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Operational activities segment

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 July 2012, at 10 a.m.

President : Mr. Percaya (Vice-President) (Indonesia)**Contents**

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

- (a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council
- (b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the 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

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In the absence of Mr. Koterec (Slovakia), Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

- (a) **Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council** (E/2012/79-A/67/93 and E/2012/80-A/67/94)
- (b) **Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the 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/2011/35, E/2012/5, E/2012/6, E/2012/14, E/2012/34 (Part I)/Add.1-E/ICEF/2012/7 (Part I)/Add.1, E/2012/34 (Part II)-E/ICEF/2012/7 (Part II), E/2012/34/Rev.1-E/ICEF/2012/7/Rev.1, E/2012/36 and E/2012/L.7)

1. **The President**, opening the operational activities segment, recalled that at the recently concluded United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the world had reaffirmed its commitment to a future based on sustainable development and charged the Council with helping to ensure the realization of that vision through a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions. The outcome of the Conference therefore marked an important new departure for the future work of the United Nations development system in programme countries. In addition, the segment would serve as the primary venue for policy dialogue among Member States on the key issues likely to feature in upcoming deliberations on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, to be conducted by the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. The Secretary-General's two reports for that review (E/2012/79-A/67/93 and E/2012/80-A/67/94) presented the findings of major analytical studies led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

2. **Mr. Al-Nasser** (Qatar) (President of the General Assembly) said that the 2012 operational activities segment would take stock of the progress made and challenges encountered in implementing the mandates established in General Assembly resolution 62/208 on

the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of United Nations operational activities for development. It was also a time for the Council to be forward-looking. The quadrennial review marked the beginning of a cycle that would set the mandate and framework for the United Nations development system for the period 2013 to 2016 and beyond. Stakeholder surveys conducted in preparation for the review had shown that that system was more relevant and coherent than it had been in 2007; that progress provided a good platform for more ambitious efforts to strengthen the system in the years to come. The Council's deliberations would set the stage for the upcoming review negotiations, which would reinvigorate the system's capacity to meet both current and emerging global challenges.

3. As President of the General Assembly, he had designated "sustainable development and global prosperity" as one of the four pillars of his vision for the Assembly's work, and he was committed to helping forge a united global partnership with a particular focus on the needs of the most vulnerable. United Nations operational activities for development played a central role in those efforts as both a symbol and a concrete manifestation of a partnership for a better future.

4. In cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, he had organized a three-part seminar series on the quadrennial review. Several issues had taken centre stage during those discussions. First, new centres of economic dynamism, coupled with advances in technology, were transforming the global development landscape. Accordingly, the Council must reassess the effectiveness of its approach to development cooperation and consider how the work of the United Nations development system could change in order to remain effective and relevant to country needs and contexts. Second, the changing nature of global challenges meant that solutions would increasingly require collective action and new forms of partnership. He envisaged civil society and the private sector working closely and seamlessly together with multilateral and bilateral forms of development cooperation. Third, the issue of the critical mass of core funding for United Nations operational activities for development required urgent attention and resolution; the current imbalance between core and non-core funding threatened to undermine the capacity,

independence, partnerships and delivery of those activities.

5. Fourth, there was a need to recognize the important progress made in achieving greater coherence and integration of United Nations operational activities for development through the resident coordinator system, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process, the “Delivering as One” pilot initiative and the integrated mission concept, among many other initiatives, and to build on that progress in the next review cycle. The provision of high quality, cost-efficient administrative services was another area in which progress should be expected over the next four years. Lastly, the process of developing sustainable development goals, building on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework, would require greater integration of the core United Nations pillars of development, security and humanitarian assistance. Instituting effective horizontal accountability mechanisms for common performance and results assessments by United Nations entities would be critical to that effort. The success of the quadrennial review would depend to some extent on progress in strengthening horizontal accountability in the work of the United Nations development system, particularly at the country level.

6. The review was a timely exercise that offered a forward-looking reflection on the longer-term strategic repositioning of the United Nations development system within the development landscape. The resolution that the General Assembly would adopt at the close of the review would directly impact the day-to-day work of the United Nations system and shape the strategic plans of the more than 30 entities that accounted for nearly two thirds of all system-wide activities of the United Nations. In the coming months, Member States would have an opportunity to shape the future of the United Nations development system and to build a lasting legacy for the Organization. He was confident that the segment would result in forward-looking recommendations for the quadrennial review negotiations.

7. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the segment provided an important opportunity to take stock of progress in preparations for the quadrennial review. His Department had been mandated to support that process by providing objective, evidence-based

analysis through an effective consultative process. The two reports under the agenda item had benefited from global surveys, stakeholder consultations, country missions and analytical studies.

8. The report of the Secretary-General on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (E/2012/79-A/67/93) noted that there had been significant progress in enhancing the coherence of the United Nations development system since the 2007 review. Programme country Governments ranked the support provided by the United Nations development system at the country level higher than that of the international financial institutions and bilateral donors. It was, however, still necessary to reflect on the longer-term strategic repositioning of the system in development cooperation, which would have implications for the alignment of functions, funding, capacity, partnerships, organizational arrangements and governance. The report also pointed out that addressing global and national challenges such as those relating to sustainable development would increasingly require the system to have the capacity to work as one.

9. The United Nations development system depended primarily on three key coordination processes: the resident coordinator system, the UNDAF process and common business operations at the country level. The resident coordinator system was a key driver of coherence at the country level, but its performance had been uneven across programme countries for a long time. Survey results showed that those countries were strongly in favour of strengthening its coordination role, which was essential if it was decided to enhance horizontal accountability across the United Nations development system.

10. Programme country Governments generally viewed UNDAF more favourably than United Nations country team members and considered it a key instrument in promoting coherence, but they had also made it clear that the UNDAF process should be strengthened and that coherence should be carried through to the implementation stage. Those Governments also supported a major simplification and harmonization of programming instruments and processes; there had been some progress in harmonizing business operations at the country level during the past review cycle, but lasting efficiency gains and cost savings had yet to be more broadly

demonstrated. The Secretary-General argued that further progress in that area should be given high priority in the next cycle.

11. The report found that capacity development had often not met programme country Government expectations, especially with regard to the use of national systems, and stressed the importance of strengthening independent system-wide evaluation of United Nations operational activities at the country level in order to foster coherence and accountability. It showed that long-term funding trends for operational activities had been positive but that almost all growth had been in non-core resources, which tended to be highly fragmented. The share of core funding, which subsidized the programme support and management costs of non-core funding, continued to decline; burden-sharing among donors was highly uneven; and the predictability of resources had not improved since the 2007 review. That huge mismatch in the growth of core and non-core funding over the past 15 years was one of the key challenges facing the United Nations development system. It made it difficult to deliver on intergovernmental mandates and to ensure sufficient capacity for core programming on the ground, as well as undermining the neutrality of the Organization in development cooperation.

12. Lastly, he noted Member States' appreciation for the improvements introduced in the areas of statistics, analysis and reporting on funding for United Nations operational activities for development.

13. *A panel discussion on the topic, "Perspectives from programme countries: Dialogue with representatives of programme countries on progress in enhancing the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations development system since the 2007 comprehensive policy review of the General Assembly", chaired by Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Ms. Astrid Helle Ajamay (Deputy Director-General, Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway), followed. The moderator introduced the panellists: Ms. Viviana Caro (Minister of Planning and Development, Plurinational State of Bolivia); Mr. Isa Tuwajiri (Minister of Planning, Libya); Mr. Julio Raudales (Minister of Planning and External Cooperation, Honduras); Mr. Somchit Inthamith (Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment, Lao People's Democratic Republic; and Mr. Admasu Gedamu (Director, United Nations Agencies and Regional Economic Cooperation*

Directorate, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ethiopia). The panellists made presentations and an interactive dialogue, in which the representatives of Bangladesh, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Cuba, Indonesia, France, the United States of America and Switzerland and the observers for Albania, Sweden and Algeria participated, ensued. The panellists responded to questions and comments and the moderator and the Chair made concluding remarks.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.