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27 July 2017–26 July 2018

Operational activities for development segment

### Summary record of the 9th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 27 February 2018, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Vice-President)..... (Belgium)

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*In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

### Opening of the segment

1. **The President**, opening the operational activities for development segment, said that the segment provided an opportunity both to take stock of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and to discuss the Secretary-General's proposals on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The integrated and indivisible 2030 Agenda had balanced the three pillars of sustainable development. It showed the determination of Member States to promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies, free from poverty, fear and violence, and based on human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

3. In order to uphold those commitments, the United Nations development system must be made fit for purpose. To that end, the Secretary-General had presented specific proposals which envisaged repositioning and reinvigorating the system to meet the expectations of Member States in the twenty-first century. In so doing, the Secretary-General had placed development at the heart of his reforms.

4. Member States should now act boldly, in accordance with the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, to transform the system. The opportunities for interactive discussions provided by the operational activities for development segment should help to lay the basis for a consensus to be forged in the coming weeks.

5. **The Secretary-General**, delivering the keynote address, said that he had addressed the Council three times on the substance of the reforms proposed for the United Nations development system. In his present opening remarks, he wished to talk about the huge challenges faced in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the central objective of sustainable and inclusive development. Those challenges fully justified the need to be bold in the reforms being proposed.

6. It should not be taken for granted that the 2030 Agenda would be fully implemented: there were serious threats in the way that global development was taking place and in the way that the global economy and technologies were evolving. Effective reform of the United Nations development system was needed to limit

the impact of those threats and to use, as much as possible, the potential of the system's capacities to support Member States. Since the Council was taking up the issue of operational activities for development, he wished to offer some perspectives on the current economic and social picture.

7. The world was facing a crisis of legitimacy, confidence and trust. That crisis was not abstract but was rooted in the legitimate fears, anxieties and even anger of people. No one could doubt the many benefits of globalization: the integration of the world's economies, the expansion of trade and the stunning advances in technology; more people had risen out of extreme poverty than ever before, and the global middle class was bigger than ever; and more people were living longer and healthier lives. However, too many people were also being left behind in the different rust belts of the world. Women were still far less likely to participate in the labour market, and gender pay gaps remained a global concern. Youth employment was at alarming levels, a big concern in relation to the welfare of young people, development perspectives and global security. Inequalities were rampant, stretching the fabric of societies to breaking point and undermining the social compact. People were rightly questioning a world in which a handful of men held the same wealth as half of humanity. World regions, countries and communities could find themselves marooned from waves of progress and left behind by growth. Exclusion had a price: frustration, alienation and instability. Life chances and contributions became severely limited. Vulnerability to economic and climate-related shocks grew. So, too, did the danger of forced migration and the temptation to fall prey to the siren songs of extremist ideologies.

8. At the same time, technology was transforming how people lived and worked, from bio-engineering to synthetic biology, artificial intelligences, data analytics and many other aspects. Yet, as much as technology was a vector of hope, it was also a source of fear. The world was only beginning to address the dark side of innovation, from cybersecurity threats to the natural impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on societies and labour markets. The crippling impact of cyberattacks on public infrastructure and on electoral process could already be seen. The risks of cyberwarfare between nations were increasing. Artificial intelligence was changing the game and could boost development and transform lives in spectacular fashion. But it could also have a dramatic impact on labour markets and, indeed, on global security and societies as a whole. The web, in addition to being an incredible platform for free speech, was also magnifying hate speech. Innovation was far outstripping the ability to comprehend those

implications and their unintended consequences. It was necessary to seize the potential of the Fourth Industrial Revolution while safeguarding against its dangers.

9. All of the above compelled the international community to do everything it could to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. That was a goal in its own right, but also the best form of prevention against all kinds of risks. After all, clinging to an economic and social model that drove exclusion and environmental destruction meant that people died, opportunities were missed, the seeds of division and future conflicts were sown and the full force of climate change became ever more likely. What was needed was a global economy that worked for all and created opportunities for all. To rebuild trust, a fair globalization must be built. The 2030 Agenda was a crucial contribution to that end, and poverty eradication remained the top priority. The 2030 Agenda was the road map and its goals and targets were tools to get there. The Sustainable Development Goals made clear the ambition and the commitment: to empower women; to include young people in meaningful ways; to reduce climate risk; to create decent jobs and mobilize clean investments for inclusive growth; and to expand dignity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet.

10. Finance was pivotal. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development stressed the importance of upholding commitments to official development assistance. That and much more would be needed. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda also called for scaling up efforts and innovation in leveraging resources and financing for development. Support was also needed for countries in their efforts to mobilize domestic resources. But that must be accompanied by a stronger commitment by the international community to fight tax evasion, money-laundering and illicit financial flows that posed a severe threat to many developing countries seeking the necessary reforms to achieve sustainable growth.

11. The ambitious 2030 Agenda required ambitious change in the way the United Nations operated. That was why the proposals to reposition the United Nations development system were founded on creating a new generation of country teams to support countries, reinforce national leadership and advance national ownership for sustainable development.

12. He was focused on building a system that was demand-driven, oriented around achieving results at scale, and accountable in providing support to achieve the 2030 Agenda. With results for the people it served as the ultimate measure, the United Nations was

working to make its support to regional integration more in tune with modern realities and country needs, and to address transboundary opportunities and challenges.

13. He had proposed a set of adjustments at the global level to make United Nations operations on the ground more cohesive, effective and efficient. He had also launched a series of work streams to strengthen the capacity of the Organization to harness the power of partnerships. He was seeking to bolster the accountability of the United Nations development system, both at the country level and at the global level, through an Economic and Social Council that was empowered to hold the system accountable and would challenge it to do more through collective efforts. A funding compact had been proposed to give the system the resources and the flexibility that it needed to deliver, in exchange for more transparency and accountability for results.

14. Over the next three days, as Member States considered the proposals, he encouraged them to take inspiration from the ambition of the 2030 Agenda to help forge “the future we want”. They had come a long way, together, since the far-reaching vision and guidance provided by the December 2016 resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. They were now closer than ever to repositioning sustainable development at the heart of the Organization and to having a development system that was an even stronger partner that could deliver for people. Together, they must make good on their shared promise to humanity: a future of prosperity, peace and dignity for all.

15. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia), Vice-President of the General Assembly, speaking on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, said the issues to be discussed during the operational activities for development segment were high on the agenda for Member States. During the annual general debate of the General Assembly last September, 118 Member States had spoken about the Secretary-General’s reform proposals and 114 delegations had mentioned sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving those Goals would depend greatly on the ability of the United Nations development system to deliver. The discussions on repositioning the development system were an important way to ensure that the system was up to the task at hand.

16. Throughout the past year the President of the General Assembly had heard from many Member States about the need to make the United Nations more relevant and effective. Enabling Member States to deliver on the ambitious development agenda would be a win for multilateralism and an accomplishment for the

United Nations. The President of the General Assembly would promote ownership by Member States of the proposed reforms. They had made clear to him that the three tracks of reforms must be mutually reinforcing and that progress on them should be made simultaneously.

17. The President of the General Assembly had also closely followed the briefings held by the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General and had heard the views expressed by Member States during the consultations held by the Economic and Social Council on the way forward. In that context, the President of the Council had written to the President of the General Assembly conveying the general agreement that there must be further action on the Secretary-General's proposals through an intergovernmental process carried out within the framework of the General Assembly. Accordingly, the Permanent Representatives of Algeria and Denmark to the United Nations had recently been appointed as co-facilitators to steer that process in an open, inclusive and transparent way. Member States were encouraged to engage in the process, ask questions and propose solutions. The time frame and scope of the negotiations were in their hands.

18. There were interlinkages between the repositioning of the United Nations development system and the review of General Assembly resolution 68/1 and the alignment process. Over the years delegations had called on the United Nations to reduce and avoid overlaps and duplications; to make the United Nations fit for purpose; and to move away from business as usual. The current meeting was a prime opportunity to continue the discussions. However, everyone could already agree on the need to focus on people and to create a better United Nations. While Member States might have differences of opinion on what shape the necessary reforms should take, or different priorities in implementing the 2030 Agenda, they should not allow those differences to undermine their common commitment to the ambitious development agenda and their pledge to leave no one behind.

#### **Agenda item 7: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation**

##### **(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (A/72/124-E/2018/3, A/72/684-E/2018/7 and A/73/63-E/2018/8)**

*Panel discussion: "Supporting United Nations country teams for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — perspectives from the field: building a new generation of United Nations country teams"*

19. **The President** enquired about the specific challenges faced by multi-country offices responsible for serving several States and, in such cases, how the United Nations development service could be tailored to deliver system-wide support for the 2030 Agenda to each individual country.

20. **Mr. O'Malley** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Barbados), panellist, said that, as the Resident Coordinator for Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), which was composed of six United Nations Member States and three United Kingdom overseas territories, he served a large number of countries, each with different governance systems. The United Nations House built and maintained for his team by the Government of Barbados also housed the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the subregional office of the Pan-American Health Organization was right next door. The type of integration envisioned in the report of the Secretary General (A/73/63-E/2018/8) was thus well under way, as were efforts towards regional cooperation.

21. When six United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) had ended several years ago around the same time, that had been seen as an opportunity to develop a regional strategy for closer collaboration among those country teams and the relevant United Nations agencies. Following extensive consultations with Member States, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and OECS, it was noted that the lack of a common footprint among the United Nations agencies in the subregion could be addressed through a common regional strategic document. However, for programming to be successful, the needs of the smaller Member States also needed to be balanced with the very different needs of the larger Member States. The resulting multi-country sustainable development framework made it possible to create not only an overarching strategic framework, but also to develop country-specific implementation plans, following consultations with individual Governments, and a subregional implementation plan for OECS. Reporting provided both a regional overview on United Nations development system outcomes and disaggregated data on a country-by-country basis.

22. **The President** asked how UNDAFs could be used for joint planning and better implementation of the 2030

Agenda in lower-middle-income countries such as Tajikistan, where more than 20 agencies were present.

23. **Ms. Mehta** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Tajikistan), panellist, said that as Tajikistan was a landlocked, mountainous, lower-middle-income country prone to repeated natural disasters, its UNDAF was covered by a mixture of 15 resident and 6 non-resident agencies that mainly dealt with development and humanitarian issues. Of the 15 resident agencies, 10 were co-located in two United Nations Houses, with back-office services for many already provided by the largest agency present, UNDP, which accounted for half of the 365 United Nations personnel, while some 70 per cent of the UNDAF budget was shared among 6 of the 21 agencies.

24. With the current UNDAF soon reaching its midpoint, it was time to reflect on the way forward, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and discussions on United Nations reform. In order to support an integrated and scaled up Goals-oriented solution, the country team would need to be reprofiled to balance its current programme and project management skills with more policy and analytical skills; build its partnership and networking capacity; and tap into technological innovation and pool its capacities so as to shift from providing mainly programme management support to a more integrated, policy-driven support. That shift required a much more comprehensive Goals-based country assessment, conducted in consultation with the Government, to identify thematic priorities and capacity needs, as well as areas for joint programme and technical support.

25. After hosting a mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support mission, the country team had determined that the methodology could be tailored to support a Goals-based analysis, following a more inclusive inter-agency approach and involving other partners, such as international financial institutions. The process used for the current UNDAF had largely included the United Nations agencies plus consultations with other multi-stakeholders. In order to fully support transformative change and leave no one behind, however, the team was considering opening up the next process to include the private sector, non-governmental organizations and donors so that it would become a true partnership framework and not simply a framework for United Nations development assistance.

26. To support the country team in undertaking and achieving those changes, the Office of the Resident Coordinator would need to be reconfigured, shift its current capacity from process coordination to the coordination of technical assistance, and be able to

source technical expertise from the non-resident agencies. Beyond that, having a Sustainable Development Goals coordinator or development economist in the Office could further support integration by facilitating the technical work needed. Given the scope and ambition of the Goals, all relevant partners must be included while making the most of the different comparative advantages and skill sets of the 21 agencies already present.

27. **The President** enquired about the results of the Joint Office of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in Cabo Verde, a model which had first been piloted in 2006.

28. **Ms. Richardson** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Cabo Verde), panellist, said that shortly before it had graduated from least developed country status, Cabo Verde, like other lower-middle-income countries and small island developing States, had been facing structural vulnerabilities such as a small market, dependence on imports, difficulty with economic diversification, increasing inequalities, high poverty rates and challenges relating to demographic transition. The Joint Office had therefore been created to ensure the presence of United Nations agencies that could help to address the prevailing economic crisis and declining resources for development. Over 10 years later, the Office had become a prototype for a modular, flexible and cost-effective country presence. The three participating agencies, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, were all well represented within a single United Nations House, they operated under one set of business procedures and they had one back-office structure provided by UNDP. There was also one United Nations Resident Coordinator who also acted as the Resident Representative for all three agencies.

29. A single, completely integrated, joint programme document had recently been submitted to the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF. Both the document and the country's UNDAF had been fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda, thereby making the United Nations system much better placed to respond to multidimensional challenges.

30. The budget for the Joint Office was maintained from core and non-core funding, which was based on a pre-established and prorated formula, depending on programme volume. Funding for the Joint Office had not always been easy to raise, as many current tools addressed agency-specific or single projects. Nevertheless, the joint programming and policy approach made it possible to adapt more quickly to the Government's needs and to changing realities, to mobilize new vertical funds and hence to implement joint activities.

31. **Mr. Gad** (Observer for Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, asked the panellist how their experiences of dealing with day-to-day issues could inform the present discussions and what their recommendations were for going forward. He particularly wished to know, *inter alia*: how the presence of entities on the ground was agreed with Governments; how Governments were given the necessary tools and information to exert accountability; if joint meetings were convened in the presence of the relevant national authorities; what support was provided to agencies on the ground to help Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; what kinds of collaboration and synergies existed among the entities on ground, including in terms of complementarity of mandates; and how non-resident agencies were involved in supporting countries of operation.

32. **Ms. Zahir** (Observer for Maldives), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, noted the crucial role of the United Nations development system in supporting small island developing States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the importance of maintaining the right mix of United Nations representation on the ground and the need to create synergies among the 2030 Agenda, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (Samoa Pathway) and other relevant processes. Seeking insight on how multi-country offices should operate in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Secretary-General's proposals, she particularly wished to know what role country-specific UNDAFs could play; how resident coordinators primarily communicated with Governments and country teams; and what assistance resident coordinators needed to carry out their tasks as effectively and efficiently as possible.

33. **Mr. Momeni** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) asked how the Organization could ensure robust and predictable funding for UNDAF implementation and how the regional commissions could support Member States in improving regional cooperation.

34. **Mr. Peña** (Observer for Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, asked what challenges had been experienced in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, including in the light of the need for synergies with the 2030 Agenda.

35. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that it would be interesting to know more about the composition of the Joint Office in Cabo Verde and to learn more about the project, which had piloted the "Delivering as one" approach.

36. Cooperation with the host Government was fundamental to a country team's success. For its part, her Government was satisfied with the work of the United Nations country team in Belarus, which was working closely with her Government. The approaches used needed to adapt to changing situations on the ground, however. Therefore, any changes to the configuration of the United Nations development system's in-country presence needed to be based on the host country's specific needs and development priorities.

37. She welcomed the flexibility provided by the proposed indicative criteria that would be used to determine the need for in-country presence of the United Nations development system. However, a change to the composition and size of the country team at the start of every new UNDAF cycle could lower team effectiveness and result in the loss of institutional memory and country-specific knowledge. Therefore, such staffing decisions should be discussed openly between the host Government and the country team.

38. Resident coordinators, who were supporting countries in their efforts to achieve ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, had one of the most difficult jobs in the United Nations system. The appointment of a resident coordinator should therefore consider the individual's professional expertise and whether it matched the country's needs.

39. **Ms. Haque** (Observer for Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, asked how the provisions of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and other relevant international agreements would fit into the revitalized UNDAF; how the full participation of Governments could be ensured in the design and implementation of UNDAFs; and how the reinvigorated United Nations country teams would address the fact that some Sustainable Development Goals remained underserved. Lastly, if a standardized model of physical presence was to be introduced in all countries, she noted that it would be important to take into account the observations of resident coordinators, the host country and the executive boards in order to maintain the presence of the necessary agencies in the least developed countries.

40. **Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer** (Observer for Brazil) said that all developing countries must be able to benefit from the physical presence of the United Nations development system. Any restructuring should ensure a more proficient, streamlined, flexible and localized country team composition and the resulting resources saved should be directed towards strengthening the

development system and its activities. The composition of the country teams should be discussed with the Government of the host country, on the basis of the relevant UNDAF, before any final decision was made. Moreover, the development of UNDAFs should be coordinated by the public authorities directly responsible for international development and cooperation in the host countries. In that context, he asked how the Resident Coordinators proposed to lead country teams, and the development and implementation of UNDAFs, in a way that reinforced national ownership and leadership.

41. **Mr. Park** Chull-Joo (Republic of Korea) asked whether the Joint Office in Cabo Verde collected any fees or levies from other agencies also benefiting from the back-office functions provided by UNDP, and whether any of them were non-resident agencies.

42. **Ms. Andreyeva** (United Kingdom) asked what impact the Secretary-General's proposed approach to physical presence would have, in practice, on the multi-country offices, in particular in those areas where the Resident Coordinators worked; what drawbacks or challenges they saw with regard to the joint offices; and how the United Nations could scale up partnerships to further bring together the United Nations and other actors to meet development needs.

43. **Mr. Kulikov** (Russian Federation) said that UNDP had established country support platforms in line with the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. He was interested to know whether that initiative had been helpful to the Resident Coordinators and, more generally, what role UNDP played in relation to the United Nations country team in addition to the back-office role that had been mentioned earlier.

44. **Mr. Gadabu** (Observer for Nauru), speaking on behalf of the Group of Pacific Small Island Developing States, asked how the multi-country office configuration would need to change to cope with the increased demands of the reform agenda; how a strengthened UNDAF would operate with regard to regional planning documents with country-specific implementation plans in the context of a multi-country office; and, given that such offices were intended to create efficiencies in the delivery of United Nations development system services, what lessons could be applied more broadly and what challenges had been created by the model.

45. **Ms. Richardson** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Cabo Verde) said that UNDP did not receive payment from the other agencies for the provision of operational services because the Joint Office in Cabo Verde was considered to be a single office. The Joint Office had originally comprised four

United Nations agencies: UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP). WFP had since completed its mission and left the country. There were currently 10 non-resident agencies working in Cabo Verde, including six with at least one or two technical staff inside the country. Owing to the Joint Office's collaborative working methods and joint programming, the six non-resident agencies with a presence on the ground were able to collaborate actively, albeit informally, with the Joint Office. She recommended that those arrangements should be formalized. In that way particular expertise could be integrated for UNDAF implementation as and when required. Such a tailored and flexible approach was ideal for addressing multidimensional challenges, including those related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

46. The process of developing UNDAFs and country programmes was shared by the Joint Office and the Government, with other actors being invited to participate in consultations at the national and local levels over a period of six months. The guiding principles were national priorities, but the 2030 Agenda was also an essential part of the discussions.

47. While there were challenges to be overcome in implementing the Joint Office model, her experience had been extremely positive, and it would certainly be possible to scale it up. One of the main initial concerns had been that it might be impossible to respect the individual mandates of each agency, but those fears had proven to be unfounded.

48. The United Nations development system should guarantee a smooth transition for countries graduating from least developed country status by continuing to provide a certain level of tailored support. Clear benchmarks should be established to enable the system to work more effectively with Governments to ensure that graduation was a success. UNDAFs for those countries should take graduation challenges into account.

49. **Ms. Mehta** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Tajikistan) said that the United Nations often supported Governments in the preparation of national development strategies and plans, which provided an opportunity to harmonize national and international priorities, including by mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into national strategies. The purpose of UNDAFs was to define how the United Nations system could support national development priorities and how its comparative advantages could facilitate the implementation of the national vision for development. Many intergovernmental commitments, including the Vienna Programme of Action for

Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, were already in line with the Goals.

50. The preparation of UNDAFs was a joint process between the United Nations and the relevant Government. In Tajikistan, a joint steering committee comprising United Nations and government representatives reviewed the progress that had been made every year, and government representatives were invited to participate in the annual planning retreat.

51. One of the functions of the Office of the Resident Coordinator was to maintain close and open communication with non-resident agencies. In Tajikistan, those agencies received agendas and minutes of the country team's regular meetings by email, and their members sometimes participated in meetings by video or phone link, if factors such as time zone differences allowed. Videoconferences were specifically held with the agencies on certain topics and agenda items. The Office of the Resident Coordinator also provided logistical support for members of those agencies when they visited Tajikistan. As national capacity grew, her Office was increasingly able to recruit local staff. Currently, 90 per cent of the staff were local.

52. Her Office's efforts to increase its partnerships had begun only recently. Since the 2030 Agenda could not be achieved by the United Nations alone, future UNDAFs would need to identify not only the Organization's expected contribution to each outcome, but also the contribution that could be made by its various partners. Her Office was currently exploring ways to increase the participation of other stakeholders and encourage them to take ownership of outcomes.

53. **Mr. O'Malley** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Barbados) said that travel and communications created challenges in a multi-country setting. Travel between countries in the Caribbean was expensive and time-consuming, which created difficulties for United Nations staff as well as country representatives. His Office was attempting to address those challenges through the use of information and communications technology, but connectivity problems caused difficulties in some countries. The country team therefore tried to organize itself as effectively as possible. For example, to reduce travel and facilitate communication, a representative traveling to a specific country would often engage in discussions with the national authorities on behalf of several agencies.

54. The first UNDAF for Barbados and OECS, for the period 2012-2016, had covered the 10 countries for which he was Resident Coordinator. The current document, known as the United Nations Multi-Country

Sustainable Development Framework in the Caribbean, had been developed in cooperation with five other country teams in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean and covered a total of 18 countries. The document had been developed in full cooperation and consultation with those countries, and their Governments had signed it. Care had been taken to ensure that the document took national strategies into account and was in line with the Samoa Pathway, the Sustainable Development Goals and the CARICOM strategic plan for the period 2015-2019.

55. Turning to the subject of changes that should be made to his Office, he said that monitoring and evaluation could be improved. The Office aspired to be accountable for its work and was making every effort in that regard. For example, one shortcoming had been that national representatives at the regional meetings designed to ensure accountability had tended to be from Ministries of Planning and Ministries of Finance rather than the line ministries. His Office had therefore found ways to bring in representatives from Ministries of Health and Ministries of Agriculture, which were in a better position to assess the work that had been done. However, there was still room to improve accountability and the Office would benefit from increased capacity in that area.

56. He would also welcome greater capacity within the Office for the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics. Various United Nations entities were already supporting CARICOM and OECS on statistics-related matters, including gender mainstreaming, but bringing expertise in that area into the Office of the Resident Coordinator would help to make that support even more effective. It would also be useful to have a member of staff dedicated to promoting innovation, as impressive innovations by States were often not shared among countries. In broader terms, the reforms to be undertaken should enable United Nations agencies to work together more effectively and increase their ability to deliver the results that countries wanted. That applied to multi-country offices and single-country offices alike.

57. The Secretary-General's proposals for reforming multi-country offices would most likely be an effective approach. The challenge would be to put in place the flexible administrative arrangements required in a timely and cost-effective manner.

58. With regard to partnerships with non-United Nations entities, his Office had cooperated successfully with a number of CARICOM agencies, including the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, which led the response to disasters in the region. His



Office also collaborated with the Caribbean Development Bank on two levels: it had agreements with the Bank that enabled the Office to implement projects on its behalf, and members of the Bank's technical staff participated in local results groups on topics such as poverty eradication and education.

59. **Ms. Steiger** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the idea of UNDAFs becoming a framework for partnership was an interesting possibility, given that the challenge of implementing transformational change could not be addressed by the United Nations alone. She would be interested to hear about the innovations that had been tested by resident coordinator offices and country teams, including ones that had failed. She also requested examples of how country teams were now working differently in supporting the integrated achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

60. **Mr. Larhmaid** (Morocco) said that it was essential to enhance synergies and coordination among United Nations entities at the national and regional levels in order to deliver as one on the ground while maintaining the individual mandates of the various entities. He asked how the proposed reforms would take into account the specific challenges of countries such as Cabo Verde and ensure that all States were in a position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. He also asked how continuity in the provision of support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda would be ensured while country teams and entities were being reconfigured and, in some cases, relocated.

61. **Ms. Benjasil** (Observer for Thailand) said that her delegation was eager to participate in consultations on the composition of country teams, hoped that the details of those consultations would be shared with host Governments well in advance and would be interested to know what criteria would be used to determine the size of the country presence of the various United Nations entities. She also asked how consultations would be conducted on UNDAFs that would need to be revised because they were not in line with the 2030 Agenda.

62. **Ms. Fladby** (Norway) asked how the Resident Coordinators had been able to draw on the expertise of non-resident agencies and regional economic commissions, and what arrangements would need to be put in place to enable country teams to benefit more from the expertise of the broader United Nations development system. She also asked what major steps would need to be taken to ensure that UNDAFs were implemented as intended, given that in the past UNDAFs had given agencies the flexibility to work in accordance with their own particular priorities.

63. **Ms. Leyva Regueira** (Observer for Cuba) said that development assistance must continue to be delivered throughout the process of repositioning the United Nations development system. UNDAFs should be the guiding documents for operational activities of the United Nations development system at the national level, and Governments should maintain their leadership role and have the final say on the substantive elements of UNDAFs and the reconfiguration of country teams. It was also important to ensure that the system was flexible enough to adapt to the requirements of UNDAFs and address the specific needs on the ground. Her Government had a good relationship with the Resident Coordinator and the country team in Cuba and would welcome the opportunity to share experiences, including details of specific mechanisms that might be transferrable, for the benefit of other Member States.

64. **Ms. Pindera** (Canada) said that her delegation supported the Secretary-General's aim of strengthening the functioning and capacities of resident coordinators, in particular with regard to accountability and the leadership of country teams. UNDAFs should help to improve results reporting and the performance of country teams. They could also serve as focal points for partnerships. Country teams, guided by the relevant UNDAFs, should bring together partners such as Governments, donors, civil society and the private sector to develop opportunities for each to lend their comparative advantages to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

65. She asked how UNDAFs could contribute to a smooth transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable development. She would also be interested to hear any examples of how the wealth of data that agencies possessed was being shared among themselves and with other partners, including host Governments, to ensure that planning, programmes and the identification of priorities were based on a common set of data.

66. **Ms. Mafole** (South Africa) asked how the new generation of country teams, and the United Nations development system more broadly, would address the in-country presence of agencies that Governments might consider unnecessary and, conversely, whether Governments would be able to advocate for the presence of certain agencies that they felt could make a particularly valuable contribution. She also requested more information about how the Office of the Resident Coordinator for Tajikistan was establishing thematic priorities around the Sustainable Development Goals. She would be particularly interested to know what consultations would be undertaken with the Government and whether there were any methodologies or lessons

learned that could be shared with countries preparing new UNDAFs.

67. **Ms. Pellegrin** (Observer for the Netherlands) asked how the Resident Coordinators were handling the Sustainable Development Goals in areas that had not been addressed by the Millennium Development Goals. Specifically, she wished to know whether they had engaged in discussions with Governments, what requests they had received from Governments in relation to those areas and whether they had felt the need to seek out partners beyond the United Nations system. She also asked what specific support or changes they expected to see from the reform process.

68. **Ms. Chen Hongying** (China) said that resident coordinators should strictly respect their mandates, and country teams must align themselves fully with the priorities of their host countries and carry out in-depth consultations with Governments. Leadership must come from national Governments. She asked how it would be possible for resident coordinator offices to fully supervise and monitor the work of all members of country teams, given that members also reported to their entity heads.

69. **Mr. Paust** (Germany) said that his delegation would be interested to hear the views of the panellists on the proposed country support platforms for the Sustainable Development Goals and the role of UNDP in that context.

70. **Ms. Clifford** (Observer for Australia) asked what the panellists had done to overcome the constraints resulting from the fact that resource mobilization tools were often focused on specific agencies or projects, and what new tools could be created to improve resource mobilization and partnerships with international financial institutions, regional development banks and other entities outside the United Nations system.

71. **Mr. Fialho Rocha** (Observer for Cabo Verde) said that the experience of his country demonstrated that joint offices would be a way to establish the new generation of country teams and reinvigorated resident coordinator system envisaged by the Secretary-General, at least in some contexts.

72. Cabo Verde had graduated to lower-middle-income country status but retained the vulnerability of a small island developing State. Currently, many partners phased out their work once a country had graduated, rather than ensuring that the State had the tools, instruments and cooperation it needed to thrive. His Government was eager to implement the 2030 Agenda but did not have sufficient resources. He asked how the reforms would provide a differentiated response for

low- and middle-income countries and small island developing States, and how they would make it possible for States to expand partnerships within and outside the United Nations system to help them achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Funding mobilization was important to ensure that United Nations agencies, in particular non-resident agencies, were motivated to support the implementation of UNDAFs.

73. **Ms. Azlisha** (Observer for Malaysia) said that a new generation of country teams tailored to the specific needs of each country would help States to properly formulate effective development plans in line with their priorities. However, her delegation had concerns about the proposal to allow individuals from outside the United Nations to be appointed resident coordinators, given that they might have little knowledge of the United Nations system.

74. **Ms. Mehta** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Tajikistan) said that her Office had already made modest changes to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, it had supported the establishment of a Sustainable Development Goals technical group within the Government and an inter-agency working group to ensure the provision of coordinated and harmonized support for the preparation of the country's voluntary national reports, including its first report on the Goals. A joint vulnerability mapping project had recently been undertaken by nine United Nations agencies and the Tajik Government to help ensure that no one was left behind. The results of that exercise should enable the United Nations and the Government to target their activities effectively and would hopefully be updated periodically to serve as an effective baseline for monitoring. The two main topics that would be discussed at the annual planning retreat in March 2018 were changes that should be made to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and how to place prevention at the centre of programming, given that Tajikistan was prone to various types of crises.

75. The expected results of the reforms concerning resident coordinator offices would be different depending on whether the new role of resident coordinators would be to promote coordination or integration. In her view, the focus should be on integration, since the implementation of the 2030 Agenda required an integrated approach. That would involve approaching accountability from an outcome-based, rather than a process-based, perspective. Resident coordinator offices should be given more substantive capacity to move beyond their current role, which primarily involved process coordination. That

would also enable a functional firewall to be placed between the functions of resident coordinators and UNDP resident representatives. The presence of an economist in the office of each resident coordinator would do much to strengthen those offices.

76. It was important to have incentives for agencies to work together. Pooled funding mechanisms over and above the regular budget provided incentives for entities to make the much-needed changes to their working methods. The One Plan pooled funding mechanism in Viet Nam, for example, had enhanced joint programming in the country and had brought about gradual changes to the operation of the country team. Another incentive would be the transformation of UNDAFs into plans that were aligned with all United Nations agencies operating in a given country.

77. The national development strategy of Tajikistan identified the priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals as national thematic priorities, which provided a good framework for the alignment of the work of the United Nations development system with the national development strategy. Her Office was examining all indicators and targets for the Goals and grouping them together, since many were cross-cutting. That framework would be used to promote an integrated approach to the provision of support and to develop an integrated monitoring system. Those efforts were at an early stage and the methodology had not yet been fully determined.

78. The country support platforms were not yet operational, as the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, in which they had been proposed, had only recently been approved. However, work was being done in the field to assess how the platforms could be established.

79. **Mr. O'Malley** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Barbados) said that, with regard to innovation, his Office was developing a proposal to increase youth engagement in disaster risk reduction policymaking. Furthermore, in response to Hurricane Maria in Dominica, the resident agency UNICEF had worked with the non-resident agency WFP to distribute cash to 25,000 people through a system set up by the Government. A less successful initiative had been the attempt to conduct online consultations on the multi-country sustainable development framework. Lessons had been learned from that experience about the power and weaknesses of social media.

80. His Office made an effort to involve non-resident agencies in its work by inviting them to participate in its meetings by video link. The International Labour Organization Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, which was based in Trinidad and Tobago,

was a particularly regular virtual participant in meetings and had been a useful partner in implementing employment programmes linked to disaster recovery. There was room to increase cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, which was also located in Trinidad and Tobago. The Secretary-General's reports on repositioning gave the agencies, country teams and regional commissions the push that they needed to move forward in that direction.

81. Data was of critical importance, in particular because it enabled evidence-based decision-making, and should be a central element of the assistance provided to Governments by the United Nations development system. Data was essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda and for accurately monitoring and reporting on progress in that regard. In that connection, it was worth noting that gaps in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals related primarily to targets with the smallest sets of indicators.

82. With regard to his expectations and hopes for the reform of the system, he said that there should be an increased focus on results to ensure that teams were equipped to deliver the results that Governments wanted. He also hoped that resident coordinator offices would be given the flexibility to tailor responses to the specific needs of countries and to make internal administrative changes swiftly, as needed. With regard to resource mobilization, he said that giving resident coordinators funding aligned to priorities would be very powerful.

83. **Ms. Richardson** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Cabo Verde) said that the focus of the 2030 Agenda on peace and prevention and leaving no one behind had been useful in the development of UNDAFs for Cabo Verde, and most likely for all UNDAFs and national planning frameworks in countries involved in development cooperation with the United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals covering areas that had not been addressed by the Millennium Development Goals had been included in UNDAFs and national development plans as a result of constant consultation and dialogue with Governments. Some relevant issues, such as the protection of the oceans and the protection of the most vulnerable, had already emerged as priority areas for the Government of Cabo Verde.

84. UNDAFs appeared broad because they contained a set of desired outcomes. They were operationalized through much more detailed country programme documents. Coherence and coordination were ensured through monitoring. In Cabo Verde, a joint steering

committee comprising representatives of the national Government, local governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector helped to monitor the implementation of the country's UNDAF.

85. Resident coordinator offices were often not closely involved in discussions among entities providing budget support to national Governments. However, in Cabo Verde increased dialogue and articulation with the budget support group, which included bilateral partners, multilateral institutions and multilateral banks, was promoting a more integrated approach to activities. The United Nations development system had a particular role to play in institutional capacity-building in that regard.

86. Country support platforms would be essential to unite the efforts of the various development entities. To be effective, the platforms would have to be entirely co-owned and include a joint monitoring instrument. The entities must all use the same data for monitoring to be integrated and coherent. In that connection, it was essential to provide capacity-building for national statistical institutions.

87. She had very high expectations of the reforms. Efforts would not have to start from zero; there was already significant cooperation and coherence in the field. Certain barriers created by existing systems and structures remained, but change would be possible provided there were sufficient funds and commitment. The use of pooled funding mechanisms would be useful, as they encouraged, and in some cases forced, actors to work together.

#### **(c) South-South cooperation for development**

88. **The President**, recalling that the General Assembly had, in its resolution [71/318](#), decided to hold the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in March 2019 and to postpone the twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation to June 2019, suggested that the consideration of agenda item 7 (c), entitled "South-South cooperation for development", should be postponed until the 2019 session of the Council.

89. *It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*