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Operational activities for development segment

Summary record of the 16th meeting

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President: Mr. Ladeb (Vice-President) (Tunisia)

Contents

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

- (b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the World Food Programme

Interactive dialogue with the executive heads of the United Nations development system: "Unlocking transformations through integrated policy support at the global, regional and country levels"

Interactive discussion: "Overview of evaluation and independent assessment findings and management response: discussion on the recent evaluations, findings and actions taken"

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In the absence of Ms. Narváez Ojeda (Chile), Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

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

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the World Food Programme (E/2023/34/Rev.1, E/2023/35 and E/2023/36)

Interactive dialogue with the executive heads of the United Nations development system: "Unlocking transformations through integrated policy support at the global, regional and country levels"

1. **Mr. Rwamucyo** (Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations), moderator, said that the panellists would respond to the following questions: (a) how United Nations development system entities were supporting countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in integrated policy support, joint planning and joint programming, and what constraints were hampering further progress; and (b) how United Nations development system entities with no physical presence were contributing to the work of the United Nations country teams in support of Sustainable Development Goal acceleration and what specific constraints they were facing in that regard.

2. **Mr. Salazar-Xirinachs** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)), panellist, said that the Latin American and Caribbean region was caught in three traps, namely, low growth capacity; high inequality and low social mobility; and limited institutional capacities and weak governance. Further analysis and related proposals could be found in the latest issue of the *CEPAL Review*. On that basis, it was unsurprising that only 22 per cent of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals would be met in the region by 2030, while progress on 32 per cent of the targets was backsliding and was too slow for 46 per cent of the targets.

3. The report submitted by ECLAC as input to the seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development contained a chapter on the six transitions for accelerating progress towards the Goals, in which

ECLAC described the nature and scope of each transition, its links to key Goals, the current scenario and the desired scenario. It also analysed means of implementation, which were divided into three categories: strategies, policies, plans and programmes to promote each transition; institutional arrangements; and investment needs.

4. It was challenging, though not impossible, for United Nations entities with no physical presence in specific countries to contribute to the work of the country teams in those countries, owing to constraints such as transportation and coordination costs and the reporting system. Virtual coordination platforms were an important tool for mitigating costs. The economic commissions had their own reporting systems that were generally not integrated into the UN-Info platform, which led to underrepresentation of their work in that platform.

5. **Ms. Grynszpan** (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that UNCTAD collaborated with the United Nations system on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the systemic level. UNCTAD was providing countries with significant technical cooperation and it worked with the resident coordinator system each year to decide which common country analyses and common country frameworks it would participate in, often going above and beyond those commitments.

6. Two large UNCTAD programmes had had maximum impact for minimum resources: a digitalized customs system, implemented in 100 countries, which had helped with domestic resource mobilization, digitalization and cutting red tape; and a debt management programme, present in over 60 countries.

7. UNCTAD also worked with small island developing States and with the least developed countries; in the latter case, it prepared vulnerability profiles for those graduating from least developed country status to help them to avoid returning to it.

8. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that UNEP was supporting countries in tackling the triple planetary crisis. A healthy nature, a stable climate and a non-polluted world were all critical to human well-being, prosperity, the economy, social well-being, harmony and conflict reduction, while conflict and migration were often the result of environmental implosion. Sustainable Development Goals 13, 14 and 15, all of which were climate-related, were among those that were lagging the

furthest behind. Unfortunately, one of the main constraints was a lack of financing.

9. UNEP had a physical presence in 45 countries, and a programmatic presence in others. Country teams and the resident coordinator system had enabled UNEP to establish a greater presence, through focal points for each country team, and resident coordinators now hosted meetings online.

10. UNEP had established surge capacity to respond to environmental disasters and the environmental impact of conflict. It was also working with trade and economic organizations to encourage more sustainable financing and investment. The United Nations reforms had made a huge difference. UNEP made a significant contribution to common country analyses, given that they often covered the root causes of environmental issues.

11. **Mr. Rwamucyo** (Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations) invited the panellists to respond to the following questions: (a) what measures were required to help to strengthen operational alignment across United Nations development system entities, including in terms of business models, country configurations and skill sets for the priorities enshrined in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks; and (b) what specific actions should Member States take to support and promote such measures.

12. **Mr. Salazar-Xirinachs** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) said that, in terms of business models, regional support was provided through the regional collaborative platforms, whose role was to align the work at the national, regional and global levels and to support the resident coordinators and country teams in their engagement with Member States. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin American and the Caribbean was made up of 24 United Nations entities and provided various types of services. Significant regional efficiencies had been achieved, with an estimated cost avoidance of \$4 million between 2022 and 2024.

13. Concerning country configurations and skill sets, in 2023 the issue-based coalitions and working groups of the Platform had received 52 requests for support from 14 resident coordinators and country teams in the region, including some that were aligned with the six transitions. In response, the Platform had delivered various types of support, including policy support and capacity-building. For instance, the reports of the issue-based coalition on human mobility were a key source of information for policy analysis of regional migration trends.

14. Measures should be fostered that addressed gaps in financing for development. Country processes needed to be better understood, and a shift was needed from a project-based mindset to a long-term transformational approach, in which transformation and transition processes would be supported on an ongoing basis.

15. Most countries had demonstrated strong national ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and had established institutions to support and monitor their implementation. In terms of specific action, Governments could continue to make the best use of the convening power of the United Nations, such as by continuing their active participation in the regional forums on sustainable development. They should strengthen their institutions and their coordination processes relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by creating appropriate national forums for social dialogue and strengthening coordination between the public and private sectors and civil society, with the participation of country teams. It was particularly important to bring Ministries of Finance into discussions on coordination and to work with the United Nations system to draw on lessons learned regarding accelerating progress, using tools such as the six transitions framework.

16. **Ms. Grynszpan** (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), speaking via video link, said that, regarding strengthening operational alignment, inter-agency committees resulted in greater system-wide coherence and facilitated the development of more integrated country frameworks. In addition, proposals such as the Sustainable Development Goal stimulus and the global digital compact reflected a coherent position across the system and gave the United Nations a single voice.

17. Non-resident agencies should make greater efforts to include the resident coordinator system and country teams in their agendas when conducting country visits. Furthermore, a great deal could be learned from the experience with the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, when the United Nations at all levels – global, regional and country – had collaborated closely. While surge capacity had been developed by many institutions, there was no surge financing for development work, only for humanitarian work. That situation should be addressed, since UNCTAD could only respond to around 50 per cent of country requests at present.

18. The most important action that States could take would be to make use of coordinating mechanisms such as the resident coordinator system and avoid setting the

agencies in competition with one another. Another measure would be to create financing instruments that would allow non-resident agencies to be more effective in responding to requests for cooperation and policy advice.

19. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), speaking via video link, said that operational alignment was strengthened by the United Nations Environment Management Group, which brought together around 50 entities. A common approach to, and ownership of, issues such as biodiversity conservation and pollution by all agencies was the only way to have an impact. If the triple planetary crisis was not addressed, it would be impossible to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. A lack of presence at the country level was a constraint; however, the issue-based coalitions and the regional collaborative platforms helped to create a presence.

20. UNEP managed 17 multilateral environmental agreements; while they were on diverse topics, they were indivisible, and they were all overseen by the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP.

21. Financing was woefully inadequate and a smarter approach was needed, including with respect to the public and private sectors, subsidy reform and fiscal policy. Nevertheless, the financing flows promised under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development must be delivered upon if the Goals were to be met.

22. **Ms. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) said that the worrying state of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the increasing gap in financing for development called for urgent transformative action. The United Nations development system had a fundamental role to play in supporting national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and in accelerating the transformations necessary for sustainable development. Countries needed support in various priority areas, which included a just and inclusive energy transition, poverty eradication, and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

23. **Ms. Paereli** (Germany) said that her delegation wished to know what incentives already existed for entities on the ground and non-resident agencies to engage meaningfully and concretely in the United Nations reforms. In addition, she wondered what other incentives would accelerate the integration of United Nations development system support for the programme countries and whether such incentives could include relevant indicators in the performance appraisals of country directors. The indicator for promotion could be

an entity's contribution to collective outcomes at the country level. She would also like to know how Member States could support the ongoing process, perhaps through funding allocations or political support. Lastly, according to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system ([A/79/72-E/2024/12](#)), fewer than 30 per cent of resident coordinators considered all entity country programmes to be aligned with Cooperation Frameworks. While earmarking funds was not conducive to the Cooperation Framework process, it was challenging for Member States to fund strategic priorities when country teams did not present a convincing collective offer that was aligned with national priorities.

24. **Ms. Fathizadeh** (United Kingdom) said that the report of the Secretary-General ([A/79/72-E/2024/12](#)) provided examples of heads of agencies not following the requirements set out in the management and accountability framework. Too few resident coordinators were contributing to the performance appraisals of heads of agencies, which was important for ensuring the coherent delivery of host Government priorities by country teams. The management and accountability framework underpinned United Nations reforms in-country and agencies must therefore play their part in fully implementing it. She asked what more could be done to drive progress.

25. Country programme documents must be aligned with and derived from Cooperation Frameworks to facilitate accelerated delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and greater emphasis must be given to integrated programmes and synergies. She asked what steps were being taken to ensure full alignment, including in the guidance provided to resident representatives by the respective headquarters.

26. Lastly, the reported efficiency gains of \$553 million in 2023, largely the result of entity-specific initiatives, were a significant achievement. The establishment of the first common back office in Nairobi was another welcome step. She asked what efficiencies had been realized through common back-office functions and what plans were in place to accelerate those in the coming years.

27. **Ms. Hedin** (Sweden) said that Sweden was concerned by the reported lack of alignment of organizations' country programmes with Cooperation Frameworks and by the low rate of joint planning, programming and resource mobilization. It was also concerned by the lack of implementation of the

management and accountability framework. Many of the obstacles to progress in that regard were linked to funding volumes and modalities and were also correlated with inconsistent messaging from Member States in their engagement with the United Nations. In relation to the review of the management and accountability framework to be carried out in 2024, her delegation would like to know which aspects of the framework must be changed in order to fully implement it.

28. Sweden provided funding in accordance with agreements on official development assistance and it proactively provided guidance to its representatives on its priorities in relation to United Nations coordination and reform and with speaking points to be used in dialogues with resident coordinators, country teams and individual United Nations entities. Sweden expected stronger ownership and integration from all members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Her delegation was curious about the approach that would be taken to the country team configuration exercise and wondered whether more information could be provided on good practices from configuration exercises already under way.

29. **Mr. Salazar-Xirinachs** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) said that the most important incentive for the agencies was the decisions of the various United Nations bodies and the instructions of the Secretary-General. He and the other Vice-Chair of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean had already held two meetings in 2024 with all the resident coordinators in the region to discuss priorities and hear feedback, which was a major change when compared with the previous way of working. Other incentives included development funding, which also increased the capacity to collaborate. Including indicators in performance appraisals was a good idea but it required careful consideration; individual entities had their own mandates, work programmes and functions. While it was important to include collaboration with other agencies and at the country level in performance appraisals, mandate delivery must be protected.

30. Strengthening alignment was a two-step process. The first step was to align country programme documents with national development plans and policies, and there was room for improvement in that area. It was vital to have the cooperation of the Governments in question in order to fully understand those plans and policies. The second step was to align the work of the United Nations agencies with the country programmes, which was a key element of the

mandate of every resident coordinator. The challenge was to transition from a project-based mindset to supporting transformation processes.

31. **Ms. Grynspan** (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), speaking via video link, said that incentives were needed to overcome fragmentation, because coordination and collective action had transaction costs. Leadership was another critical element. A coherent voice was also vital, because different institutions giving different answers to the same problem was confusing for States.

32. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depended not only on domestic action but also on systemic action within the United Nations. Incentives would also need to come from Member States attaching importance to spaces for co-creation, knowledge-sharing and coherence and the related transaction costs, otherwise entities would simply return to their previous *modus operandi*.

33. Concerning management and accountability frameworks and alignment at the country level in the integrated framework, performance indicators were important to assess how much effort had been devoted to collective planning, strategy and action. However, the application of such performance indicators to non-resident agencies would be challenging and would require discussion.

34. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) said that United Nations entities supported countries such as Costa Rica not only in designing strategies and policies, but also in planning and joint coordination. Through their technical expertise and specialized knowledge, they helped States to address many dimensions of sustainable development.

35. One of the main obstacles to progress was the need for greater operational alignment between the entities in the system; they must coordinate their activities more effectively and avoid duplication by harmonizing their models and country configurations. A lack of resources and capacity often made such alignment difficult and, in turn, limited States' ability to capitalize fully on United Nations support. Leadership was required to overcome those challenges, as well as concrete measures to strengthen operational alignment. They included implementing more flexible models and improving country configurations to ensure an equitable distribution of resources and capabilities. Lastly, an unwavering commitment from Member States was essential to promote those measures. Through joint, coordinated action, significant headway could be made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

36. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), speaking via video link, said that Colombia was an excellent example of integrated policy support. Colombia would also be hosting the upcoming sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, a critical event that would be attended by all components of the United Nations system concerning nature and biodiversity and UNEP would make every effort to mobilize action.

37. The questions from the representatives of Germany and the United Kingdom appeared to be directed at agencies with a country presence. UNCTAD and UNEP were in a somewhat different situation as they did not have regional or country directors. In their cases, one incentive for reform of the United Nations development system was that it opened doors, since the resident coordinator was their representative; for example, the resident coordinator was invited to, and made every effort to attend, meetings with country teams. UNEP was setting up regional environment offices in a number of key countries, thanks to some savings made. It was an opportunity for the countries and the United Nations system to take ownership of environmental issues, which were distinct from climate-related issues.

38. Under their compact with the Secretary-General, the agencies were measured on many of the critical elements. It was not possible to measure their performance in all areas since they were not participating in every country programme. In addition, the UNEP mandate went beyond development; it included chemicals of concern such as hazardous pesticides that were governed by international agreements. Although those matters were rarely included in the Cooperation Frameworks, UNEP would continue to support Member States in complying with all such conventions.

39. **Ms. Pindera** (Observer for Canada) said that a discussion had taken place that morning with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office on pooled funding and on incentivizing cooperation on the ground in terms of joint programming. In his report ([A/79/72-E/2024/12](#)), the Secretary-General had highlighted the need for a seismic shift in joint activity budgeting and programme delivery. The examples presented, in particular by UNEP, indicated that solid progress had been made in working with country teams, both virtually and in regional offices, on better integration on climate and environmental issues.

Interactive discussion: "Overview of evaluation and independent assessment findings and management response: discussion on the recent evaluations, findings and actions taken"

40. **Ms. Brandt** (Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations), moderator, said that the panellists would consider the following questions: (a) how monitoring and evaluation activities across the United Nations development system could enhance learning and accountability within the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle; (b) what overarching findings and recommendations had emerged from the evaluations carried out to date of the development system and the resident coordinator system following the reforms; (c) what key system-wide actions had been taken to date in response to those evaluations and how the establishment of the system-wide evaluation function contributed to that work; and (d) how Member States could support the development system and the resident coordinator system in ensuring effective follow-up to the recommendations made in those evaluations.

41. **Ms. Ndiaye** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)), panellist, said that the resident coordinator system had been subject to OIOS oversight since the reform and it had been evaluated incrementally: the first evaluation ([E/AC.51/2022/2](#)) had focused on progress towards programme coherence at the country level; the second evaluation ([E/AC.51/2023/2](#)) had concentrated on structure and regional reform in looking at Development Coordination Office regional offices; and the third evaluation (IED-23-019) had taken an in-depth look at support for policy coherence.

42. Evaluation topics were selected using a risk-informed approach. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS chose the evaluation topics and the aspects of resident coordinator system work that were critical to reform roll-out, the resident coordinator system and the wider United Nations system on the basis of comprehensive desk reviews, including of reports of the Secretary-General and of the Deputy Secretary-General as Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and scoping consultations with senior management and the resident coordinators. The 2024 evaluation of the resident coordinator system, due to be completed by the end of the year, was focused on complex settings in which the resident coordinator was also designated as humanitarian coordinator, deputy special representative of the Secretary-General and/or deputy special coordinator. More than one third of countries were currently experiencing a political or

humanitarian crisis and one quarter of all resident coordinators were double or triple hatted.

43. A participatory and strongly collaborative approach was taken to evaluation design, conduct and reporting with the aim of building a culture of evaluation and learning, in addition to providing evidence-based assessments of the resident coordinator system at the country, regional and global levels. Reference groups had been established for every evaluation that included senior staff from both Secretariat and non-Secretariat entities. All evaluations had included global surveys of resident coordinators and country team members. The response rate had been between 65 and 84 per cent for the resident coordinator surveys and around 50 per cent for country team member surveys.

44. The findings of all evaluations had been used both internally and in discussions with Member States. All recommendations for strengthening the work of the resident coordinator system had been accepted and were being implemented. Recommendations from the 2021 evaluation had all been fully implemented.

45. Evaluations played an important role in ensuring the accountability of the United Nations development system by assessing the outcomes of the reform and whether the objectives had been met. They also provided valuable learning by identifying the enabling factors for the success of the development system and the risks and obstacles that must be mitigated or overcome for greater effectiveness. OIOS evaluations were particularly critical for assessing the relevance of the Secretariat's contributions to the development system and whether those contributions were appropriately designed to facilitate the achievement of goals. Although OIOS evaluations covered the Secretariat, as mandated, they had also highlighted critical issues that extended beyond resident coordinator offices and the Development Coordination Office, allowing for a conversation among country team members and within the development system more widely. The 2021 evaluation of country-level programme coherence had generated a broader discussion of the evolving relationship between and the respective roles and responsibilities of the resident coordinators and country teams and had acted as a catalyst for further evaluations planned by the System-wide Evaluation Office on country programme derivation from Cooperation Frameworks and on United Nations country team configuration.

46. The evaluations had found that the coherence of country-level programming and the provision of integrated United Nations policy advice had improved.

However, those improvements had not resulted in the fully coordinated delivery of operational activities at the country level. Regional level support from the Development Coordination Office had enhanced resident coordinator capacity and the effectiveness of resident coordinator offices but reform at the regional level was still evolving. United Nations policy advice to host Governments had led to enhanced government capacity to advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

47. Member States could support the work of evaluation by engaging with United Nations leadership, by considering the evidence provided by evaluations and by looking at how management actions were addressing areas of concern.

48. **Ms. Cook** (Executive Director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office), panellist, accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the System-wide Evaluation Office was responsible for the provision of independent evaluation evidence to strengthen oversight, transparency and accountability, to incentivize joint work and collective learning and to conduct and advance system-wide evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. It was an independent office that reported directly to the Secretary-General and had the prerogative to share reports directly with the Council and at the appropriate level of decision-making within the development system. It conducted evaluations to complement those from other United Nations entities, focusing on system-wide activities that could not be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms.

50. In 2023, she had been appointed by the Secretary-General as the first Executive Director of the System-wide Evaluation Office. The Office was fully operational with staff and resources largely in place to deliver the 2024 programme of work. The priority for 2024 was finalization of the system-wide evaluation policy for endorsement by the Secretary-General. In terms of ongoing and planned activities, the evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative would be finalized by September, meeting accountability and learning needs related to gender-based violence and development system reform. An evaluation of country programme derivation from Country Cooperation Frameworks and of country team configuration would be launched in mid-2024 for completion in 2025 in order to learn lessons from the implementation of the first generation

of Cooperation Frameworks with recommendations for improvements to United Nations country-level development planning processes. Scoping work had begun for an evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, five years after its launch. Starting in 2025, the Office would put in place a systematic and transparent process for identifying and prioritizing system-wide issues to be evaluated, in consultation with United Nations entities and other United Nations oversight bodies.

51. Some of the work recently initiated by the Office highlighted its role in the promotion of system-wide learning and the use of evaluation evidence. An initial mapping of the more than 4,000 evaluation reports published at entity-level in the United Nations since 2021 represented a rich but somewhat fragmented evidence base on the contributions of the United Nations system to Sustainable Development Goal progress and development system reform. That body of evidence included 256 entity-specific country programme evaluations with findings on development system reform and priorities for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. United Nations evaluation offices were increasingly producing syntheses of evaluations to promote the use of evidence at the strategic level, such as the recent inter-agency synthesis of evaluations on Goal 5.

52. Lastly, in a pilot cross-system initiative, an interactive digital map of United Nations system evaluation evidence would be created and short summaries would be produced related to priorities for the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review as learning resources for the 2024 process.

53. **Ms. Paereli** (Germany) said that quality data and analysis on how the United Nations development system worked towards sustainable impacts were crucial so that the German Government, parliament and public could see how funds were being spent. Many Sustainable Development Goals were off track and a better application of results-based management was needed, as mandated by General Assembly resolution [75/233](#). Business models should be optimized in favour of a strong results-based culture and Germany stood ready to support United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities in that regard.

54. Her delegation welcomed the operationalization of the System-wide Evaluation Office but wondered what the next steps would be in terms of operability, since it was still a little understaffed. It would also like to know how Member States could best engage with OIOS and the System-wide Evaluation Office to support their important work.

55. **Mr. Etter Lindegger** (Observer for Switzerland) said that evaluation was a key function for learning and accountability and for oversight of the United Nations development system. Evaluation findings and recommendations must be discussed within the Council and a session on that topic should be systematically incorporated into the operational activities segment.

56. His delegation welcomed the evaluation of the resident coordinator system and the significant progress made in establishing the core team of the System-wide Evaluation Office. It also supported the efforts to ensure predictable and sustainable funding for the Office through the regular budget. He asked how the speakers would assess the collaboration and complementarity between the Office and other United Nations evaluation units, how synergies were being utilized and whether there was any potential to exploit them further.

57. **Mr. De Rezende Pinto** (Brazil) said that Cooperation Frameworks should be regarded as integrated inter-agency planning documents and as a vital tool for evaluating the quality of cooperation among the entities of the United Nations development system and its value added for development. Brazil had proposed that the Resident Coordinator Office in Brazil implement specific evaluation criteria to assess the technical and operational performance of the multilateral agencies operating there. His Government would also like to determine the degree of alignment between those agencies and its own guidelines on international cooperation, in order to ensure that the support provided effectively addressed national priorities and contributed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Brazil.

58. **Ms. Lelek** (United States of America) said that learning from evaluation was critical and her delegation welcomed the use of the operational activities segment as a forum to do so. She wondered whether “fully operational” meant that the System-wide Evaluation Office was fully staffed; given the Office’s broad mandate, it was important to ensure that it had the necessary capacity or that States’ expectations were managed accordingly. Concerning the initial mapping of the United Nations system-wide evaluations against the priorities for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, she asked when Member States could expect to receive information on the priorities, which would be especially useful ahead of the negotiations on the review. Recommendations based on an analysis of that information would also be welcome.

59. **Mr. van der Straaten** (Observer for the Kingdom of the Netherlands), welcoming the operationalization of the System-wide Evaluation Office, said that the very

insightful evaluation of the resident coordinator system would help Member States to determine not only what could be changed in their own behaviour, but also what could be adjusted and further improved upon in the United Nations development system through the upcoming quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

60. He asked what the System-wide Evaluation Office and OIOS would identify as priorities to improve the effectiveness of the resident coordinator system. He also asked what Member States could do through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the operational activities segment, the Fifth Committee and the governing boards of the agencies, funds and programmes to ensure that the work of the Office and OIOS was acted upon effectively, and how the segment could be strengthened in view of the need for greater coherence in oversight and learning.

61. **Ms. Ndiaye** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)) said that, concerning Member States' engagement with the Secretariat on the evaluations of the resident coordinator system and the United Nations development system, the evaluation reports provided a great deal of evidence derived from discussions with people in the field, government officials, civil society organizations and many other actors. That evidence informed an understanding of the issues as well as what was working well, and was the most significant contribution to decision-making for both senior management and Member States. Member States' engagement with United Nations management and OIOS on that evidence would be very helpful as a means to understand the culture, which was shifting. There had been considerable apprehension regarding the reform and whether it would lead to concrete results. Results-based management was a matter of organizational culture, as was emerging in the surveys of resident coordinators and other actors. The recommendations were all being taken seriously and being implemented, the question was more about ensuring collective learning by all members of the development system and by Member States.

62. On the subject of collaboration and synergies between OIOS and the System-wide Evaluation Office, the OIOS mandate was to produce independent evaluations of the Secretariat, which included the resident coordinator system. Synergies and complementarities had been discussed when the Executive Director of the System-wide Evaluation Office had assumed her post. Based on those discussions, her expectation of the Office was that it would provide a mapping of the evaluation work being done throughout the system, matching it with the

quadrennial comprehensive policy review and providing information on gaps in coverage and the priorities based on Member States' concerns or needs. The establishment of the Office had been absolutely necessary in order to gain a system-wide overview.

63. **Ms. Cook** (Executive Director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office) said that her Office was fully functional, with a core team of four staff members. That capacity was reflected in the regular budget proposal for 2025. It had received extrabudgetary funds from Switzerland, start-up funds from Denmark and contributions from United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities, which were generally focused on specific work rather than core support, with the exception of the contributions from the United Nations Population Fund, which had funded the secondment of a senior evaluation officer to the Office for its first full year of operation. It remained to be seen how the work would evolve and what the level of demand would be, and it was vital to ensure that the Office remained faithful to its mandate to complement system-wide evaluation work. She anticipated that some adjustment would be required in the coming years to ensure the right level of capacity to meet expectations, however, core staffing was appropriate at present. There were some resourcing gaps in relation to some of the evaluation work that had been outlined earlier. The Office had a resource mobilization strategy that addressed resources within the system and selective engagement with Member States to seek support.

64. In terms of Member State engagement on the system-wide evaluation policy, she had extended invitations to States for bilateral discussions and there was also a standing invitation to brief regional groups on the work of the Office. In June and July 2024, informal briefings on the evaluation policy would be held. A multi-year rolling work plan would also be established for the Office, to be developed on the basis of solid analysis. There would be formal consultation with United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities and the Office would consult Member States under a modality that would be determined in conjunction with the Bureau of the Council.

65. The policy would apply to the system-wide evaluation function at the global level, the regional level, in line with the expectations for regional collaborative platforms, and at the country level through the conduct of Cooperation Framework evaluations. Those were conducted by the resident coordinators but were a key building block of the Office's work and the most important vehicle for accountability and transparency at the national level. The Office was

intended to be small and nimble, to build on collective contributions and to strengthen system-wide collaboration on evaluation. It was an active member of the United Nations Evaluation Group, which was sharing best practices on evaluation across the system. The policy would set out the establishment of a steering group to facilitate collaboration.

66. The Office was expected to build on existing system capacities, rather than set up a separate layer of activity, and would engage regularly with OIOS, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors to ensure the complementarities were appropriately framed. The policy would set out the institutional architecture of the system-wide evaluation function.

67. The Office was piloting a new method for undertaking the mapping work for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which consisted of producing an interactive map that showed the evaluation evidence that was available for the priority areas of the review. The interactive map would be available for the consideration of Member States around mid-2024. It was already clear that there were clusters of evaluation evidence in certain areas; the Office would work with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group through the evaluation officers and would also seek the input of Member States on the priorities. In terms of integrating that work, the Office was in discussions with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to see how the resources produced through the mapping could be integrated into the support available to Member States in the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.