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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION:
RESTRUCTURING OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECTORS OF
THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Relationships between the Director-General for Development and
International Economic Co-operation and entities of the United
Nations Secretariat

Comments of the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the members of the General Assembly his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on relationships between the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and entities of the United Nations Secretariat (A/36/419).

ANNEX

Comments of the Secretary-General

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Relationships between the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and entities of the United Nations Secretariat" has been prepared following a proposal initially made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) for the examination by the General Assembly with the co-operation of JIU of the implementation of resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1980 and the progress made in the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. By resolution 35/223, the General Assembly requested the JIU, in establishing its work programme for the implementation of the recommendations of the CPC, to be guided by the priorities identified in General Assembly resolution 35/203 dealing with the Office of Director-General.
2. The Secretary-General believes that the examination which the General Assembly proposes to undertake will benefit considerably from the detailed analysis which JIU has made in its report. The report deals only with the Director-General's functions relating to ensuring the provision of effective leadership, coherence, co-ordination and efficient management of all activities in the economic and social fields within the United Nations proper. A later report will deal with the Director-General's mandate in respect of the United Nations system.
3. The JIU report touches on many issues of major concern to the Organization. They include the need to strengthen the authority of the Director-General to provide leadership and ensure efficient management in the economic and social sectors; the development of clearer and more uniform reporting, consultative and clearance procedures; the articulation of the relationship between the Director-General's substantive responsibilities and planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation activities; and the definition of the relationship between the Director-General and the various categories of economic and social entities in the United Nations, taking into account their differences in terms of their legislative, functional and financial characteristics. These are complex issues, the roots of which lie in the evolution of the United Nations itself over the years prior to the establishment of the Office of Director-General and which, as pointed out by the Inspectors, have led to a degree of uncertainty and fragmentation of authority. The Secretary-General feels that the JIU report has made a valuable contribution by drawing attention to these problems and proposing practical means towards their resolution.
4. The Secretary-General concurs with the views of the Inspectors regarding the essential prerequisites for the effective exercise of the Director-General's responsibilities (paras. 92 and 93). These relate to the specification of authority; the institution of appropriate methods and procedures; selectivity in the exercise of management functions; the contribution of Secretariat entities to the work of the Director-General; and a clarification of the relationships between the Director-General and entities in the economic and social field. To these

prerequisites must be added the need for a shared commitment both by secretariats and by various intergovernmental bodies, to the achievement of the objectives of resolution 32/197 without which no institutional arrangements or managerial procedures can be effective in practice.

5. In the same context, the following considerations deserve mention:

(a) The over-all responsibility and authority of the Secretary-General in regard to international economic and social co-operation derives from his position as defined in Articles 97 and 98 of the Charter. The Secretary-General views the establishment of the post of Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation as an essential instrumentality, under his direct authority, to enable him to exercise his authority to the fullest and most effective extent possible.

(b) The establishment of the post of Director-General was not intended to supplant existing departmental responsibilities or to supercede their mandates or spheres of competence. It was to provide a catalytic and leadership function which would draw fully on the potential of the Organization as a whole to ensure a coherent and efficient response to the policy requirements of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council; and to provide the capacity to establish policy-related guidelines designed to ensure coherence, co-ordination and efficient management of all activities in the economic and social fields.

(c) In the light of this approach, the experience gained over the past three years confirms that a clearer specification of authority is necessary to enable the Director-General to exercise his responsibilities, drawing fully on the capacity of the Organization as a whole. There is also a need for a selective articulation of such methods and procedures as would enable the Director-General to exercise his functions. The methods and procedures utilized should neither be too diffuse to be effective, nor too dense to impair the catalytic role of the Director-General.

(d) Arrangements for the exercise of the Director-General's functions should fully take into account the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 32/197 and 33/202 regarding their equal applicability to all services and organs within the United Nations without prejudice to their respective sphere of competence or legislative mandates. This requires, in particular, the full recognition of the status and degree of autonomy enjoyed by entities established by the General Assembly under Article 7, paragraph 2, and Article 22 of the Charter and of their legislative, administrative and financial competence as defined in their respective basic instruments. Full account must also be taken of the responsibility of executive heads of these entities to their respective intergovernmental bodies, subject to the over-all responsibility of the Secretary-General and the Director-General acting on his behalf. At the same time, there is also an evident need for arrangements which, without prejudice to the above requirements, would serve to strengthen the capacity of the Director-General to ensure the efficient management and co-ordination of all United Nations activities in the economic and social fields and generally to enhance the coherence of these activities and their responsiveness to the policy guidelines established by the General Assembly and the

Economic and Social Council. These requirements call for flexibility and common perceptions among all concerned, and in particular a shared commitment to the realization of the substantive and management goals underlying the restructuring process, of which the establishment of the Director-General's Office is an integral part.

6. The specific comments of the Secretary-General which follow should be read within the context of the above considerations which have guided his response to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit.

Recommendation 1. The Secretary-General believes that a clear specification of the authority of the Director-General along the lines suggested in paragraph 26 of the JIU report is required to reflect better the dimension of accountability implicit in section IV of the General Assembly resolution 33/202 and to clarify the role of the Director-General to all components of the Organization. As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, at its thirty-sixth session, a SGB concerning the Office of the Director-General for inclusion in a revised edition of the Manual on the Organization of the Secretariat will be prepared in the light, inter alia, of the General Assembly's consideration of the JIU report and the comments of the Secretary-General.

Recommendation 2. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation. While the Director-General seeks the instructions and guidance of the Secretary-General on major issues, the Secretary-General intends to explore the scope for more systematic and periodic arrangements for consultations and reporting in future. In this connexion, it may be noted that the consultative arrangements described in the Secretary-General's report on restructuring to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session (A/35/527 and Corr.1) also serve to make available the collegiate views of heads of the various organizational entities to the Secretary-General on a regular basis.

Recommendation 3. The Secretary-General believes that the Director-General acting on his behalf should keep specialized intergovernmental bodies periodically informed on issues related to the restructuring process initiated by General Assembly resolution 32/197 and that the Director-General should provide these bodies at their request with his views on proposals before them which affect the work of other entities. Consistent with the basic functions of the Director-General in assisting the Secretary-General in ensuring coherence of action in the economic and social fields, the purpose of such arrangements should be to enhance the information available to intergovernmental fora so that policy discussions in each forum might take account of all relevant considerations and related developments in other fora. However, as JIU recognizes, there is little doubt that the spirit in which co-operation takes place between the Director-General and other United Nations entities, and the efforts by Governments themselves to promote consistency in the positions taken by various intergovernmental bodies will be no less important than specific procedures.

Recommendation 4. The Secretary-General believes that the recommendation would have to be implemented with flexibility bearing in mind the difficulties of drawing clear distinctions in practice.

Recommendation 5. The Secretary-General agrees that the Director-General should specify and communicate to Secretariat entities concerned details of the priority activities to be carried out and the contributions expected of them. The modalities of such communication will need to be examined in the light of actual needs and working requirements. The final aim should be to establish a monitoring and follow-up system which, avoiding excessive rigidity and formalization of procedure, would ensure an effective and timely response by Secretariat entities to intergovernmental requirements.

Recommendation 6. The Secretary-General agrees that entities of the Secretariat should contribute fully to the work of the Director-General as a matter of priority. In this connexion, he considers that substantive contributions by Secretariat units either directly or through participation in task forces and other consultative arrangements would be the general rule, while staff resources would be made available in special circumstances. Generally, experience has indicated that operating under tight resource constraints Secretariat units are seldom in a position to spare resources and staff time already committed to approved time-bound work programmes. In recognition of these difficulties, JIU recommended that consideration should be given, subject to budgetary policy, to providing a minimum of additional resources to the Director-General's Office. The Secretary-General will give consideration to this matter in the light of such decisions as the General Assembly might take.

Recommendation 7. The Secretary-General agrees that meetings held under Secretariat consultative arrangements should concentrate on major issues of concern to the General Assembly which require collective discussions, an appropriate balance being struck between policy and management questions. They have already begun to prove their value as a mechanism for formulating common positions and for achieving a better understanding among the heads of the various entities on questions of general interest.

Recommendation 8. The Secretary-General believes that effective channels of communication between the Office of the Director-General and the Secretariat entities concerned are essential to fulfil the purposes of resolution 32/197 and related General Assembly resolutions. Such liaison is perhaps best ensured through contacts on specific substantive or management issues between the competent officials rather than through the formal appointment of liaison officers. This consideration is reinforced by the fact that in large organizational entities specific substantive issues are dealt with by different individuals. Nevertheless, wherever appropriate, contacts will be made through the existing liaison units of the entities concerned and through such focal points as may have been previously designated for specific activities.

Recommendation 9. On the basis of past experience, as outlined in his report last year (A/35/527, paras. 22-25), the Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation: while all heads of entities would have direct access to the Secretary-General as proposed in paragraph 28 of the JIU report they should report to the Director-General on all questions that fall within his purview.

Recommendation 10. The Secretary-General generally agrees with the need for written reporting procedures as recommended by JIU, aimed at making him aware in good time of questions that may require his attention. While the Director-General actively follows major developments in the economic and social fields, there is no arrangement for systematic provision to him of such advance information. With respect to the suggestion in paragraph 60 (d) that the Office of the Director-General should be linked with existing reporting processes, particularly those concerned with programme performance, the Secretary-General considers that subject to such action as the General Assembly might take further to its resolution 35/211, it would be sufficient for the Director-General to be kept informed of major budgetary, financial and programme issues arising within Secretariat entities which require his attention.

Recommendation 11. The recommendation of JIU regarding an improved system for clearance of documents is in line with the intentions of the Secretary-General, as indicated in three earlier reports on restructuring (A/33/410/Rev.1, para. 32; A/34/736, para. 33; and A/35/527, para. 15), to introduce more systematic arrangements for prior consultations on Secretariat submissions which have policy or institutional implications for the organization as a whole. It is important, however, that due flexibility and selectivity should be applied in the operation of such a system: there will invariably be grey areas which require the exercise of judgement on the part of all concerned, taking into account the responsibilities of the heads of the entities concerned in relation to their corresponding intergovernmental bodies and the geographical dispersion of units. Furthermore, in some cases prior consultation on the thrust of the ideas to be embodied in the relevant documents rather than the specific clearance of the documents themselves would suffice. The smooth working of such procedures will depend, inter alia, on "author-units" overcoming the difficulties they have been experiencing in meeting time schedules. Efforts currently under way to reduce the total volume of documentation, in accordance with the relevant directives of the General Assembly and other competent intergovernmental bodies, will also serve to facilitate the functioning of these arrangements.

Recommendation 12. This recommendation related to use of the annual work plan on which the Secretary-General has commented above, as the medium for indicating the steps to be taken, in accordance with the medium-term plan, to ensure proper programme co-ordination (recommendation 5). The Secretary-General has no difficulty with this recommendation but would observe that in addition, the process of co-ordination must rely on the procedures and mechanisms best suited to the circumstances, including at the Secretariat level direct contacts, formal or informal consultations, intra-secretariat or interagency consultative machinery, and at the intergovernmental level, informal consultations with delegations as well as formal participation at meetings of legislative organs and the submission of reports.

Recommendation 13. The Ad Hoc Group of high level officials reviewing the work programme of the Organization with a view, inter alia, to identifying obsolete and marginal or ineffective activities was set up to conduct a special review requested by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General considers that an integrated and comprehensive procedure in accordance with resolution 35/209 for the identification of these activities should be established within the framework of the planning, programming and budgeting cycles of the United Nations. While appreciating the intent of the JIU recommendation that the above-mentioned Ad Hoc Group should become a permanent feature of the budget preparation process, the Secretary-General considers that the specific modalities should be explored in the light of the outcome of the General Assembly's discussions on the subject of priority-setting.

Recommendation 14. The Secretary-General concurs with the need in certain cases for an "informed outside review", under the guidance of the Director-General, of priority management problems which have implications for a number of entities, keeping in mind the primary responsibility of heads of these entities for the effective management of their programmes. Appropriate steps will be taken by the Office of the Director-General to study the possibilities in this area in collaboration with appropriate parts of the Secretariat (including DAFM/AMS and DIESA/PPCO).

Recommendation 15. The Secretary-General believes that the resolution of jurisdictional issues is in the first instance the responsibility of the department heads concerned. The Director-General should provide general guidance based on the need for consistency and compatibility with relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council decisions. He would intervene when no agreement can be reached, or where such intervention is sought by one or other of the parties concerned. It is understood that budgetary and administrative aspects will require consultation with the Department of Administration, Finance and Management in the light of the responsibilities of that Department. The Secretary-General attaches particular importance to the establishment of co-operative arrangements to which JIU has also drawn attention and views this as a task inherent in the functions of the Director-General.

Recommendation 16. The Secretary-General agrees that working arrangements to strengthen coherence of work in economic and social analyses, syntheses and identification of issues of international concern can be further developed with due regard to the responsibilities of the department heads concerned. The Director-General should be consulted, and should provide directives, for the identification of new approaches and in the preparation of major analyses and surveys. Implementation at subsequent phases of such exercises is the responsibility of the department head concerned who should keep the Director-General fully informed. The Secretary-General notes that the relationship between the Office of the Director-General and DIESA has been particularly constructive.

Recommendation 17. The Secretary-General believes that the functions of the Director-General, as set out in resolution 32/197 and described in subparagraphs (a) and (e) to (i) of paragraph 26 of the JIU report, imply the exercise of over-all supervision by the Director-General, particularly in matters having substantive implications. He agrees that the practice of consultation being followed by the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters in that context should be continued and developed.

Recommendation 18. The Secretary-General concurs with the recommendation contained in paragraphs 83 (a), (b) and (c). With respect to paragraph 83 (d), the Secretary-General considers that the exercise of the Director-General's responsibilities should be governed by the requirements of the intergovernmental bodies concerned; the need to respect the variety and scope of existing funding mechanisms, and to avoid the duplication of administrative machinery. He also notes that, in its resolution 35/81 of 5 December 1980, the General Assembly has invited all governing bodies within the United Nations system to consider new and specific ways of mobilizing increased resources for operational activities for development. Such follow-up action as the Assembly might take in this regard will determine the need for the approach recommended by JIU.

Recommendation 19. The Secretary-General considers that a pragmatic approach should be followed in the light of his comments on recommendation 8 above.

Recommendation 20. In his report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session (A/35/527, para. 38), the Secretary-General suggested that there may be a need for the Director-General to have assistance at a higher managerial level than is currently provided for in the staffing table of his Office. The Secretary-General accordingly concurs with the need for high-level staff assistance to the Director-General as indicated by JIU, and will explore possibilities in this regard.
