



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
12 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 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 21 May 2019, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Ms. King ..... (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)  
*later:* Ms. Azucena (Vice-President) ..... (Philippines)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### Opening of the segment

1. **The President**, opening the operational activities for development segment, said that the presence of high-level representatives demonstrated a deep commitment to improving the support provided by the United Nations system for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The current operational activities segment was highly significant, as it was the first since the adoption of General Assembly resolution [72/305](#) on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. For the first time, there would be formal review and deliberation on the implementation of the mandates for the repositioning of the United Nations development system. It was also the penultimate opportunity for the Council to discuss the implementation of the current quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle and the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution [71/243](#). Those discussions would be undertaken while bearing in mind the critical role of the Council as the platform for Member States to review and ensure oversight and accountability of the United Nations development system. The fulfilment of the Council's critical function in relation to the review would have far-reaching impact. The work of the current segment was also significant as it would feed into the Council's preparations for the next review cycle in 2020.

2. **Ms. Azucena** (Philippines), Vice-President for the operational activities for development segment, said that General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations system provided guidance on the measures that the United Nations development system should take, with the support of Member States, to become more efficient, effective and dynamic so that it could better support countries in advancing towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. During the current segment, the Council was responsible for providing an effective review and accountability platform for the United Nations development system.

3. The 2019 operational activities segment was of particular importance. In addition to discussing progress on the implementation of the policy review, it would be the first opportunity for Member States to voice their views on the work done thus far to reposition the United Nations development system and better support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, through an active and open dialogue on all the issues at stake. The current segment had been structured to address each of the mandates contained in General Assembly resolutions

[71/243](#) and [72/279](#) and would include a dialogue with the executive heads of the United Nations development system and a discussion of ways to strengthen the alignment of system-wide and individual entity governance.

4. The function of the Council, in accordance with the provisions set out in General Assembly resolution [72/305](#), was critical for supporting the General Assembly in its work and shaping the future of the United Nations development system in a manner that fulfilled the expectations of Member States.

5. **The Secretary-General**, delivering his keynote address, said that he welcomed the opportunity to provide an update in the current operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council. His first such report since the landmark General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system was currently before the Council ([A/74/73-E/2019/14](#)). The report outlined progress not only in response to direct mandates of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the resolution, but also on all the measures he was taking to ensure effective, cohesive and accountable support to the 2030 Agenda. That included strengthening internal platforms and tools in the work of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, such as new guidelines for United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and a management and accountability framework that clarified the new relationships between country teams and resident coordinators. Although such measures were not a direct consequence of quadrennial comprehensive policy review resolutions, they would nonetheless be posted on the Organization's websites, in the spirit of transparency. His report also included updates on all mandates and indicators of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which were produced annually by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

6. The beginning of 2019 had marked a new era for the United Nations development system and, as observed in his report, there had been considerable advancements on that transformative journey. There had been the transition to a reinvigorated, independent resident coordinator system, with sustainable development at its core. The Development Coordination Office was up and running, supporting resident coordinators and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Progress was being made in establishing a new generation of country teams that were more integrated, responsible and accountable in

responding to country priorities and needs with updated guidance, instruments and tools.

7. Several adjustments had been made to mechanisms at Headquarters and to tools to incentivize and enable transformative change on the ground. A funding compact had been crafted, hand in hand with Member States, to shift away from funding practices that fragmented action by country teams. United Nations regional assets and multi-country office arrangements had been reviewed and work was being done towards better organization in order to ensure that every country received optimal support to achieve results and meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Significant efforts were being made to bring the system together to enhance efficiencies in operations. Important mechanisms had been put in place to allow country teams to progressively move towards common back offices and common premises wherever possible, as a key instrument of efficiency. A methodology was also being developed to track and report efficiencies in operations.

8. The objective was not to seek savings for their own sake, but rather to strengthen the response to the 2030 Agenda. Every dollar saved could be reinvested in development activities. There was also progression towards strengthening independent, system-wide evaluations, in close consultation with the Joint Inspection Unit and the evaluation units of various United Nations entities. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group had come a long way in the complex task of drafting a system-wide strategic document that responded to the varied needs and expectations of Member States. That document would be finalized in the weeks that followed, in consultation with Member States. He knew that there would be dedicated discussions on all those elements during the segment. The feedback of Member States on the journey so far and on his recommendations for the road ahead remained vital. While the process was complex, fast-moving and far-reaching, he remained absolutely determined to forge ahead with full confidence in the ability to proceed with the same ambition and pace that had marked the journey to date.

9. He was confident because of the clarity in the objectives, which were to ensure that the United Nations development system was well-positioned to help Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda and to be more responsible and accountable to national priorities. National ownership and leadership were and would remain at the centre of efforts. An empowered, development-focused resident coordinator would help to drive an integrated and meaningful response to the priorities and needs of Member States on the ground.

Furthermore, there was a shared sense of urgency, as the world was not moving fast enough to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind, which was the central objective. The race against climate change was also being lost. The financing gap must be filled, drawing on all available public and private sources, so that countries could make focused investments to achieve their goals. No one country or institution could tackle such challenges alone. Working together was crucial. A more cohesive, integrated and accountable United Nations development system was necessary to help countries accelerate action and achieve the transformative change that the world required. There was also a strong sense of political will to rise to the occasion of such a historic opportunity.

10. He was grateful to all Member States for their support. They had agreed on a remarkable global blueprint for sustainable development and a bold and clear General Assembly resolution to usher in the most ambitious reform process in the history of the United Nations. They had also shown unity of purpose across the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Fifth Committee and the governing bodies of the United Nations development system. Furthermore, they had consistently voiced support for the reforms in their bilateral engagement with entities of the system. Several Member States had already contributed to the special purpose trust fund in support of the resident coordinator system, which had allowed the transition to occur as planned, although a funding gap remained in sustaining the resident coordinator system capacities beyond 2019. The 1 per cent levy was starting to materialize and should help to bridge the gap. Resources should be yielded from the levy as of the following month. He continued to encourage every Member State to contribute.

11. The resident coordinator system belonged to everyone and a wide funding base was essential. He was grateful to all entities of the United Nations development system for their support and engagement. A smooth operational transition to a new resident coordinator system would not have been possible without the remarkable dedication of colleagues in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Secretariat. The timely cost-sharing contributions of the United Nations development system had been decisive and would remain so moving forward. He was grateful for the decisive leadership demonstrated by the Chairs of the governing bodies of United Nations entities across the world.

12. The current momentum must be maintained. The reforms belonged to Member States and the

transformations under way aimed to meet their aspirations. The investments made in the United Nations development system would yield better results and greater transparency. Most importantly, shared efforts would have a stronger impact on the lives of the people that the system served. With that in mind, he had brought forward further proposals to reposition the system and meet the ambitions set by Member States. Those proposals were the result of an open and transparent process, marked by extensive consultations within and beyond the United Nations system. They were informed by a wide array of technical inputs and recommendations from Member States, entities of the United Nations development system, think tanks and other stakeholders.

13. He was counting on Member States to endorse the proposed way forward in four specific areas. The first area was to improve multi-country offices. He had offered a set of concrete proposals, with a clear road map for their implementation. He would continue to consult with all countries concerned to operationalize the proposals, particularly through discussions on how best to strengthen the presence and capacities of the system. The second area involved revamping regional assets. He would welcome feedback from Member States on the core transformative areas put forward in his report. Implementation would be tailored to each region through an open and consultative change management process of the United Nations system. The inputs of Member States would continue to be sought as that process unfolded. Thirdly, he looked forward to the endorsement of the funding compact by the Council, which would send a strong signal of mutual trust. The compact was the product of a truly collaborative process and symbolized the spirit of collective responsibility that was at the core of the reforms. Fourthly, he looked forward to the feedback of Member States during the collaborative work to finalize the system-wide strategic document. As an exercise, it would be the first of its kind and it must be done right.

14. The changes proposed to the regional architecture, multi-country offices and funding base were critical to maximize the impact of the reforms. All the elements were interlinked and mutually reinforcing. He trusted that the informal sessions held prior to the Council meetings had helped to clarify some points. As the document was being finalized, the membership would continue to be consulted. To move forward, continuing to work hand in hand was necessary. There had been significant achievements thanks to partnership and unity of purpose. Together, the international community had made progress that many deemed impossible. Together, they had found common ground and together they were

implementing change at a pace and on a scale that was unprecedented. They were doing so because the challenges facing the world demanded no less. It was only through collective action that increasingly complex global crises, threats that knew no borders, the race against climate change, financial uncertainty and pervasive inequalities could be tackled.

15. The international community must proceed with the same determination and mutual trust for people and the planet. The 2030 Agenda offered the best chance to change the world and ensure a future of prosperity, peace and dignity for all. He called upon the Council to renew its commitment to action and take bold decisions on the remaining mandates of what was a transformative journey.

16. **Ms. Kaba** (Guinea), discussant, said that, in the light of the Secretary-General's concrete proposals and recommendations on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, it was clear that a crucial phase had been reached. While his bold reforms should be given all necessary support, she recalled that decision-making processes in any institution were slow to change and thus there remained a need for pragmatism and realistic expectations. Achieving consistency, effectiveness and efficiency were complex endeavours, particularly in the case of a development system that had grown organically over almost a century, with agencies, funds and programmes that had not always evolved in tandem. However, real progress had been made since the start of the year, when the new resident coordinator system had been operationalized and the funding compact had been endorsed. The new approach towards the repositioning of the development system required leaders at Headquarters that could identify common objectives and priorities, mobilize partners and promote national ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals. With the continued support of the Council, she had no doubt that the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General would be successful in their reform efforts.

17. The United Nations development system had come to the rescue during critical and challenging moments in the lives of nations, addressing crises to help to build resilience and redirect the States concerned on the road towards sustainable development. A striking example was the response of the United Nations to the Ebola crisis in her country, demonstrating the power of united, coordinated and integrated action. It had shown how good governance, financial generosity, support and well-designed organizational responses could ensure that critical situations were addressed in a timely manner. She hoped that example would serve as a

standard for solutions that were in national interests, made possible by rapid, effective action supported by an integrated United Nations team that offered a range of responses. With renewed political will and the necessary support, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals could contribute to combating extreme poverty in the world.

18. The challenges facing humanity could only be addressed by the United Nations. That was why a change in the culture of the Organization was necessary, as generic models did not consider the specific contexts and realities. Regeneration of the development system was necessary, enabling it to fulfil the ambitions of the new development agenda and the promise to leave no one behind.

19. **Mr. Bessho** (Japan) said that his delegation strongly supported the reforms in their aim to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the development system. A unified United Nations was a very powerful entity with great potential. Japan had followed the progress of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, which was a central pillar of the reform, and had heard some mixed messages. In some cases, information sharing between the resident coordinators and United Nations agencies had increased; in others, the establishment of the dual reporting system between the resident coordinators and United Nations funds and programmes was a challenge, as were communications between them. Even stronger leadership from the Secretary-General would ensure that the Organization was unified in its actions.

20. He welcomed efforts by the Business Innovation Group to harmonize administrative procedures and increase the proportion of United Nations common premises. While a certain level of investment was necessary at the early stages of the reform, that investment should ultimately be recovered and result in savings in the medium and long term. Japan was committed to realizing efficiency gains and looked forward to the finalization of the system-wide strategic document. Japan also welcomed recent partnerships with institutions such as the World Bank and the African Union and looked forward to their expansion.

21. With regard to the multi-country office review, his country supported the Secretary-General's policy to take measures to ensure that small island developing States were not left behind. To that end, he asked how financing could be secured, including the establishment of a multi-country office in the North Pacific and the deployment of additional professional staff.

22. **Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom) said that his country had committed another \$11.5 million over the following two years to the resident coordinator system special purpose trust fund, in addition to almost \$6 million pledged the previous year. Turning to the improvement of collaboration between peacebuilding, development and humanitarian actors, he asked what measures could be taken by the United Nations to put the right structures in place for effective joint analysis before the outbreak of conflict. A particular focus should be placed on that area by the resident coordinators. He also asked how such an approach could be taken beyond the United Nations itself to improve cooperation with international financial institutions.

23. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) said that resident coordinators must be independent and accountable for work across country teams in order to provide them with effective leadership. They also needed to make country team agencies flexible and able to respond quickly to changing needs on the ground. They would therefore need the support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the Development Coordination Office, which should resist centralized, one-size-fits-all policies. His delegation would be following progress on cost efficiency closely. The promised cost savings must be realized; otherwise, the reforms would lose all credibility and donor support would erode. He asked what the Secretariat could do to maintain cost efficiency.

24. **Mr. de la Fuente Ramirez** (Mexico) said that the 2030 Agenda had served as a model for the creation of the national development plan in Mexico and that his country was committed to advancing both in tandem. At the regional level, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean had been working in a coordinated, effective manner. Under its leadership in Mexico, a project was under way to address complex phenomena such as migration more effectively. The major challenge lay in the alignment of national efforts with the local coordination of United Nations agencies and a regional cooperation framework.

25. **Mr. Chumakov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation remained committed to engaging in discussions on reforms and on sources of financing. The reports under consideration focused more on the reforms and provided less information on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. More details on the national capacity-building efforts under way to achieve sustainable development would be particularly welcome as the statistical information in the current reports did not shed much light on that area. It was probably too early to judge whether the high

number of administrative officers requested for the Development Coordination Office was necessary. While trust was placed in the Secretary-General on that matter, there should also be regular review of such requirements.

26. **Mr. Hermann** (Denmark) said that continued roll-out of reforms was both necessary and urgent if the development system was to be in a position to help Member States deliver the Sustainable Development Goals for the people. As reflected in the new quadrennial comprehensive policy review report, partnership was vital, not only for funding but also for bringing new knowledge and methodologies to the table, involving all parts of society in development efforts.

27. Welcoming the update on the interlinkages between development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding, which were essential in helping countries move from crisis to development, he asked how the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration and the relevant agencies and units would approach such work in future.

28. Reforms of the development system must not leave cross-cutting issues behind, as they were essential for sustainable development. The year 2019 was a key moment for reform, which required the full engagement of all parts of the development system. Denmark would continue to support the reforms both politically and financially, in New York and at the country level.

29. **Mr. Umarov** (Observer for Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan firmly supported the core values of the Secretary-General to create a renewed development system that relied on transparency, accountability and a truly collaborative approach. A multilateral approach was key in order to forge economic growth and integration between countries and regions.

30. Crises and conflicts were not usually contained within the boundaries of geographical divisions. Collaboration was therefore necessary to see how a country-specific approach could be changed to a more regional approach, in order to tackle transboundary problems effectively. He asked whether there were any established practices or mechanisms to ensure that resident coordinators worked collaboratively when tackling the transboundary challenges of neighbouring countries. He also wondered whether there were plans to undertake any further steps to bring a more regional and interregional approach to the United Nations principle of “Delivering as one”, for example, through the introduction of regional resident coordinators.

31. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that the Secretary-General had taken very bold steps to reform both the

peace and security pillar and the development pillar. She asked whether systematic steps were being taken to unite those two streams of reform in mission settings and wondered whether the Secretary-General considered a strategic framework with overarching goals to be a feasible method for responding to calls for a whole-of-system approach. She also asked whether the delegation of authority could be a major instrument for better collaboration between the peace and security pillar and the development pillar in the countries concerned.

32. **Mr. Xu Zhongsheng** (China) said that, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, the development system reform was driving progress in the resident coordinator system, the funding compact, cost-sharing initiatives and the coordination levy. All relevant parties should find a way to strengthen regional organizations, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, so that regional economic commissions could play a major role in the economic development of their regions. Meanwhile, at Headquarters level, the relevant departments should fulfil their role in terms of data statistics and policy support so as to provide better coordination between Headquarters and field systems and at the regional level.

33. With regard to the new resident coordinator system and country teams, the opinions of Member States should be heeded to provide better support, particularly to the programme countries, to enable them to develop their own development paths that corresponded to their own conditions. China continued to support reforms that would better help countries to address development deficits, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the 2030 Agenda on time.

34. **Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland) said that, to be effective, the United Nations must be clear and coherent in both policy and programmatic terms, which in turn required funding and effective coordination. The country-led, national ownership aspects of the report were fundamental to the success of the reforms.

35. The regional architecture was an ongoing source of concern, both within the Council and in other United Nations forums. She asked how to ensure that work was rooted in a truly regional-based approach, which had shown significant success, for example in the Peacebuilding Commission. Such an approach should not be lost in moving forward with the transformed development system. Multi-country offices were the first port of call for many communities. She asked how the financial, political and human resources needed to carry out complex work in remote areas could be

guaranteed, particularly to small island developing States.

36. The normative work that took into account human rights and gender equality must continue to be the bedrock of all United Nations development efforts during the delivery of the reform process. The issue of silos appeared at times to be most present in New York itself. She encouraged frank contributions from resident coordinators on what worked on the ground, as the impact of the development system in that context was what actually mattered and what enabled the Organization to be competitive.

37. **Ms. Hamdouni** (Morocco) said that it was important to adopt a gradual, action- and results-oriented approach that responded to the real challenges faced by developing countries at the current implementation stage. Adequate funding for sustainable development was a crucial dimension for the success of the transition and should be seen as a real tool for improving the development system.

38. Raising awareness of the resident coordinator system and supporting the new resident coordinators and their teams was highly important. She asked how the challenges on the ground could be translated into opportunities for action and innovation through the newly appointed resident coordinators. With regard to the repositioning of the development system, the strength and value of the regional platforms for intergovernmental consultations were crucial. A paradigm shift was necessary to accelerate the path towards sustainable development.

39. **Mr. Fox-Drummond Gough** (Brazil) said that the interactive nature of the current session allowed for a better exchange of ideas among delegations and a more direct, focused discussion. The repositioning of the development system was necessary for the United Nations to deliver more and to work more effectively towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Organization had delivered on a number of important issues, including through the implementation of General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#) and [72/279](#). Nonetheless, some mandates were still either pending or required additional discussion with Member States, particularly programme countries. Detailed information on the new United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) would be the foundation upon which country documents, local presence and targets should be built. A strategy for closer communications with local governments, led by the resident coordinators, should also be considered.

40. While it was still too early to discuss the impact of the new resident coordinator system on the ground, the revised management and accountability framework should be finalized and circulated to Member States as a matter of urgency. That document was central to the work of the new resident coordinators, in terms of their mutual accountability with country teams and their relationship with local governments. The development system should also strive to maintain the momentum of further engaging South-South and triangular initiatives.

41. **Ms. Leyva Regueira** (Observer for Cuba) said that the report of the Secretary-General was a step forward in the implementation of the relevant resolutions. The gradual overhaul of the system, in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and its mandates, was welcome. Country presence and assistance for countries in special situations must be maintained during the repositioning process, which should be carried out in a flexible, inclusive manner. National priorities must also be respected and national ownership of internal processes safeguarded, particularly through the work of the resident coordinators and the country teams, in the light of the changes taking place in relation to UNDAFs. The review of the country offices and the regional approach were both highly important; Cuba would remain open to further discussing the proposals in those areas. With regard to regional reform, it was important to strengthen the mechanisms of the entities at the regional level, particularly the regional economic commissions. All proposals should strengthen the commissions so that they could effectively fulfil their mandates. Lastly, there should be effective implementation of the funding compact, as well as further dialogue on the strategic document, which could promote support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

42. **Ms. von Steiger Weber** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the strong leadership of the Secretary-General was key to maintaining momentum in the implementation of the reforms. The United Nations should use its unique position as the holder and promoter of universal norms and values, which required a collective effort in ensuring peace and development. Switzerland was keen to show its support in that joint endeavour.

43. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador) said that the operational activities segments had served to strengthen and reinvigorate the Council through its analysis of policies within the United Nations development system. All the teams involved had been working tirelessly to ensure the mandates contained in the previous year's resolution had been fulfilled or presented for discussion

at the current segment. The establishment of clear timelines would be welcome, for example on UNDAF guidance, country programme documents for all agencies and the redefinition of United Nations country teams. A consistent understanding of timelines and processes between the Secretariat, missions, people on the ground and agencies would be beneficial. He asked how all agencies, including those not traditionally considered to be part of the development system, could be integrated into joint efforts and be part of a deeper discussion.

44. **The Secretary-General**, responding to the questions posed, said that there were mixed messages from teams on the ground, but that there were also mixed realities. People were not used to effective coordination, transparency and accountability, and so there was resistance. There had been a very good level of cooperation among the top management of the different entities, a surprising level of commitment at the ground level, but a lot of resistance at the mid-level. There were cases in certain agencies in which regional directors had discouraged involvement with local people. Such resistance must therefore be overcome, and was being addressed systematically, on a case-by-case basis. As the former head of an agency himself, he affirmed that people were not used to working in the new way proposed and it would take time to ensure that it was done effectively.

45. While the mutual accountability framework had been completed the previous week, it had been a very difficult document to agree upon. It was important for Member States to have a clear understanding of how challenging it was to change the culture in which everyone was used to operating. But there was also complete determination to overcome the resistance and problems faced and he would be extremely persistent in doing so.

46. During the most recent meeting of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, all problems had been put on the table to ensure progress, and to enable those on the periphery to enter the system. He was extremely grateful to Member States in the different governing bodies, as they gave a very strong message to the different organizations that they needed to be part of the common effort.

47. Cost efficiencies were extremely important and there were areas in which meaningful efficiencies could be obtained, including common premises, common back offices and in relation to the new characteristics of UNDAFs. He had seen many UNDAFs in the past and had even participated in many as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Most involved cutting and

past; agencies would present their own papers, which would then be assembled and delivered as UNDAFs. As such, it was impossible to avoid overlaps, meaning clear duplications with different agencies doing similar work, funded by different entities and leading to a waste of resources. The priority was cooperation, rather than assistance. UNDAFs should be based on inspiration from the different programmes to avoid duplication, thereby leading to meaningful savings and efficiencies in their delivery.

48. Multi-country offices would receive an increase in human resources, through the repositioning of people from other areas. Several donors in the Pacific region were very interested in supporting the growth of capacity to support Member States. He believed there could be a balance between the increase in resources and the mobilization of support. He agreed on the need for partnership between resident coordinators and country teams, with the support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the Development Coordination Office. The additional commitment of \$11.5 million to the resident coordinator system special purpose trust fund by the United Kingdom was very much welcome.

49. In the past, there had been no connection between peacebuilding, development and humanitarian activities. The Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration was substantially improving work in that regard and making progress, despite the cultural change involved. Notably, the link had been created at the top level. The Peacebuilding Support Office was part of all humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms. For the first time, there was a regional organization that allowed for more effective coordination between the peace and security pillar and the development and humanitarian pillar.

50. Alongside the Human Rights Up Front initiative, there were several mechanisms in place for regular horizon scanning at the national and regional levels, providing the Executive Committee with feedback on which a number of prevention activities were based, sometimes in connection with the Security Council. One particularly strong area for coordination was with international financial institutions, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. There were even mechanisms for the exchange of information to allow earlier detection of some dangerous situations, as economic deterioration was a condition that could lead to other issues. He fully agreed with the points that had been made regarding accountability, flexibility and in



relation to efficiencies, as well as those related to inclusivity.

51. Country teams should be well-coordinated and able to provide support within the framework of national development plans, in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goals as defined in the 2030 Agenda. The coordination mechanisms used by country teams would only be effective if the same coordination mechanisms existed for Governments, to allow the objective of true leadership and national ownership to be fulfilled.

52. Implementing the quadrennial comprehensive policy review was precisely the aim of the reforms. While the main part of the reforms was linked to the review, there were also elements that went beyond its mandates but which were nonetheless referred to in the report as a matter of transparency, including mutual accountability frameworks and the new guidelines on cooperation in the development system. He thanked Member States for their trust, but fully agreed with the need for regular review. In terms of national ownership, support from country teams to Governments in the implementation of national plans would increase the capacity of Member States, creating the conditions for them to be more effective. He agreed that that reforms of the development systems must not leave cross-cutting issues behind.

53. Many delegates had mentioned the question of the regional dimension. The starting point of United Nations regional coordination had been chaos: there had been no common regional approach in the peace and security pillar, as each department had its own regional divisions. The first thing he had done after becoming Secretary-General was to convene the relevant people from each region of the different departments, which had itself been very difficult. However, there was now one person coordinating all the activities of all departments at the regional level, which allowed for a regional linkage between the peace and security pillar and the development and humanitarian pillars. However, in the development pillar, the regional commissions were very different from one another and more efficiency was necessary. For example, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic Commission for Europe looked like two different worlds, with each doing completely different things. The aim was therefore to have regional commissions with similar objectives and to link them with the rest of the structure. He recalled visiting one place in particular where there was one representative of a regional commission and another of a development agency. Although they were working on the same issue, they had never talked to one another.

54. He was currently working to ensure that the regional commissions truly supported the country teams to achieve a mutual objective, which constituted a new approach and a revolution. With the different agencies, each with its different regional divisions and strategies, the reform process was not easy, nor was it in the completion phase; the current report was the first of its kind. For example, it did not address structural issues; structures did indeed need to be re-examined, which would be difficult due to the number of elements, representing a puzzle with completely divergent pieces. But they were committed, as demonstrated by the creation of a regional platform led by the Deputy Secretary-General to ensure that the pieces were put together progressively, in order to overcome the challenges of compatibility on a structural level through functional actions and move forward effectively.

55. He agreed that the current interactive format was beneficial for the exchange of information; that systematic steps were being taken to unite the two streams of his reforms in mission settings; that a strategic framework with common overarching goals was a way forward in responding to the call for a system-wide approach; and that the delegation of authority could be a major instrument for better collaboration between the peace and security pillar and the development pillar in the countries concerned. He also fully agreed that the central question in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals was poverty eradication and affirmed that the reforms were totally in line with the principles of national ownership. With regard to comments on regional architecture, he confirmed that multi-country offices would be involved. It was necessary to increase the capacity to support Member States and to preserve a global coordination mechanism, as certain aspects must be viewed together. The very objective of the mechanisms of accountability and evaluation was to transform challenges into opportunities, as well as to detect where the problems were to transform them into forms of more effective action.

#### **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/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)**

#### *Interactive discussion*

56. *Ms. Azucena (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

57. **Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review provided very strategic guidance and a request for the Secretary-General to outline his vision for repositioning the United Nations development system. As a result, two reports had been submitted by the Secretary-General in 2017 on repositioning the system, followed by the launch of historic reforms in June 2018 to allow the system to support the 2030 Agenda. Almost a year later, notwithstanding the challenging timeline, the Secretary-General had delivered on his commitment, presenting progress and further proposals at the current meeting.

58. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [71/243 \(A/74/73-E/2019/14\)](#) was accompanied by addenda demonstrating the evidence-based implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the early phase of the repositioning process, including the monitoring framework and the funding report. The evidence collected showed that the United Nations development system faced challenges in supporting countries in the elaboration of integrated policies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the previous three years, the voluntary national reviews and the high-level political forum on sustainable development had revealed that many countries needed support in that regard, as anticipated by the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, in which the United Nations development system had been encouraged to respond effectively. The number of countries submitting requests for support in developing integrated policies had increased since 2016. Most notably, requests for support on specific Goals had quadrupled. Despite the rapid increase, country teams had still been able to provide support to 97 per cent of the countries requesting support. However, resident coordinators had indicated that country teams generally provided advice through a coordinated process rather than an integrated one. The strategic results group on integrated Sustainable Development Goal implementation was developing a plan for the provision of an integrated policy support package.

59. The repositioning of the United Nations development system should also facilitate the provision of integrated policy advice and whole-of-system approaches. That applied in particular to strengthening the prerogatives of resident coordinators. Many United Nations development system entities had reported plans to update their procedures in order improve the job description of their country representatives and reflect their revised accountabilities in line with the new

management and accountability framework. That framework would also encourage joint work and collective results. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework was also expected to spur a whole-of-system approach. Member States could further encourage such changes through the various United Nations development system governing bodies.

60. Solid progress was being made in terms of cooperation between development and humanitarian actors. All reporting country teams had made progress in joint work, especially in conflict analysis and programming. Internal policies were being strengthened to deliver integrated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions in the countries concerned. There was also stronger cooperation with the World Bank and the European Commission, underpinned by the revitalization of the Peacebuilding Support Office. A United Nations Sustainable Development Group task team on transition and recovery would reflect on how to make further advances.

61. Three quarters of United Nations development system entities had implemented a common approach with regard to country-level data and statistics. However, only a few of them had strategic plans that included a systematic approach to developing national capacities. Such approaches required sustained, predictable and longer-term funding.

62. The monitoring framework had also shown very solid advances in terms of gender equality, spurred by the adoption of the new system-wide action plan, the standards of which most United Nations entities had either met or exceeded. The two minimum standards that had generally not been met were resource allocation and gender architecture and parity. The updated country team performance indicators on gender equality and the empowerment of women was already being implemented in 24 countries.

63. Both the quantity and quality of funding had a bearing on whether United Nations entities truly adopted a joined-up approach to the Sustainable Development Goals. The need for voluntary resources could fuel competition among agencies and trigger shifts in priorities, leading to incoherencies in the work of the system and gaps in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals. Comprehensive funding analysis by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs showed a mixed picture in terms of the quantity and quality of the funding for operational activities for development. In terms of quantity, there had been robust growth in the overall funding of the United Nations development system over the previous 15 years, with

funding more than doubling in real terms. However, with regard to quality, the core share of funding had dropped below 21 per cent, which was the lowest share ever. Factors contributing to that decline included a higher proportion of humanitarian activities, which tended to be non-core, in the system's overall operational activities, as well as the rapid growth in the largely non-core funding that was channelled to the system through other multilateral organizations, global funds and the private sector. Even excluding such factors, less than one quarter of voluntary funding from Member States to development-related United Nations activities were core.

64. There had nonetheless been an increase in contributions to loosely earmarked, entity-specific thematic funds and to inter-agency pooled funds. However, without adequate, predictable and high-quality funding, the United Nations development system would be unable to fulfil its role. The provision of funding hinged upon transparency, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency as mandated by Member States through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The funding compact was an important instrument that would help to monitor whether the necessary changes were happening to the way in which the system and its individual entities operated and to the way in which Member States were funding the system.

65. The next quadrennial comprehensive policy review would need to be anchored in an in-depth, comprehensive set of evidence, data and information, as well as analysis of the role of the United Nations development system in implementing the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including the repositioning of mandates. In addition to data collected from all parts of the system, the next report would include the results and analysis of four surveys by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, concerning programme country Governments, resident coordinators, operations management teams and entity headquarters. Those surveys and the monitoring framework would be revised and complemented with in-depth analysis on selected topics, allowing the report of the Secretary-General in 2020 to provide a clear picture of progress over the previous four years.

66. **Ms. Gyles-McDonnough** (Director of the Sustainable Development Unit, Executive Office of the Secretary-General), introducing the first annual report of the United Nations Development Coordination Office ([E/2019/62](#)) and speaking on behalf of the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Development

Coordination Office, said that the establishment of the Development Coordination Office was one of the most important milestones of the reforms to date. Work had been under way since January 2019 to establish an independent and empowered development coordination system to increase impact, cohesion, accountability and transparency. The clear objective of such efforts was to better position the system to help Member States implement the 2030 Agenda. General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) provided a clear mandate in that regard. The creation of an independent resident coordinator system and a transformed Development Coordination Office had brought about the most significant reorganization of the United Nations coordination function in years, laying the groundwork for profound changes in the operations of the Organization's country teams. All such advancements had only been made possible thanks to the support of Member States and the active engagement and contributions of all entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

67. Significant progress had been made in rolling out the new resident coordinator system in accordance with the Secretary-General's implementation plan. Resident coordinators were in many ways the engines of the reforms and were central to the advent of a new generation of country teams. They provided leadership for coordination at the country level, working collaboratively with country teams, guiding strategic policy and enabling innovative partnerships and investments for the Sustainable Development Goals. While the establishment of the new system was a major milestone, it was only the beginning of a process that would unfold over several months. Resident coordinator selection processes, talent management and resource structures would continue to be strengthened. Moreover, recruitment, training programmes and substantive tools were being revamped so that all resident coordinators had a deep substantive knowledge of the 2030 Agenda and the experience required for their country contexts. Independent and rigorous assessment of resident coordinators would be maintained and handled by an independent third party and steps would be taken to increase transparency in the recruitment process. Gender parity and geographic balance were also key priorities in that area.

68. The resident coordinator offices were being strengthened and had been rolled out in stages to ensure continuity in operations during the transition. Each office had recruited both national and international staff that corresponded to specific country needs. The Development Coordination Office was also working to redress regional balance in recruitment from both the

global North and the global South. Of the total budget for the new resident coordinator system, 87 per cent was dedicated to country coordination. To support what was a highly decentralized system, one third of all coordination office positions were allocated to newly created regional desks. Such investment at the regional level was expected to bolster capacity to address regional, subregional and cross-border challenges.

69. No effort was being spared to make sure that an adequate and sustainable funding base was in place for the new resident coordinator system. The cost-sharing arrangements set out by Member States had been implemented swiftly by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The Development Coordination Office had also begun collecting the 1 per cent coordination levy. Furthermore, a wide variety of Member States had come forward with voluntary contributions within tight timelines to support the transition. For full transparency and accountability, a web-based portal had been set up with real-time information on all the funds allocated to the resident coordinator system. While those efforts had enabled the transition, a funding gap remained and sustainability continued to pose a challenge. The continued support and contributions of Member States would allow the joint work to continue.

70. The Development Coordination Office report was transitional in nature, providing an overview of its first five months. Burgeoning change was beginning to be seen at the country level. At the early stages of reform, the narrative was inevitably focused on getting the mechanics and structures right. However, the ultimate goal was to generate coordinated and impactful results for people. The next report would provide an insight into the early results of the joint efforts to reposition the development system, linking the results of the country teams to the activities of the Development Coordination Office and the resident coordinator system. Transparent and robust reporting would be critical to the shared objective of making the Council a central platform to hold everyone collectively accountable for supporting the 2030 Agenda.

71. **Ms. Juul** (Norway), moderator, said that the reinvigorated resident coordinator system was at the heart of the reform of the United Nations development system. Its successful implementation was key to achieving the overarching goal of poverty eradication and ensuring that no one was left behind. The Development Coordination Office had been entrusted with formidable tasks. The transfer of responsibility for administering the resident coordinator system from UNDP to the Development Coordination Office had

been remarkably smooth, as had the posting of resident coordinators. The collaboration and active role of UNDP in those processes could not be underestimated. Reforming the development system was a complex and challenging task. There were inherent systemic tensions that must be addressed; therefore room for adjustments would be needed moving forward, based on lessons learned.

72. The presence of full-time, impartial resident coordinators who were empowered to lead United Nations efforts at the country level was crucial to success. However, there was a risk that the role of the resident coordinator could become operational. She asked how it would be possible to safeguard against such a development and how neutrality could be ensured in the recruitment process, basing decisions on relevant experience and recruiting from a broad range of agencies. Future reports of the Development Coordination Office reports should openly address challenges and their implications. Lastly, as sufficient and predictable funding for the resident coordinator system was a necessary requirement for large-scale reform, she asked for information on the implications of the present shortfall in funding and what should be prioritized if such circumstances continued.

73. **Ms. Amorim** (France) said that while the establishment of the resident coordinator system on 1 January 2019 had constituted a significant challenge, considerable progress had been made. There would be challenges of equal stature moving forward; sustainability and effective coordination must therefore be ensured. She asked whether future recruitment would be external or internal, to allow strengthened mobility within the United Nations system. Efficiency was of particular concern; it was important that the establishment of the new resident coordinator offices did not lead to an increase in bureaucracy. The opportunity that the establishment of the resident coordinator offices could offer to implement true mobility within the United Nations system should be evaluated.

74. **Ms. Leyva Regueira** (Observer for Cuba) said that the annual presentation of future reports under the operational activities segment would be welcome, with more details on the mandate as well as the operational, administrative and financial aspects of the Development Coordination Office. It was important to provide Member States with information whenever new and significant structures emerged, particularly in relation to the management and supervision of the new resident coordinator system.

75. She asked for further information on the flow of communications at the national and global levels between the resident coordinators, the Development Coordination Office and the Secretary-General, particularly given the responsibility of resident coordinators to report on implementation in the context of cooperation. She also asked for more details on the distinctions between the functions of the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the regional Development Coordination Office, the platforms for regional cooperation being proposed and the regional economic commissions. Turning to sustainable funding for the resident coordinators, she enquired about the financial implications of the current process of growth at the regional level. Lastly, she requested more information on the role of Governments in the process of selecting and appointing resident coordinators and how to ensure that the appointed resident coordinators met national needs and priorities.

76. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that interlinkages between sustainable development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding should be established in accordance with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. In that connection, the Group requested greater clarity on cooperation among those three pillars and how country needs and priorities were factored in. All such efforts must be considered and approved by Member States.

77. **Ms. Pindera** (Canada) said that reports from the field had generally been positive with regard to the implementation of the resident coordinator system in a manner that involved minimal disruption. She asked for more information about the targets and performance measures for 2020 and 2021 in the results framework attached to the report and would welcome the opportunity to engage further in that area with the Development Coordination Office. She also requested more information on the role and responsibilities of the resident coordinators and what was envisioned at the regional and global levels in terms of proposals to enhance coherence and coordination. Member States and individual development agencies working on the ground would benefit from more direction from the Development Coordination Office and the system, particularly on the trends and issues at the country level, to help them support implementation and ensure that results could be delivered on the ground.

78. **Ms. von Steiger Weber** (Observer for Switzerland) said that it was self-evident that the resident coordinators should be recruited on the basis of competence only and that Member States should refrain

from interference in that regard. The skill sets of resident coordinators must be tailored to their contexts and should include sufficient knowledge of the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. Increasingly, resident coordinators should be trilingual and well-versed in such issues as international humanitarian law, development and peacebuilding.

79. Switzerland supported the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, including at the resident coordinator level. Because gender parity was essential to the effectiveness, impact and credibility of the United Nations, the gains made thus far must be sustained. Full and consistent implementation of the strategy throughout the entire United Nations system was therefore essential.

80. With regard to the funding of back-office services, Switzerland favoured a cost-efficient and transparent fee-for-service model and asked for clarification on how reporting on UNDP services to the resident coordinator system would be established. Changes to the resident coordinator system should be accompanied by new accountability mechanisms for the back-office services provided to the resident coordinator offices, preferably outside of UNDP. Moreover, more information was needed to avoid a conflict of interest between the role of UNDP as an integrator platform and its agency-specific work.

81. **Ms. Werdermann** (Germany) said that while the report discussed country-level coordination and the strengthened authority of resident coordinators, there was little information on how country teams would work together. She asked how to ensure that all the voices of representatives from different United Nations development system entities were heard by resident coordinators within the process of formulating the new UNDAFs.

82. **Mr. Xu Zhongsheng** (China) said that the new resident coordinators should be selected on the basis of knowledge of development issues and that more representatives from developing countries should be nominated as they were aware of the current needs of such countries. General assembly resolutions [72/279](#) and [71/243](#) should be implemented in strict accordance with their mandates. Furthermore, the deployment of human rights advisors should always be approved by the countries concerned. He asked whether regular briefings from resident coordinators to programme countries could be established to keep them up to date on work in progress.

83. **Ms. Gyles-McDonnough** (Director of the Sustainable Development Unit, Executive Office of the



Secretary-General) said that the next report would certainly take into account the challenges, implications, trends and the messages derived from them. However, the current report had been prepared only three months after the establishment of the Development Coordination Office; while every effort had been made to make it as comprehensive as possible, it had been too early to include details on trends and related information.

84. The resident coordinator office was specifically designed with the capacities and resources that they required for coordination. The reason for separating the resident coordinator function from the UNDP resident representative function was because they were two full-time jobs. The coordination function was a very time-consuming and challenging one; resident coordinators and their teams would be fully occupied, ensuring the provision of effective, integrated and coordinated support to each country in accordance with their context. Resident coordinator offices did not receive direct funding, but rather were there to organize the implementation of activities to where they would be best placed within the system, working in close collaboration with their country team. Moreover, at the current early stage there had been no indications of resident coordinator offices becoming operational.

85. The Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre took an impartial approach that prioritized expertise in the recruitment process. With regard to internal mobility, the resident coordinator pool would be fed with both internal and external candidates; work was currently under way to establish a process for the latter. Staff members in the United Nations system would therefore be able to apply to the resident coordinator pool, assuming that they met all relevant criteria and had passed the evaluation of the Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre. There would be a very detailed review of country contexts and needs going forward, as well as interactions with the outgoing resident coordinators, which would inform the recruitment and selection process.

86. The Development Coordination Office and the resident coordinator offices had outlined in detail their respective roles and functions to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. That framework that was being adhered to, with no additionality beyond the costing approved by Member States. In terms of staffing, the operation was highly decentralized, with some staff present at the regional level to facilitate the necessary coordination at that level.

87. In order to strengthen communications, United Nations information centres would be integrated in countries where they already existed, with coordination offices to provide communication capacity for the development function. In cases where there were no information centres, the cost of communication and advocacy offices was already included in the total costing package approved by Member States. The Development Coordination Office was the interface for channelling communications between the field and Headquarters and across 131 country teams, to ensure that there was consistency and an understanding of the approach to the reform. There were also weekly webinars with resident coordinators, enabling them to ask questions and address issues.

88. Assets would be made accessible to country teams at the regional level in order to support their work. With regard to the operational pillar, there were regional offices of agencies, funds and programmes that carried out activities relating to country teams, quality assurance and the preparation of guidelines. They worked collaboratively within the framework of the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group to provide support for country teams in a timely manner.

89. Efforts to address the humanitarian-development nexus would be undertaken together with Member States in country contexts where necessary. The Joint Steering Committee provided an opportunity to bring the pillars together, to engage with and address the specific issues faced by country teams and Governments and to support them in finding solutions, while also laying the groundwork for a transition from crisis into longer-term development. With regard to targets and results for 2020, a review of the performance management system and structure in relation to the resident coordinator function was currently under way; it would be possible to move forward once that was decided upon.

90. UNDP and relevant departments in the Secretariat had worked tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition and business continuity for resident coordinators and country teams in the field. While client satisfaction would be evaluated over time and responded to accordingly, everything was working smoothly to date and was expected to continue in that way.

91. With regard to the offices and the function of the resident coordinators, each office was set up with core capacities, but also on the understanding that additional capacities, such as human rights or recovery advisors, might be needed in accordance with the country context. Such advisors were placed at the request of resident

coordinators and the scope of their engagement was discussed and shared with Governments. There were currently 24 human rights advisors who were working in diverse locations across all levels of development for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

92. Formal reporting would take place on an annual basis from resident coordinators and country teams to Governments, within the predetermined Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Additionally, on the ground, there would be ample opportunity for interim discussions on progress between resident coordinators and their government counterparts as part of their regular interaction.

**(c) South-South cooperation for development**  
(A/74/39)

93. **The President** said that in its decision 73/553, the General Assembly had decided to further postpone the twentieth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation until May 2020. In that regard, she proposed that consideration of agenda item 7, sub-item (c), South-South cooperation for development, Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation, be postponed until the 2020 session of the Council.

94. *It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*