the regions most in need.

Under the United Nations reform agenda, the process of harmonizing and coordinating the different elements of the United Nations system within the Lao People's Democratic Republic had been slow but promising. The first UNDAF (2002-2006) had been deemed by a joint Government and United Nations system review to be too broad and lacking in specific action-oriented programmes. The second UNDAF (2007-2011), prepared in close consultation

between the United Nations country team and the Government and taking into account the lessons learned from the implementation of the first UNDAF, provided a basis for increased collaboration among the entities of the United Nations system, the Government and key development partners.

Important challenges remaining included full implementation of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the simplification and harmonization of policies, rules and regulations among United Nations agencies, in particular UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, and between the Government and those agencies. In addition, unexploded ordnance continued to pose a challenge for the Lao People's Democratic Republic and its development partners and required more financial and technical support to remove a major obstacle to socio-economic development. Capacity-building likewise remained a key task for the Government and the United Nations system, within a stronger and better-coordinated office of the resident coordinator.

Mr. DOSSOU (Benin) said that Benin, which rated 163rd out of 177 countries listed in the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report, had a rate of economic growth insufficient to meet the MDGs by 2015, its average income per capita having barely changed from 1960 to 1999. However, since April 2006 it was operating in a new political context. The new President, a former President of the West African Development Bank, who had been elected by a 75 per cent majority, intended to make Benin an emerging country and to quadruple the average per capita income by the year 2025. The strategic development guidelines being developed by the Government included among its main pillars public-sector reconstruction, improved governance and modernizing of the administration, liberalization of the economy, and the strengthening of human capital development.

While most of the United Nations agencies were represented in Benin, development assistance had tended in the past to be fragmented, with each agency focusing on results in its own sphere. Much remained to be achieved in respect of harmonization and improved coordination. The current UNDAF for the period 2004 to 2008 unfortunately did not take account of the fact that the fight against poverty should be driven by economic growth. In accordance with its strategic development guidelines and growth strategy for poverty reduction adopted in 2006, the Government wished to ensure that United Nations cooperation within the second UNDAF (2009 to 2013) was more coordinated, based on better programming of activities

and was in accord with national priorities and the vision and expectations of the local authorities. Coordination and complementarity between the agencies should be prioritized, in order for all of the agencies to work together around a common focal point, while maintaining their individual specificities. He added that Benin would require hundreds of millions of dollars, in addition to that already received from the donor community, in order to meet the MDGs by 2015.

Ms. SÖDER (Assistant Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the unique contribution of the United Nations as a development partner was its universality in ownership and membership and its neutrality in terms of its assistance and advice. States could rely on the advice and knowledge provided by the United Nations in the areas of capacity development, standard setting and implementation of international agreements. The United Nations entities were also a source of high quality technical skills and best practices in complex subject areas. The United Nations facilitated agreement on international development goals and encouraged the international community to take concerted action for achieving them.

The effectiveness of the United Nations system in support of national efforts depended on how far its operational activities were embedded in national efforts, just as its success in assisting countries to reach the MDGs was contingent on the political will of governments themselves. As the United Nations system attempted to improve coherence in the implementation of operational activities, its efforts must be guided by improvements in coordination and cooperation, with division of labour, strengthening of individual and joint capacities and a focus on better delivery and meriting the trust of Member States. Reform was about avoiding overlap, duplication and fragmentation, and reducing high transaction costs.

The resident coordinator system needed to be reshaped to enable it to function as a gateway to the entire United Nations system, consisting in a composite of various channels rather than in one single channel. The CCA and UNDAF mechanisms had tended to be excessively narrow in their scope, focused mainly on social rather than productive sectors. Each fund, programme or agency should ensure that country representatives were well versed in the capabilities of the agency they represented, while it was the resident coordinator's responsibility to create the necessary space for their participation.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system in working with its development partners relied on shaping delivery, further strengthening the ownership of the developing countries and the key factor of executing capacity. Working together was not only about the field - much could be done at head offices to ensure that the United Nations was viewed as a trusted partner.

Mr. PIOT (Executive Director, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) said that there had been real progress in some countries in United Nations delivery in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but that accelerated action was required to achieve the goal of halting the spread of HIV/AIDS by the 2015 deadline. On the question of how UNAIDS could become more efficient, he mentioned five points including improved coherence at the country, regional and global levels, the Unified Budget and Work Plan, joint horizontal accountability, and a clear division of labour. Accountability of individuals was still weak, and there was a long way to go to improve performance management. The harmonization of administrative and financial procedures would solve a number of issues, including cost effectiveness, that arose out of differences between the various agencies.

Efforts to improve coherence were often undermined when donors provided funding to individual projects and agencies outside the agreed framework. He therefore appealed to governments and private donors to focus their funding on agreed and joint plans and programmes that supported national efforts. Coherence had improved, with more focus on the desired objectives and less on the process of delivery. All international actors had agreed on a single approach to addressing country priorities, using one coordinated mechanism and a single monitoring and evaluation framework. UNAIDS had been instrumental in technical, human and financial resource mobilization, in concert with the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Such cooperation had resulted in the reduction of the cost of antiretroviral drugs, a major achievement in expanding the coverage of patient care. "Making the money work for the people" was the slogan of UNAIDS.

With reference to queries relating to the resident coordinator system and mechanisms for national implementation, he said that a division of labour had been crucial to the success of UNAIDS cooperation with UNDP, using the UNDAF mechanism where it could serve as an

instrument for prioritized action. UNAIDS operations in the field had demonstrated that the United Nations system could work in unison, even if coherence needed to move faster to keep pace with the epidemic itself.

Mr. MELKERT (Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals had reshaped the landscape of development cooperation inasmuch as it was a sustained effort over a long period of time and that it was an agenda linked to clear results and measurable outcomes. Under that results-based framework, there were four main tasks, in support of country efforts: the collection of reliable data; support for institution building; advocacy for mobilizing international resources to support MDG implementation; and advising on domestic resource mobilization and allocation.

For the United Nations system to work effectively in the field, there were two important groups: the bilateral donors, and the unilateral donors, including the international financial organizations and the Bretton Woods institutions. Fragmentation was an important issue with regard to the former: there was still too much short-term financing, and there was a need for longer-term commitments. In post-crisis situations, donor trust funds should be based on the comparative advantages of the United Nations and the World Bank, for example, and competition should be avoided. The problem was that the focus on coordination could be to the detriment of concentration on the MDGs.

Turning to the issue of greater coordination within the United Nations system, he said that many initiatives were under way, progress had been made and there was a new spirit of cooperation within the United Nations development system. For example, Resident Coordinator positions were open to applicants from all agencies and currently more than one third of resident coordinators were from agencies other than UNDP. The joint assessment of a resident coordinator's performance by all agencies had been a major step forward. The One United Nations pilot initiative would provide valuable information on what could be done when it came to coordinating programmes tailor-made for eight very different countries. It would however take time before any reliable assessment of such coordination efforts could be made.

UNDP often felt squeezed between the requirements of donor and recipient countries as it tried to promote country ownership of development efforts. He did not understand the reticence

of the Group of 77 and China with regard to the One United Nations programme, which would appear to be the ideal response to requests for greater country ownership of development efforts. It was important therefore that donor and recipient countries should be in agreement on their development objectives.

More could certainly be done in the area of coordination, a case in point being the exemplary coordination and clear division of labour between UNAIDS and other agencies participating in the fight against HIV/AIDS, including UNDP. UNDP was also working with other agencies to clearly define responsibilities and avoid duplication of effort. He welcomed the suggestion from the representative of Switzerland that a business support unit might help reduce transaction costs and the suggestion from the representative of Benin on the identification of a focal point as a means of channelling contacts between development partners and recipient governments.

The regional United Nations entities, including the commissions, had a wealth of knowledge and expertise to share and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) should work with the commissions to better manage knowledge-sharing. Procedures should be simplified, including - as suggested by the representative of the Netherlands - by reducing documentation to essential, strategic documents, for example the poverty reduction strategy, Joint Assistance Strategy and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). He cautioned however that efforts to improve coordination should not detract from efforts to achieve the ultimate objective of real and sustained development.

Mr. CHAYABONGSE (Thailand) took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial comprehensive review (A/62/73-E/2007/52) and welcomed the progress made in increasing coherence, which should be a means of strengthening coordination between United Nations agencies, whose activities should reflect national development strategies and encourage countries to take ownership of and increase their participation in those activities. He recalled that the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness underscored the need to simplify procedures for assistance, which would facilitate relations between donor and recipient.

His delegation supported reform and wished to emphasize the importance of coordination and the establishment of an effective resident coordinator system and country team. He noted

that the One United Nations programme must take into account the specific circumstances and needs of each country. Accountability mechanisms and assessment processes must be strengthened to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts. Coordination among partners and national authorities at the country level must be enhanced and, in that regard, he welcomed the progress made by the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors.

He welcomed the efforts by several agencies to harmonize their multi-year funding frameworks and encouraged greater efforts in that area. That would help recipient countries in their long-term development planning and ensure continued development. He also welcomed the UNAIDS Unified Budget and Workplan. His delegation believed that more extensive consultation with national development partners was a key to demand-driven development but at the same time underscored the importance of performance monitoring and evaluation.

His delegation attached great importance to national capacity-building and South-South, North-South and North-South-South cooperation. His Government had pursued equitable economic and social development policies, focusing on increasing opportunities, building capacity and improving quality of life for the poor. Concerted efforts and continued cooperation among all development partners, including a more efficient and effective United Nations system, would ensure steady progress toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. ANGULA (Namibia) welcomed the pilot One United Nations programme but said that activities must be adapted to the specific needs of each country. He also recognized the importance of the knowledge and expertise the United Nations system could share with developing countries which had benefited his own country. He said that there was some reticence among the developing countries with regard to efforts to promote reform and increased coherence because the experience with similar efforts in the Bretton Woods institutions was that the reform process had monopolized resources and in the end detracted from development goals.

It was critical to mobilize adequate resources for the Organization to be effective; savings from, for example, reducing transaction costs would have only a minimal effect given the already low initial amounts involved. The United Nations system should also play a greater role in the middle-income countries, whose resources were limited by low per capita income, as

suggested by the representative of the Netherlands. Although he supported the One United Nations concept and the idea of all agencies speaking with one voice, he stressed that there must be enough flexibility within the system for agencies to continue to be responsive to the needs of countries, and to maintain the valuable partnerships developed with recipient countries over the years. Finally, while he supported reform of the system, he stressed the need for reform of the system's agencies and programmes themselves, not just the relationships among them, since it was questionable whether an unreformed agency could be truly effective and efficient.

Mr. HACKETT (Barbados) welcomed the One United Nations programme and the recent appointment of a representative of UNAIDS to the United Nations team in the Caribbean. He expressed concern however, that while crime - especially drug-related crime - was a growing threat to development efforts in the Caribbean, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) had closed its office in the region. That was an example of donor influence over policy, with priority being given to security-related issues rather than the needs of the region. He wondered what could be done to reverse that decision.

Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was of course a priority, but UNDP should ensure that resources were also allocated to the other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs). He encouraged greater cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions and hoped that UNDP and other development partners would be able to collect information on gaps in the efforts of those institutions at the country level.

Mr. RUKMA (Indonesia) said that it was essential to ensure stable funding for development efforts. Budget cuts at the country and programme levels inevitably affected programme implementation. He suggested that more thorough and realistic preparation must take place before projects and programmes were finalized. Mechanisms must also be established to respond to unforeseen circumstances that affected funding.

The United Nations system played a valuable role as a neutral provider and coordinator of multi-stakeholder development assistance. More sensitivity to relationships at the country level could however be shown, by simplifying the procedures for the provision of development

support and taking measures to avoid creating divisions among government agencies responsible for executing development programmes on the ground. Furthermore, he suggested that the UNDAF system could perhaps give priority first to individual country needs followed by identification of programmes to meet those specific needs, while still preserving the flexibility to respond to recommendations made in the framework.

Ms. BLOEM (Conference of NGOs (CONGO)) stressed that international development efforts for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals must include the promotion of dedicated partnerships with representative civil society organizations in order to meet the specific needs of developing countries.

Mr. MARQUES (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depended to a large extent on the successful reform of the United Nations operational activities. General Assembly resolution 59/250 was a valuable tool in the successful implementation of the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit to make the Organization's country presence more effective. Given the progress made by the funds, programmes and specialized agencies to improve their performance, he asked what the agencies expected from the next triennial comprehensive policy review and what could be done to overcome the obstacles that limited the Organization's ability to provide effective and efficient assistance.

Mr. MELKERT (Associate Administrator, UNDP), agreed with the representatives of Barbados and Namibia that development efforts must be tailor-made to meet the specific needs of individual countries. He regretted the decision by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to close its office in the Caribbean. That issue should be addressed; it highlighted the problems faced by the country teams in trying to decide how to respond to the specific needs of the country or region and underscored the need for agencies to retain the flexibility to respond to the circumstances in which they were operating. He said that the Millennium Development Goals had acquired greater prominence than the Internationally Agreed Development Goals largely because they contained clear and measurable objectives.

The PRESIDENT, speaking in his personal capacity, said that he supported efforts to increase coherence, such as the One United Nations programme, but believed that enthusiasm for reform must not cause partners to lose sight of the end objective, the promotion of development. He felt that responsibility for defining the overarching goals of reform remained with the General Assembly. He agreed that the Millennium Development Goals were not the be-all and end-all of development but had simply been a convenient way of focusing attention on key priorities. They were not a substitute for a restructuring of international relations.

The fragmentation and inefficiency of United Nations development efforts could be attributed to the decline in core resource contributions from donor countries, the competition among beneficiary country ministries for meagre resources instead of having one channel for contact with development partners, lack of coordination within the United Nations system itself and the competing priorities of NGOs. Greater coordination was necessary, and he suggested the Secretary-General could play a role as a conciliator in allocating voluntary resources to competing agencies.

He regretted that a few issues had not been touched on. While great emphasis had been placed on national ownership, he would have liked to hear discussion of the issue of demand- and supply-driven responses in areas such as relief, rehabilitation and development. There was also much talk of civil society but more must be done to identify and involve real civil society partners. Civil society tended to be identified with NGOs, which were often based in the North, making it questionable whether they truly represented the populations of the South. Finally, he stressed the need for ongoing independent evaluation of development efforts. Mechanisms similar to the independent evaluation mechanism established by the World Bank should be instituted within the agencies of the United Nations development system.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.