



Statement of Helen Clark, UNDG Chair

On the occasion of the meeting of UNDG Asia-Pacific Team and Resident Representatives/Resident Co-ordinators from UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific

7 October 2009, Thailand

Today's meeting brings together in Thailand all levels of the UNDG:

- The UNDG Chair;
- The regional directors making up UNDG Asia Pacific and
- The Resident Co-ordinators who lead the UN Country Teams around the region.

My comments today will focus on the better co-ordination of the UN development system being pursued at all levels of the UNDG; the necessity for it as we seek to respond to the 21st century needs of programme countries; and the change in the skills mix in our teams which we will need to operate effectively.

The moves to co-ordinate across the UNDG are well merited. Put simply: we can achieve together what we cannot achieve alone.

The UN development system has fully subscribed to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.

I see three consequences flowing from that:

1. We in the multilateral agencies need to get our act together to be more effective in the support we give programme countries.
2. We need close co-ordination with donors so that they can support us in acting coherently.
3. We need to support programme countries to be able to provide the national leadership and ownership of coherent development strategies on which effective implementation the Accra Agenda for Action relies.

We cannot be coherent if our country counterparts are not.

Clearly this is a big agenda if we are to maximize its potential.

It is also a big agenda around which a lot of work has been done – including by many of you in this room – in the country teams and at the regional level.

The showpieces for the “Delivering as One” thrust have been the formal pilots in eight countries.

They have gained a lot of attention – with their concerted attempt to establish:

- one leader in the Resident Co-ordinator
- one strategy, and
- one budget

The fourth pillar – one house – is desirable, but in an age when the UN is exposed to terrorist attacks, does highlight the need for adequate security.

There have already been stocktaking reports done of the eight pilots.

Now, formal country-led evaluations are about to begin.

As well, the General Assembly agreed in September that there should be an independent evaluation of the pilots as a whole.

There will be a meeting in Rwanda in about 12 days to discuss the stocktaking reports.

I understand that Viet Nam may also host a meeting on the eight pilots next year.

Should the independent evaluation of the whole initiative be positive, then one could anticipate that this way of working could be mandated as the “business as usual” of the future.

From what I can see, however, the UN development system hasn’t sat around waiting for that to happen.

A number of country teams, with the full support of their host governments, have become self starters on ‘Delivering as One’.

But even that understates the extent to which the UN system at the country level is moving to a greater level of co-ordination.

I have just read the Synthesis of Resident Co-ordinator Annual Reports for 2008 – which outlines the now extensive efforts across many country teams to co-ordinate their activities.

This convinces me that the time is right for formalising the “Delivering as One” approach.

Already we have the Management and Accountability Framework for the Resident Co-ordinator-led system and its responsibilities, and accountabilities.

My sense is that this still need to shake down – in many discussions with Resident Co-ordinators from around the world, a number are still uncertain about how much authority they have, and how exactly the RC role fits with the UNDP Resident Representative role.

I have underlined that the RC is still the RR, but that commonsense has to be applied, so that the whole country team has confidence in the RC, and so that wearing the RR hat strategic leadership can also be given to UNDP.

Many RCs feel tell me that their co-ordination role is under-resourced - and probably in many cases it is.

The UNDG has now approved a proposal to increase support for the RC function in some twenty countries in transition from crisis where RCs face especially tough challenges. Debbie Landey and DOCO have committed to raise resources to increase the existing \$5 million transition fund in DOCO to \$23 million.

The “Delivering as One” pilots have made it clear that a lot of work needs to be done on harmonization of business practices across agencies and on simplifying reporting – all matters on which I am assured that work is being done.

There is every reason for us all to be working to progress the co-ordination agenda, because it will enable us to be more effective in our support for developing countries.

Taken as a whole, financial resources for the UN’s development operations have reached \$20 billion annually, an amount equivalent to nearly 20 per cent of total ODA.

Even bulked up, that is very much a minor share of the total. But if we each rely on our small share of that for impact, we won’t be maximizing what we can achieve as a group.

The recession has taken its toll on donor country budgets for official development assistance, and as these countries begin to exit from their stimulus packages, funding for development could be tight.

If agreement can be reached on climate financing, however, then there will be significant extra resources to be applied to adaptation and to low carbon routes to development and energy access.

But to make the most of existing or additional financing, we will each need to move more outside our silos to embrace joint programming where clusters of us can bring relevant skills and expertise to the table.

Some examples:

- across a number of our organizations, we have expertise in social protection. Joined together, that amounts to virtual clusters of scale in country and regional teams.

- the same will apply in the support we give to countries on adaptation and mitigation strategies around the climate agenda. We will have considerable expertise dispersed across our organizations.

Overall, I believe we should be actively looking for those synergies between our agencies where together we can achieve more than we could on our own. I see no reason why we can't share the credit for joint effort.

As well, we need to be supporting each other's mandates. My own agency, UNDP, with the greatest field presence, has a particular responsibility through its convening and leadership role in the system.

One way or another though, all our mandates relate to the MDGs.

The MDGs are clearly interconnected – progress on some can assist progress on others.

Where the goals are struggling at present is often related to the low priority accorded to meeting women's needs at the national level. As well, we in the UN system must ask ourselves whether we have done enough to promote gender perspectives in achieving the MDGs.

I hope we can keep this issue of women's empowerment to the fore in the 2010 MDG Review – and, in the six remaining years from now until 2015, work to put more focus on the gender aspects of the MDGs which could help more countries reach more targets.

Our key donors are especially interested in boosting the status of women, and I am optimistic that they will be supportive of applying gender analyses to the 2010 MDG Review.

These donors also are keen to put more of their country-level funding for UN agencies over time into joint programming.

The huge Spanish MDG Achievement Fund has led the way on this – and the “Delivering as One” tagged funding in pilot countries is another example. If more funding was directed to joint programming, we could do more of it.

Let me now say a word about the skill mix we will need in the UN Country Teams in the future to give the best possible service to programme countries.

In general, UN Country Teams are heavy in programme management and administration. Yet increasingly programme countries are looking to us to give upstream strategic and policy advice and support. In light of that, and in light of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review call to us to strengthen national capacities, we will have to change to meet these new requirements. In UNDP we are actively considering what this will mean for our skill base.

In my view, making this change is far more likely to assist transformational change in programme countries than nickel and diming with traditional development projects ever could.

Lifting hundreds of millions more people out of poverty on a sustainable basis will require smart strategies for growth which is both green and inclusive.

The new approaches require us to bring our agendas together in a new development paradigm in which growth, poverty reduction, and ecosystem protection are compatible and not alternatives.

We have the opportunity with the establishment of ninety new UN Development Assistance Frameworks in the next three years to plan much more strategically to get the best development results.

In this region, there are six UNDAF rollouts planned for next year and eight for 2011. I know that this regional group has been tele- and video-conferencing with Country Teams with pending new UNDAFs. I believe this process will help lift the standards of these frameworks.

I understand that Country Teams want a simpler and more responsive programming process. They are operating in rapidly changing environments as one international crisis follows another, and they are expected to respond to unforeseen challenges. In this context, we need a planning process which produces the maximum possible impact on development, while remaining flexible and adaptable to specific country needs.

Simplifying the UNDAF guidance and process is one of UNDG's priorities. A small group, comprised of people from both headquarters and the field, and with advice from the regional peer support groups, has worked intensively in the past few weeks to do just that. This new guidance will be available to country teams rolling out new UNDAFs next year.

I repeat: putting better UNDAFs into action requires marshalling the relevant capacity. The most strategic UNDAF imaginable will still be a lost effort if we don't have the right capacities lined up to deliver on its goals. Our partner countries do increasingly expect us to provide them with world-class policy advice and capacity development assistance, tailored to local circumstances. To meet and ideally to exceed these expectations, our Country Teams will need to review their current capacity mix, match it with their UNDAF, and make changes where needed.

Before I conclude, let me return to the role of Resident Co-ordinators – which is becoming ever more diverse and complex.

The Resident Co-ordinator frequently wears many hats. They are the UNDP's Resident Representative, and often the Designated Official for UN Security, the Humanitarian Co-ordinator leading in response to crisis, and, in crisis countries, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General supporting integrated UN missions. These multiple functions lead to numerous responsibilities and rising expectations from many of our stakeholders.

In today's meeting, you will look specifically at the role of the RC as Humanitarian Coordinator. We should keep in mind that even if she or he is not designated an official "Humanitarian Co-ordinator", an RC may still lead the UN on humanitarian co-ordination. Moreover, global trends such as climate change, the food crisis, the economic and financial crisis, population growth,

and others are significantly transforming the humanitarian environment and operational landscape in which we work.

I would like to assure you that I work closely with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes, to ensure that the development and humanitarian spheres of the UN mutually reinforce each other. Institutionally, Debbie Landey and DOCO work closely with OCHA. We look forward to taking back to Mr. Holmes and OCHA key messages you have on how we can improve our collective effectiveness in this area.

In any context, the Resident Co-ordinator and the UN country team need to lead and manage the UN presence effectively. To do that, they need clearly defined responsibilities and authority. Significant progress has been made on defining the leadership role of the Resident Co-ordinator and the UN country team.

These accountabilities can only function with an effective and inclusive performance appraisal system. You will also discuss the performance appraisal system today, and I would welcome your thoughts and recommendations.

An important step forward has been the agreement that the country team members report to the Resident Co-ordinator on the results where they have agreed to lead the team. This is important for Resident Co-ordinators, because I understand that it sometimes seems like many stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback on them, without them reciprocally providing feedback as well. The concept of mutual accountability between the Resident Co-ordinator and UNCT for the delivery of development results now lies at the core of the accountability structure and the performance appraisal system.

The current economic and financial crisis reinforces the need for teams of regional directors like this one to be addressing the issues which cross national borders. Here UNDG Asia-Pacific plays a vital role in its support for UN Country Teams.

I wish you all well for a useful and productive day's discussions, and look forward to hearing of the outcome.

Thank you.