Economic and Social Council

Substantive session of 2012
Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record of the 33rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 July 2012, at 10 a.m.

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

Contents

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In the absence of Mr. Koterec (Slovak Republic), 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 (*continued*)

(a) **Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council** (*continued*) (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** (*continued*) (E/2011/35, E/2012/5, E/2012/6, E/2012/14, E/2012/34 (part I) and Add.1, E/2012/34 (part II) and E/2012/36; E/2012/L.7)

A panel discussion on the topic "How can Executive Boards foster enhanced policy coherence among the funds and programmes in areas such as reporting on development results, programming and common administrative services at the country level?" followed, chaired by Mr. Desra Percaya (Indonesia), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Douglas Lindores, former Chair, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme. The moderator made a statement and introduced the panellists: Mr. Fernando Fernández-Arias (Vice-President, Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women); Mr. Shobhana K. Pattanayak (President, Executive Board of the World Food Programme), speaking by video link from Rome; Mr. Macharia Kamau (Vice-President, Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund); and Ms. Candida Novak Hornakova (Vice-President, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services). The panellists made presentations and an interactive dialogue ensued in which the delegations of Cuba, Finland, Bangladesh, the Russian Federation, the Philippines, the United States of America and Canada and the observers for Tunisia and Algeria participated. The panellists

responded to questions and comments raised and the moderator closed the panel discussion.

Coordination, programme and other questions

(d) **Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system** (E/2012/61)

1. **Ms. Bachelet** (Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2012/61), said that it documented progress in gender mainstreaming in the areas of results-based management, oversight, human and financial resources, capacity development and knowledge enhancement. It also outlined efforts by United Nations entities to improve harmonization and ensure accountability across the United Nations system. Progress had been made, but more needed to be done. The report also featured results-based approaches in management and monitoring and stressed the importance of collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data to identify and address gender disparities and inequality. In addition, it recognized the work done by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality to support national strategies that strengthened accountability while enhancing coherence, partnerships, knowledge management and information sharing.

2. Institutional gender-equality policies had improved, but implementation remained uneven. A significant shortcoming was the lack of mechanisms to track the resources allocated for gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, a group led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was defining indicators to compare such financial data. In addition, a system-wide action plan instituting an accountability framework had been approved. The plan introduced a common set of indicators to measure how well United Nations entities were promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

3. The report highlighted the efforts of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to enhance coordination at the country level. Joint action and inter-agency collaboration would help to leverage the

combined strengths of United Nations entities. However, resource constraints continued to hinder effective gender mainstreaming and Member States should therefore consider increasing their financial support. In addition, the report encouraged United Nations country teams to use accountability mechanisms such as performance indicators, gender scorecards and gender audits.

4. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development within the United Nations system provided an excellent opportunity to underscore the value of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as their centrality to development, as had been reaffirmed in the Rio+20 outcome document. She encouraged the Council to adopt a resolution to that effect in the upcoming general segment of its substantive session.

5. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) said that she welcomed the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (E/2012/61), especially on the need for comparable data for analysis. The end result of the work of UN-Women should be to improve the lives of women and girls, and a tool was needed to determine whether the work undertaken was indeed leading towards that goal. Her delegation supported the adoption of a resolution on gender mainstreaming.

6. **Ms. Tohmé** (Observer for Lebanon) asked whether the gender networking and focal points used in various United Nations entities might be equally valuable at the country or regional level. She also wondered whether gender should be mainstreamed across all sustainable development goals (SDGs) beyond 2015 or whether it should be encompassed by an SDG in its own right.

7. **Ms. Lemieux** (Canada) enquired as to the capacity of United Nations staff to deliver on the mainstreaming of gender in their different mandates and asked what could be included in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review in that respect.

8. **Ms. Bachelet** (Executive Director, UN-Women), responding to the questions raised by delegations, said that gender mainstreaming was essential but that it was also important to focus on gender equality. Only about 5.6 per cent of global development funding went specifically to women and that was insufficient. Short- and medium-term programmes and policies that focused on gender were needed; it was also essential to measure whether gender mainstreaming was achieving

tangible results. In the context of the SDGs, that meant not only mainstreaming gender across the goals but also setting a specific target related to gender.

9. On the issue of focal points, she said that the establishment of two new regional centres in Cairo and Panama obviated the need for focal points there. Moreover, at the country level, UN-Women would work closely with the country teams, the resident coordinator system and relevant United Nations entities.

10. With regard to the capacity of United Nations staff, she said that more work was required to harmonize training in women's empowerment and gender equality. A related issue was the need to verify that the implementation of plans in those areas was truly aligned with national priorities.

11. The goal of "delivering as one" offered UN-Women a good opportunity to broaden its capacity for action through its partner entities. However, there was a need to address the problem of incentives that undermined the One United Nations programme; collective action required collective incentives, not solely individual ones. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review should include analysis of the incentive structure and focus on strengthening teamwork within the United Nations system.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

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12. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Observer for Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that several improvements would enable the United Nations development system to better meet the varied and

increasing demands of programme countries. First, the quality and quantity of funding should be improved. Despite repeated calls from the General Assembly to rectify the imbalance between core and non-core funding, the increasing shift towards non-core funding was liable to impair the effectiveness of operational activities. Non-core resources were unpredictable and entailed increased transaction costs, inefficiency, incoherence and fragmentation of the United Nations system, including at the country level, causing competition among organizations and leading them to deviate from their respective mandates.

13. Second, resident coordinators should carry out their duties in a fair and transparent manner in accordance with their mandates and in coordination with national authorities.

14. Third, the programming instruments at the country level should be further streamlined. United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks should serve as an overarching strategic framework for agency programming but should not become rigid instruments that precluded the flexibility required in the field.

15. Fourth, innovative solutions should be explored to reduce excessive transaction costs for the United Nations development system. Every United Nations agency should use lead agencies or common departments to provide administrative services whenever it was feasible and cost-effective to do so.

16. **Ms. Zoupaniotis** (Observer for Cyprus), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that, within the current complex and fragmented development landscape, the United Nations played a key role as a convening and implementing body of critical global public goods. It was crucial to forge a shared vision of how the system could remain at the centre of that fast-changing development architecture so as to deliver coherent, effective and efficient outcomes. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review should provide guidance on how to implement the tasks outlined by the Rio+20 outcome document in an effective and coherent manner.

17. Since non-core contributions would likely remain the funding modality of choice, it was important to discuss how to align them better with national and agreed priorities and improve the predictability and flexibility of resources. Cost-recovery from contributions should also be examined.

18. She welcomed ongoing efforts to reduce costs within the United Nations system through improved efficiencies, including the simplification and harmonization of business practices. Robust results frameworks and results-based management systems should be developed and implemented, as they were key for demonstrating the impact of development.

19. Welcoming the outcome of the Fifth High-Level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One, held in Tirana in June 2012, she said that it should inform the deliberations on the quadrennial review. As the Secretary-General's report on the review (E/2012/79-A/67/93) had called for a second generation of "Delivering as one" countries, it was time for the United Nations system to develop a new business model with standard operating procedures that would enable effective implementation. The independent evaluation and stakeholder surveys carried out by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs underlined an urgent need for the United Nations system to address bottlenecks at Headquarters through the streamlining of programming, funding, reporting and accountability mechanisms.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.