



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
5 July 2019

Original: English

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## 2019 session

26 July 2018–24 July 2019

Operational activities for development segment

### Summary record of the 19th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 23 May 2019, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Ms. Azucena . . . . . (Philippines)

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Closing of the segment

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*In the absence of Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Ms. Azucena (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

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

**(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council** *(continued)*  
(A/74/73-E/2019/14, A/74/73/Add.1-E/2019/14/Add.1, A/74/73/Add.2-E/2019/14/Add.2 and A/74/73/Add.3-E/2019/14/Add.3; E/2019/62)

*Panel discussion: "Enabling the shift: the funding compact"*

1. **Mr. Reddy** (Associate Professor of Economics at The New School for Social Research and former member of the Independent Team of Advisors to the Economic and Social Council Dialogue), moderator, said that the highly specific commitments and indicators contained in the funding compact reflected the spirit of partnership underlying the reform effort. It was important to avoid becoming mired in managerial and administrative debates throughout the reform process, which was crucial if the United Nations development system was to be fit for purpose. The universal reach of its engagement and its impartiality enabled the system to play a catalytic role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. **Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom), panellist, said that making the funding compact a reality at the country level and building momentum to ensure its success were the real challenges facing the United Nations system. Member States and United Nations agencies must be presented with a compelling case for changing funding behaviours by articulating the benefit of moving towards pooled funds. The United Kingdom was the largest contributor to inter-agency pooled funds and had doubled its contribution to the Peacebuilding Commission in order to enable the Commission to deliver rapid and high-risk interventions and bridge across silos.
3. United Nations agencies and programme countries must play an active role in the process of ensuring that funding was aligned with the development priorities and needs of those countries; for their part, donor States should consider how funding was allocated at the ministerial level. The donor base needed to be broadened beyond traditional donors, looking to new formations.
4. The structured funding dialogue of every United Nations agency should incorporate the funding compact from the outset. The outcomes produced by pooled, earmarked and thematic funding must be articulated and compared, and the entire United Nations system should consider how best to support implementation of the compact. Lastly, programme country Governments must be at the centre of the discussion, which should be facilitated by resident coordinators in a way that brought donors, United Nations agencies and programme countries together.
5. **Mr. Harris** (Chief Economist and Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development), panellist, said that universality, predictability in the funding of core United Nations development system activities and realism in accountability frameworks should be key considerations in any discussion of the funding compact. A universal institution supporting the implementation of a universal agenda should be universally funded; it would therefore be necessary to consider the best ways to broaden the donor base in support of that effort.
6. It was difficult to manage core activities in the United Nations development system, given that 80 per cent of those activities were funded by non-core resources. In order to make funding more predictable, the proportion of core resources and of assessed contributions should increase; the latter were non-discretionary and consequently more predictable, as discretionary funding always remained subject to change, making long-term planning and medium-term budgeting more challenging.
7. Existing accountability frameworks did not fully reflect the type of work done in the United Nations development system, which played a major role in setting norms and standards. Most donors preferred to measure the impact of United Nations work quantitatively in terms of results and to earmark contributions, citing the lack of efficiency of the United Nations development system. However, the results of the Organization's normative efforts – aimed at achieving transformative outcomes – were more difficult to measure in a discrete way. Such outcomes, in turn, depended not only on the performance of the United Nations development system but on factors over which the system had no control. Management effectiveness and efficiency were affected by the fact that the resources available to the United Nations development system were significantly constrained by earmarking, resulting in suboptimal outcomes and a lack of clarity and predictability. The system must therefore determine how best to deploy those resources. Given that the overall envelope of agency budgets was also

agreed, Member States could give agencies room to manage available resources to best effect.

8. **Ms. Bhatia** (Senior Adviser on Strategic Partnerships, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) panellist, said that the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) had been created as part of a reform process and, as such, epitomized the possibilities of reform fuelled by political will. Lessons from the history of UN-Women could inform the reform process of which the funding compact was a part. In terms of impact, discussions should be guided by the declared purpose of the funding compact and its role within the United Nations system; steps should be taken to ensure that the compact helped the system remain relevant and useful to its beneficiaries. The history of UN-Women had also illustrated the centrality of leverage and partnerships to the operationalization of the funding compact. It would be necessary to identify leveraging mechanisms to facilitate genuine coordination through pooled or thematic funding, rather than a zero-sum game, in order to use partner platforms in the smartest way possible. Lastly, innovative financing would have to be deployed to solve issues related to the funding compact, including by enabling entities to perform their primary activities while also mobilizing private-sector resources that would help address some of the constraints that the compact was intended to remedy, as the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality had done in the case of UN-Women.

9. **Mr. Gad** (Egypt), discussant, said that the creation of the funding compact was heartening evidence that the system was capable of producing consensus. His delegation would have preferred that the compact focus only on voluntary contributions, but had conceded on that point in the interest of consensus. In any case, it was his understanding that all commitments set forth in the compact would be considered as fully met when all indicators contained therein were achieved.

10. From the perspective of a programme country like Egypt, several steps were necessary if the system was to sustain the funding shifts. First, the delivery of service on the ground in programme countries needed to improve enough to reach the high benchmark for service set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Greater confidence in the system would, in turn, encourage programme countries and others to contribute more to the United Nations development system. At the centre of the repositioned system, a reinvigorated resident coordinator system had the function of coordinating United Nations assets on the ground and thereby promoting the achievement of the Sustainable

Development Goals. Second, a change in the culture within the United Nations system was required in order to enable the resident coordinator system to operate effectively in conjunction with the United Nations country team on the ground, in accordance with the dual accountability system. Such tools as management and accountability frameworks and Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks were critical in that respect. The success of those new arrangements would rest on the ability of country teams to raise the necessary resources to implement agreed cooperation frameworks. There was also a need to enhance alignment between entity-specific country programme documents and cooperation frameworks.

11. Third, programme country Governments had an important role to play in operationalizing the accountability of the system, in particular, in reporting on the implementation of the new cooperation framework. Fourth, it would be necessary to continue to secure enough funding for the new resident coordinator system in the coming years in order to uphold the premise of the funding compact. Fifth, the United Nations development system must become more effective and efficient in its use of limited resources, as well as more transparent and accountable for its spending. Enhancing the transparency and accountability of the system would build more trust in it.

12. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group welcomed the conclusion of the funding compact, which would directly affect the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The final version of the funding compact was balanced, reflecting the collective ambitions of Member States. He emphasized that it was the Group's understanding that all the commitments in the compact would be considered as fully met when all indicators contained therein were achieved.

13. **Mr. Amaral** (Brazil) said that the funding compact contained clear indicators based on mandates established by United Nations resolutions. Greater trust and incentives were needed, along with additional engagement from stakeholders and countries, which had the ability to communicate to decision makers which path they should take. The manner in which funding was applied must be clear, not just for the benefit of donor countries but also for programme countries. It was indeed essential that the interests of programme countries and the funding provided were aligned. The new resident coordinator system, the new Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and the system-wide strategic document would all operate as part of a cohesive, interconnected system. Developing countries

like his faced specific challenges with regard to fiscal and legal constraints. He therefore appreciated that the reference to funding as “voluntary” had been retained in the final version.

14. **Mr. Martin Prada** (Observer for the European Union) said that the funding dialogue had been a sterling example of transparency and collaborative work between all relevant actors from the United Nations membership and system. Considerable time had been spent discussing the advantages and disadvantages of core and voluntary contributions, while not enough had been devoted to the need to diversify the donor base. Moving forward, regardless of how other elements evolved, such diversification must be incentivized. Lastly, the inability to identify efficiency gains in the form of savings expected of the system as the reforms unfolded had implications for the rest of the document. As the European Union had consistently affirmed, under indicator 6, which addressed how the system would make savings that were not quantified, the savings would not require additional financial contributions and should be funded first by system-wide savings and second by in-kind contributions.

15. **Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni** (Observer for Sweden) said that the funding compact was a mutually reinforcing mechanism that required collaboration and joint efforts between Member States and United Nations development system entities. For instance, joint and thematic funds must be designed and developed together with Member States for the latter to uphold their commitments. It was crucial that agencies, funds and programmes incorporate the funding compact in their agency-specific funding dialogues if the compact was to succeed.

16. The 1 per cent levy had been placed on tightly earmarked contributions because it was costlier for agencies to work with such contributions and they did not contribute to inter-agency collaboration, which must be encouraged in order to carry out the 2030 Agenda. As one of the few countries that had chosen a donor-administrated option to collect the levy in order to minimize transaction costs, Sweden encouraged other States to follow suit and would be glad to share its experiences applying the model.

17. **Ms. Crabtree** (Turkey) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General’s efforts to make the United Nations development system more sustainable and predictably funded through the funding compact. Her country was one of the world’s largest providers of assistance and among the few donors exceeding the United Nations official development assistance (ODA) target. As the host of the largest refugee population in

the world, Turkey channelled lifeline assistance to millions in need every month and had spent \$30 billion on Syrians alone. The funding compact should not be interpreted in a one-size-fits-all manner but should instead take into account each donor’s unique features and abilities. The existing hybrid funding mechanism and the funding compact might not be sufficient to finance United Nations development system activities and the resident coordinator system fully. A long-term and sustainable solution to the financing of the resident coordinator system was needed to ensure its success; failing that, setting medium- and long-term goals and establishing partnerships between resident coordinators and host countries would be challenging. Lastly, the involvement of programme countries was indeed vital to ensuring effective implementation.

18. **Mr. Pfeil** (Germany) said that, in recent years, his Government had increased the amount of core funding it provided to a number of United Nations funds and programmes, and that it would endeavour to maintain that trend. There was a need to diversify the donor base, especially for the resident coordinator system, to ensure the sustainability of funding levels and increase the level to the required \$281 million in the years ahead. His delegation was pleased that some of the least developed countries had contributed to the special purpose trust fund.

19. With regard to savings, while efficiencies were not an end in themselves, they were a by-product of United Nations development system reform. In that connection, he asked the panellists how indicator 6 on efficiencies and savings in the context of common premises might be put into practice.

20. **Ms. Fladby** (Norway) said that the funding compact was a welcome opportunity to change the unfortunate way that the United Nations was funded, namely, by moving away from strictly earmarked funding given that such funding could not promote reform or efficiencies on collaboration. Member States and non-State actors alike should consider how they might best contribute to the compact by providing more flexible and predictable funding. The paradox of a broader donor base and a spike in earmarking should be explored in greater depth. She would appreciate hearing the views of the resident coordinators present at the meeting on how the country-level commitments in the funding compact would benefit their role.

21. **Ms. Bhatia** (Senior Adviser on Strategic Partnerships, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), noting the small proportion of system-wide entities with gender policies, financing for gender equality and gender outcomes, said

that ensuring coherence between the strategic plans of each entity and the system-wide strategic plan on a given issue would present a challenge. Smaller agencies faced difficulties in having their voices heard when working at the inter-agency level. She asked the resident coordinators what mechanisms were in place through the management and accountability framework and what incentives could be provided through the performance system and the recruitment system to guarantee that resident coordinators were bringing the whole of the United Nations development system to the country dialogue and reflecting all the country's development aspirations in the overall work programme.

22. **Mr. Harris** (Chief Economist and Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development) said that the widespread support for widening the donor base was encouraging. However, the discussion of core versus non-core funding had not addressed the reasons for and aims of earmarking, which reflected more than a simple lack of confidence in the development system. It was easier to articulate accountability if it was clear from the outset how tax money would be used, given that donors themselves were held accountable to parliaments and citizens for said use. It was incumbent upon donors and the United Nations system to make the argument that achieving the Goals was a shared objective to which all stakeholders should aspire and contribute. Ultimately, earmarking could not be reduced definitively until its root causes were fully understood; he wondered whether there was something that the United Nations development system could do to make the practice less attractive to donors.

23. **Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom) said that results, while important, were not always quantifiable, hence the need to avoid fetishizing measurement. Parliaments and taxpayers had expectations, but owing to the difficulties of operating in certain environments, things seldom went according to plan. Over 50 per cent of ODA contributed by the United Kingdom was spent in fragile or conflict-affected countries, a deliberate decision reflecting the trend of the previous decade. Aware of the challenges that came with that decision, his Government had worked on measuring results in innovative ways. He hoped that the resident coordinators could give accurate feedback on the results of activities on the ground. However Member States and the United Nations system decided to approach funding, efficiency – defined as the most effective spend to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals in programme countries – should be the overarching goal for agencies and Member States alike. A whole-of-United Nations approach that encouraged widespread contributions to voluntary

funding of the resident coordinator system would foster a sense of collective ownership in that system, underscoring the importance of every Member State's commitment.

24. **Mr. Reddy** (Associate Professor of Economics at The New School for Social Research and former member of the Independent Team of Advisors to the Economic and Social Council Dialogue) said that the discussion brought to light two possible interpretations of the purpose that efficiencies and accountability served to accomplish, namely, to make it possible to do more with existing resources, or to give credibility to how resources were spent so that additional resources could be justified. The second interpretation was easier to reconcile with the 2030 Agenda, given that it was acknowledged that the Agenda would require additional resources on a substantial scale. If additionality demanded greater efficiency and accountability as a prerequisite, it would be possible to square an agenda that required additional resources with the push to avoid additionality.

25. **Ms. Sinanoglu** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that savings were being achieved but had not yet been sufficiently publicized or shared with donors, hence the need for further efforts in that regard. In her experience, one argument against earmarked funding was the manner in which it drew efforts away from programme country priorities to tend to those of other donors and Member States. The funding compact and non-earmarked funding would make it possible to align efforts more closely with national priorities. Moreover, developing various separate projects entailed an enormous cost in terms of time and labour – with no guarantee of successful completion – as did reporting on and evaluating those projects, responding to queries and maintaining staff for that purpose; conversely, moving towards non-earmarked funding would make it possible to overcome such hidden costs.

26. **Mr. Lazzarini** (United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Lebanon) said that the funding compact was good news for United Nations country teams and constituted a mutual commitment between Member States, donors, host countries and the United Nations system. As such, it would require behavioural change in the modes of engagement. First, national priorities must be given primacy. When contributing to implementing national priorities under the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, engagement between donors and the United Nations should fall under that framework, making it possible to break

existing silos and to abandon the project approach that had become a comfort zone in recent years. Second, incentives for such a joint approach must be given. For the time being, funding at the country level was completely fragmented, and communication on a given project under way was erratic. Strategic dialogue under the cooperation framework and agreement on needs and priorities would help to support the joint approach. In that regard, pooled funding was a possible response but not the only one.

27. **Mr. Jacquand** (United Nations Development System Transition Team) said that the United Nations development system had not provided Member States with the clear picture they expected of ongoing efforts by resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to achieve efficiency gains. The current focus was on achieving those gains through existing resources and efforts before seeking other types of support.

28. The transition team was sparing no effort to implement the levy fully, regardless of any particular State's collection method; nevertheless, it appreciated the intent by Sweden to use the at-source method. To date, the United Nations development system had failed to create the right incentives of accountability and visibility for the types of funding it needed. The funding compact contained a number of very concrete commitments on the part of the United Nations to provide the same kind of accountability and visibility for core and pooled resources in particular.

*Panel discussion: "Aligning system-wide and entity-level governance for better accountability"*

29. **Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), moderator, said that the current panel discussion provided an opportunity to highlight issues on operational activities that were relevant to the executive boards and governing bodies of the United Nations development system.

30. **Mr. Cho** Tae-yul (President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations), panellist, said that the current meeting was both timely and relevant, as insufficient attention had been devoted to strengthening system-wide coherence and accountability, which was at the heart of the overall reform package. One issue was the limited level of interaction, not only among individual governing bodies, but also between the Council and the General Assembly.

31. Earlier that year he had met with the President of the General Assembly and other governing bodies to discuss issues of common interest. Those meetings had demonstrated that the lack of communication between the different governing bodies could create trust issues. More regular interaction between all the individual governing bodies and the Council would strengthen system-wide coherence and coordination.

32. The Secretary-General's recommendations were very useful in helping governing bodies to report to the Council on the steps they had taken to implement the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the resolution on the United Nations development system. They were particularly beneficial to smaller, non-resident agencies that had few opportunities to interact with the Council, but that could make major contributions to the implementation of the development system reform. However, such agencies were cautious and did not wish to appear to be competing with other larger agencies. While their policies were not well known or valued in the United Nations system, they could be extremely useful. Their active engagement and the showcasing of their achievements would benefit the entire system.

33. The Secretary-General's recommendations to help annual reviews focus more on specific challenges in operational development activities were also useful. One of his priorities as President of the Executive Board was to make it a forum for a more strategic, interactive and substantive dialogue, including on the peace-development-humanitarian nexus, which should enable more focused annual reviews of the Council.

34. With regard to the progress made on the working methods of the Executive Board, the Secretary-General's original proposal on a slower and more gradual merger of all the executive boards had yet to materialize. However, significant progress was being made to scale up joint activities, with the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards serving as a platform for discussion on common issues. Nonetheless, that meeting should not overlap with the functions of each executive board, nor infringe upon their oversight function. Lastly, holding the Council's annual operational activities for development segment so close to the annual session of the Executive Board might not leave enough time for discussions at the Council to feed into Board meetings.

35. **Ms. von Steiger** (Deputy Head for Global Cooperation of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation), panellist, said that, in a system with myriad governance tiers, ensuring that all the main principles of governance were respected was a huge challenge. Nevertheless, time and time again the United

Nations development system generated impact on the ground. Impact in the field should therefore be examined when considering how system-wide accountability could be improved, looking at what already existed, what should be strengthened and what still needed to be done.

36. Accountability at the country level had been strengthened through reporting to the Secretary-General and through the Management and Accountability Framework, which was an improvement of the governance arrangements. Accreditation of resident coordinators by Member States should be expedited. The new United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) were an important next step, their guidelines key to ensuring that the United Nations supported the host country in implementing the 2030 Agenda, with the development system as custodian of the universal norms and values.

37. The coordination frameworks were key and should enable country teams to rally around a set of strategic priorities and produce more joined-up responses for sustainable development at the national level for the benefit of those facing inequalities, poverty and exclusion. They were also an instrument for accountability, as was the recruitment process for resident coordinators. The process was centred on identifying the right skill set and shifting away from the hierarchical nature of the United Nations to make it a more agile institution. Lines of accountability between the regional level and the national and global levels should be strengthened. A pragmatic approach should be taken in strengthening the regional tier, drawing on the work of existing regional entities and bodies.

38. Significant progress had been made in terms of reform at the United Nations, despite its complex governance structure. However, for the reform to be effective and to serve the collective good, more needed to be done. Notably, the resources put into the system must be used effectively and efficiently. Overlaps must be addressed and removed so that the capacities, resources and assets could be deployed where the Organization's impact was greatest.

39. The comparative advantage of the United Nations development system must be the starting point of support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, the system-wide strategic document was important and should address the division of labour and implications at the operational level. It was up to Member States to guide the system, or otherwise risk further fragmentation.

40. A culture shift was necessary in the executive boards to allow each part to play its role in supporting

Member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to enable synergies and connections to form between the different parts. Removing bureaucratic obstacles and improving efficiencies was also necessary. The link between the Chief Executive Board and the Council still seemed weak. And yet, the Board could be used to ensure accountability and should be a forum for discussion of collective performance against the system-wide strategic document at the global level.

41. **Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), panellist, said that the governance of the operational activities of the United Nations development system was critical to the success of the repositioning process and to ensuring the impact of its work on the 2030 Agenda. It allowed Member States to give directions to the system, to oversee their implementation and to hold the system accountable.

42. Despite the clear, three-tier structure of the governance architecture, the system operated in a fairly decentralized way. For example, the governing bodies of individual entities often worked in a relatively independent manner compared to the General Assembly and the Council. Over the years, Member States had stressed the need to improve the governance of the development system so that the bodies interacted better with each other. The purpose was to ensure that clear directions were being provided by the General Assembly, that effective oversight was ensured by the Council and that there was full implementation, further guidance and accountability by the governing bodies.

43. In order to improve governance, it was critical to ensure that the work of the General Assembly and the Council was based on solid evidence, evaluation and analysis. The indicator framework for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review was particularly important in that regard, as was the information gathered in the surveys with programme countries and country teams by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The monitoring framework and the surveys would be further updated for the preparation of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

44. It was also necessary to improve the functioning of the Council's operational activities segment as an accountability platform. The Secretary-General's proposal to establish a multi-year programme of work for the operational activities segment could allow the Council to conduct more focused reviews of specific dimensions and challenges of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and provide more detailed guidance where it was required. Resolutions could then build on such guidance to lock in effective innovations

and to guide operational activities for development in all their aspects. Other measures were required to maximize impact; the current session should seek to develop ideas in that regard.

45. The governing bodies of specific entities must continue to actively follow up on decisions of the General Assembly and of the Council. The programming of the activities of individual entities and the reporting lines of their country representatives must support the leadership role of the resident coordinator.

46. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review should be used to take measures that truly improved the governance of operational activities in order to maximize their impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. Engagement of Member States at the current session would be greatly beneficial in following up on the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

47. **Ms. Shackelford** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Costa Rica) said that the linkages between the Council and the executive boards needed strengthening. There should also be a shift from an individual-agency approach to an integrated and multidimensional one. In that process, it was important to look at the bigger picture, considering how each agency could work better with others to serve countries in working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Accountability was also necessary, by looking at issues not only in relation to agency-specific mandates but more broadly, taking into consideration the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, it was important for country programme documents to have a common chapter. Lastly, the issues relating to recruitment applied not only to resident coordinators but also to country team members.

48. **Ms. Sinanoglu** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that she had not heard much with regard to specialized agencies and governing bodies, even though their impact on the work of resident coordinators was very important. The reform was very positive in the sense that UNDAFs had gained significant importance and much more primacy than before. However, it was the issues and topics and the needs and priorities of countries that should dictate UNDAFs and not necessarily the agencies. That concept should also be embraced at the executive board level. If an agency was mandated a specific topic, that did not mean that it could not be shared by a number of agencies that could also contribute to that area. Unfortunately, certain topics were not shared on the ground; the common chapters would be beneficial in addressing that issue. Common texts were currently being developed

across the Balkan countries for common issues in that region; such documents would also be useful in the executive boards.

49. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that while the Group recognized the role of the Council as an accountability platform, it should not undermine the General Assembly as the main body for strategic guidance and oversight of the United Nations development system. The Group was therefore not in favour of the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report for the General Assembly to adopt resolutions on the development system only when it conducted the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and for the Council to adopt the resolutions during the interim years.

50. **Mr. Dewar Viscarra** (Mexico) said that he wished to know how long the period between the operational activities for development segment and the annual session of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) should be according to the President of the Executive Board.

51. Mexico fully supported the Secretary-General's proposal for a General Assembly resolution on the development system only when it conducted the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and for a Council resolution on the implementation of the General Assembly guidance only in the years when there was no quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Capacities were stretched and the last two General Assembly resolutions had not added much value. He asked Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, whether implementation of that proposal would have any implications for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for example in the production of reports in years in which there was no quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Lastly, he asked how the empowerment of the resident coordinators was helping in terms of their interaction with all agencies.

52. **Ms. Klaus** (Observer for the European Union) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal for a General Assembly resolution on the development system only when the Assembly conducted the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and for the Council to adopt the resolutions in the other years. That measure would strengthen efficiencies and avoid duplication, which was a common objective. Her delegation further agreed that the operational activities segment must be more efficient but requested more



information on the proposal to establish a multi-year programme and its implications.

53. There was a need to improve reporting to better inform the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review negotiations; more extensive and qualitative reporting on targets was also required. Many of the Secretary-General's reports did not necessarily cover all the mandates given by the quadrennial comprehensive policy review in sufficient depth. Her delegation looked forward to the briefing on the progress of the long-awaited reform of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its information note mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. The latter should address the need to strengthen efficiencies and avoid overlap and should show transparent results of the mapping of resources and their use and allocation.

54. **Ms. Leyva Regueira** (Observer for Cuba) said that the General Assembly played an important role as strategic guide for operational activities. Her delegation rejected the Secretary-General's proposal on the timing of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and by the Council. While the operational activities segment was valuable and should be strengthened and supported by Member States, it was the General Assembly that should follow up on its own mandates. There were notable overlaps between the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards and the operational activities segment, but the system should be guided by the latter, rather than giving decision-making powers to the Executive Board.

55. While there had been discussion on the need to strengthen exchanges between Member States and entities on the ground with entities of the development system, including the specialized agencies, opportunities for interaction were not being seized. The annual report of the Development Coordination Office was highly important for Cuba. The operational activities segment was an important forum for understanding and discussing the work of resident coordinators. Information could also be transmitted through the operational activities segment on the United Nations Sustainable Development Group as well as the regional economic commissions with regard to implementation methods and how they gave impetus to joint work at the regional level.

56. **Mr. Cho** Tae-yul (President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations) said that the timing of the operational activities segment and the annual session of

the Executive Board had been arranged by the Secretariat in accordance with the recommendations made in the resolution of that year, leaving only a couple of days between each meeting. In order for discussions from the Council to feed into the Board meetings effectively, at least two weeks between the two would be beneficial.

57. With regard to the newly empowered role of resident coordinators, while it was still too early to see any concrete plans or outcomes, he asked whether a road map for the implementation of the ongoing reform of the development system existed. It appeared that the sense of urgency in New York in relation to the reform was not fully shared on the ground.

58. **Ms. von Steiger** (Deputy Head for Global Cooperation of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation) said that there should be more time between the operational activities segment and the annual session of the Executive Board.

59. Agencies needed to work together more on strategies and adopt an issue-based approach. While there were two levels, that of the Executive Boards and that of individual agencies, the common chapter should be used. The coordination framework, the 2030 Agenda and the issue-based approach through the resident coordinators provided the means to rally agencies around common issues and their common responsibility. An overarching vision was required, with which specialists must be familiar, but agencies must also have specific mandates which they were capable of carrying out. The Executive Boards could be put to good use in that regard. However, an entire revolution with a change in the governance structure would not be possible as the system had grown organically.

60. **Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) said that General Assembly resolution [72/305](#) had provided a new road map for organizing the timing of meetings in clusters. She asked whether it would be possible to change the timing of the meetings of the Executive Boards rather than those of the Council, which were mandated by Member States.

61. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Secretary-General's proposal had been made in clear recognition of the fact that Member States retained prerogatives for the adoption of resolutions whenever they deemed necessary, whether in the General Assembly or in the Council. The proposal had also arisen from complaints by Member States about duplication in the resolutions of the two bodies. Both the General Assembly and the Council were Charter bodies composed of Member States, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the two

bodies must be enhanced. Decision-making powers ultimately lay with Member States; the Secretariat would follow their guidance throughout the process.

62. Improving the operational activities segment was important for the repositioning of the development system and had been covered in General Assembly resolution [72/305](#). It was an issue not only for Member States, but also for United Nations agencies, particularly for entities involved in operational activities. The operational activities segment offered an opportunity for Member States to listen to the operational activities agencies and to formulate related guidance.

63. The Secretary-General's proposal on the repositioning of the development system, including the improvement of operational activities, aimed to support Member States in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The objective to make the segment more effective, substantive, interactive and action-oriented was mutual; all parties should therefore be united in working towards its achievement.

64. Indicators were fundamental to discussions and evaluations of the quadrennial comprehensive policy reviews and for the preparation of future reviews. To that end, four categories of surveys would be carried out over the coming months, with Member States, the headquarters of United Nations entities, country teams and the resident coordinators. Conducting surveys with the resident coordinators was new and would provide insight into how they would coordinate at the country level with country teams. It would allow Member States to offer advice and suggestions on how to improve the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

65. As a department of the Secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was mandated to support the General Assembly, the Council and the development system, including in the preparation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review report. Its reform should therefore aim to strengthen the role of the Secretariat in its support of Member States and the Council.

66. **Ms. Sinanoglu** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that there was a sense of urgency on the ground that had been conveyed from Headquarters and embraced by the resident coordinators. The road map was not set out on paper as developments were currently very organic in nature: some decisions were made and then implemented by the resident coordinators, but other times decisions were delayed, so the direction was not always clear. Nonetheless, an inherent road map existed, originating with the Sustainable Development Goals and developing into transition plans and more recently into

different workstreams, bringing more clarity to the management accountability framework and standard operating procedures. In certain countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, further progress had been made in terms of business operations angles and the most prominent element of the road map was the common country assessment for UNDAFs. It was important for such workstreams to be defined more clearly as part of the reform, but they were defined in different forms such as in the country team work plans.

67. **Ms. Shackelford** (United Nations Resident Coordinator for Costa Rica) said that the focus was on accelerating strategies for the Sustainable Development Goals and coordination in that area. That should include not only dialogue with Member States and host countries on national priorities, but also the use of instruments such as the universal periodic review, with recommendations to Governments and countries to work together. Strengthening the messages transmitted from the Headquarters level to the ground level was also necessary.

68. **Ms. Mohammed** (Deputy Secretary-General) said that, through the operational activities for development segment, the Council had lived up to the renewed expectations placed on it as a platform for accountability on system-wide results. Member States had evaluated the progress of joint efforts to reposition the United Nations development system to better support the 2030 Agenda within the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

69. Over the previous three days, progress in the implementation of all mandates granted to the United Nations development system had been assessed. Appreciation had been expressed for the steady pace of implementation and early achievements that included the successful transition at the start of the year to a new resident coordinator system. The resident coordinator system was the cornerstone and key enabler for deep transformation across the United Nations development system.

70. Member States had considered additional proposals by the Secretary-General and shared their initial positions on those critical mandates, in addition to holding the United Nations development system accountable on mandates that required further progress, such as delivering a robust system-wide strategic document.

71. For its part, the United Nations development system had engaged with a spirit of full transparency and a great sense of responsibility to deliver better results, candidly outlining natural challenges in its transformative journey, with the participation of heads

of agencies and first-hand accounts from resident coordinators. The leadership and engagement of Member States were most welcome, and their feedback would be heeded carefully and would enable the system to forge ahead with implementation and take corrective measures where better outcomes were needed.

72. She emerged from the segment with an ever-clearer vision on the positions and expectations of Member States on areas that would require a deeper focus moving forward, especially at the country level. The expectations of Member States for the next operational activities for development segment in a year's time were clear, as was her understanding that there was a need to continue moving forward together on the journey, in a continuous dialogue, until the aspirations behind those mandates were reached.

73. The strong support of Member States for the new Development Coordination Office was greatly appreciated. Key ingredients were in place for the beginnings of a step change in the way United Nations country teams operated, with greater impact, cohesiveness and accountability. She welcomed the keen interest of Member States in the development of the system's planning and administrative tools that would support the transition on the ground.

74. Member States would be kept fully informed as the guidelines for the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks were finalized and the regional and global level components of the management and accountability framework went ahead. Every effort would be made to deliver on the commitment to track and redeploy efficiency gains towards development priorities, in close partnership with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

75. She welcomed the positive comments regarding the funding compact – an essential tool for mutual accountability to provide the necessary incentives for the United Nations development system to be more collaborative and impactful – as well as the feedback provided on the Secretary-General's recommendations to strengthen the impact of regional assets and multi-country offices. The recommendations had arisen from thorough analysis and extensive consultations and reflected the system's best effort to better service the 2030 Agenda.

76. The efforts under way were complex, and no single solution could respond universally to the wide expectations and diverse national and regional contexts of the membership. Acknowledging those delegations that felt that their voices had not been heard, she was acutely aware that further dialogue with Member States

was important to ensure a shared understanding of the way forward. Feedback from Member States had provided further clarity in terms of their expectations. She hoped that the system could count on their backing to sustain the momentum and forge ahead to finally address longstanding bottlenecks affecting the system's ability to maximize the impact of its assets in the regions and multi-country office settings.

77. With Member States' endorsement of the direction of travel, consultations would be initiated immediately with countries covered by multi-country offices to discuss a specific implementation plan that would operationalize the Secretary-General's proposals. A structured dialogue process would be established with Member States to ensure consultations and oversight as the proposals to strengthen the regional response were taken forward on a region-by-region basis.

78. The level of ambition must remain high, and steps forward must be taken in a spirit of mutual trust. Over the previous year, Member States and the system had worked together to implement the most comprehensive reform in the history of the United Nations, leaving the Organization in a much better position. There was a strong willingness and ownership in the system to drive transformation, the new coordination system was in place, resident coordinators were getting on with their work, all mechanics had been put in place to support a new generation of country teams and changes were happening on the ground.

79. She trusted that Member States were reassured about the direction of travel, towards a system that was able and empowered to support countries and people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. She looked forward to taking the next steps on the exciting journey that lay ahead.

#### **Closing of the segment**

80. **Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), summing up, declared the segment closed.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*