

Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the United Nations Development Group

Thursday, 19 April 2007
ILO

Geneva

Summary of Conclusions

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) held its thirty-sixth meeting on Thursday, 19 April from 4:00 pm to 6:45 pm. This meeting was hosted by ILO at its Headquarters' in Geneva.

Present at the meeting were:

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| 1. Mr. K. Dervis | Chair |
| 2. Ms. T. Obaid | UNFPA |
| 3. Ms. A. Veneman | UNICEF |
| 4. Ms. J. Sheeran | WFP |
| 5. Mr. A. Melkert | UNDP |
| 6. Ms. L. Arbour | OHCHR |
| 7. Ms. M. Chan | WHO |
| 8. Mr. K. Yumkella | UNIDO |
| 9. Mr. Juan Somavia | ILO |
| 10. Mr. J. A. Ocampo | DESA |
| 11. Mr. J. Mattsson | UNOPS |
| 12. Mr. P. Piot | UNAIDS |
| 13. Ms. N. Heyzer | UNIFEM |
| 14. Mr. Antonio Maria Costa | UNODC |

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| 15. Mr. L. Bage | IFAD |
| 16. Mr. J. L. Machinea | Regional Commissions |
| 17. Mr. A. Guterres | UNHCR |
| 18. Mr. F. Frangialli | UNWTO |
| 19. Mr. H. Touré | ITU |
| 20. Mr. Michel Jarraud, | WMO |
| 21. Mr. J. Adams | World Bank |
| 22. Ms. Anneke Söder, On behalf of Jacques Diouf | FAO |
| 23. Ms. Juanito Castaño, On behalf of Mr. A. Steiner | UNEP |
| 24. Ms. Manuela Tortora on behalf of Supachai Panitchpakdi | UNCTAD |
| 25. Mr Jean Yves le Saux, on behalf of K. Matsuura | UNESCO |

Item 1: Adoption of the Draft Agenda

- The undg members adopted the draft agenda.

Item 2: Post-Conflict Needs Assessment and Framework

In introducing the agenda item the WB Representative briefly presented the key elements of the PCNA methodology which was designed in participatory manner by World Bank and the undg/ECHA working group to be used to help national partners assess and plan for essential recovery and reconstruction activities. The methodology will help governments to develop nationally defined priorities and interventions and identify financial requirements needed to help stabilize the peace and initiate recovery.

It was stressed that, once the methodology is approved by the undg, agreements would also be sought with DPKO, DPA, PBSO and other related entities to use the framework jointly in all future early recovery and reconstruction interventions.

UNDG members welcomed the initiative. The approach provides a country specific framework within which all agencies can support relevant aspects of post crisis recovery. It was noted that the methodology is being adapted for use in post natural disaster situations.

Decision: UNDG Principals endorsed the concept and methodology of PCNA and agreed to use it as a primary entry point and to support it through staff participation at the country level with the understanding that the selection of the priority and cross-cutting issues will be country specific in each case.

Item 3: Concerted UN support for scaling up the MDGs

In briefing UNDG, the UNDP Associate Administrator advised that progress towards the MDGs at the mid-point would be tabled for discussion by the UN Policy Committee in early May. The SG is committed to take up the MDG issues during the Ministerial discussions at ECOSOC, and will welcome ideas as to how best he can use this milestone to best advocate for further progress.

He further pointed out that countries needed support in establishing or improving national MDG monitoring systems to be integrated within national and regional monitoring mechanisms.

The UN agencies, while focusing on those MDGs that are specific to their areas of expertise, needed to take into account the overall picture (e.g. trade, environment) and speak with one voice in jointly identifying strategies that could be implemented readily.

It was considered neither realistic nor desirable to expect the UN development organizations to provide identical policy advice on development strategies. However, agreement could be reached on the methodology used for establishing baselines and the collection and analysis of internationally comparable data to enable more consistency in monitoring of MDG progress.

Concerns were expressed that recent declines in ODA would undermine achievements in reaching the MDGs. In this regard, the forthcoming OECD/DAC meeting presented a good opportunity to engage donors in constructive dialogue on funding for MDG-based national development strategies and plans and solicit their views and perspectives on resource availability.

The message from the Secretary General and the UN should combine a celebration of the successes achieved, as well as recognition of the remaining challenges, and a realistic reassessment of possible progress. Several countries have been successful in implementing development policies to achieve the MDGs (e.g. Egypt on health indicators). The challenge now is to scale up the successes as well as to reduce vulnerability and prevent sliding back on development indicators in case the necessary funding was not sustained.

Strengthened communication and advocacy efforts in support of the MDGs should be complemented with a reinvigorated partnership with Breton Woods institutions. Mechanisms for quality control, strategic prioritization and a focus on development results and measurement should be embedded in the MDG strategies.

DESA is in charge for collection of information from UN agencies, Breton Woods institutions and OECD, as well as the preparation of global MDG reporting for the General Assembly. ECOSOC and Development Cooperation Forum are some of the relevant forum to engage development partners in an intensive dialogue on MDGs.

Item 4: The UNDP/Spain MDG Achievement Fund

The UNDG Chair provided a briefing on the MDG Achievement Fund which was established with a US\$ 700 million pledge from the Government of Spain. The Fund was open for submissions from UN country teams, once endorsed by RCs. It would support joint programmes involving at least two agencies. A simplified abbreviated format for proposals would be used to minimize the time spent accessing the funds. Technical committees will provide initial advice on the feasibility of each proposal. Out of five ‘thematic’ windows two had already been approved: Gender and Environment and climate change, which included water. The Fund would consider proposals from 5 eligible countries, as identified by the Spanish Government.

In response to requests from the agencies, UNDP noted that additional windows were likely to be opened and that UNDP would be willing to raise with the Government of Spain the issue of opening additional windows.

Item 5: Different aspects of coherence (UNDG-HLCP/HLCM; EC-ESA – UNDG; UNDG –ECPS).

- It was agreed that the issues to be addressed under this agenda item could best be dealt with after the CEB meeting of 20 April, which was expected to review and approve the CEB structure, commissions, and coordination arrangements.

Item 6: Progress report on ‘One UN’ pilots

In introducing the item, the Chair briefed the UNDG on the progress in the ‘One UN’ pilot countries, and key issues emerging from the pilots that needed to be addressed by the leadership of the UNDG to enable the UN system to proceed with “Delivering as One”, including: (i) ensuring programmatic coherence and strategic focus; (ii) funding of

the pilots; (iii) evaluation of the impact of the pilots on development outcomes; and (iv) prioritization; (v) access to the UN technical expertise by the RC.

In general, the UNDG expressed its satisfaction with and support to the ‘One UN’ pilots. It also expressed some concerns, as summarized below:

- Concerns were expressed that the MDG agenda focused mainly on the delivery of social services, without adequate attention being given to the productive economic sector; and that MDGs and national priorities being the only driving forces for the UNDAF may preclude some UN specialized agencies from pursuing their normative mandate (e.g. ILO tripartite social dialogue) or raising sensitive issues (e.g. human rights, reproductive health, protection of refugees). Necessity to reconcile development and humanitarian dimension of the mandates of the agencies, as well as their normative and operational work presents another challenge to overcome, so does the dilemma when different agencies have contradictory objectives;
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- Several agencies pointed out that they will have to work outside the “core” UNDAF results, on the global agenda priorities that they have legal responsibilities for, if governments do not include them in the national development priorities;
- Uncertainties still existed on how the “One Programme, once approved by the government, would be presented to the governing bodies of respective UN agencies participating in pilots;
- Pilots were seen as presenting a good opportunity for gender mainstreaming using the existing tools development by UNDG gender task force. UNIFEM offered to assist in monitoring the performance of the pilots in meeting gender targets;
- Other issues faced by the pilots in the design of the ‘One UN’ Programme included: how to address quality control, oversight, strategic focus, and the need to evaluate both short term (process) results, and long term (impact) results. It was unanimously agreed that measurable development results and performance indicators should be part of the UNDAF from the outset, and that UNEG should work on these with UNDG;
- It was felt that the development of the “one programme” should be the main driver of UN coherence and coordination in the field;
- The pooled resources of the Coherence Fund would help to fill the funding gaps of the One UN Programme. The responsibility for the use of funds and achievement of results would remain with the implementing agency.
- Use of the “Cluster” approach, consolidation of the approval processes and utilization of existing mechanisms/models would help to bring more focus and efficiency in pilots implementation;
- In assessing the cost and benefits of the scale of UN presence in the pilots, we should consider the transaction costs for both the Government and the UN as well as the net change in transaction costs for the UN system at country level and not only by organization.

- Some of the issues that required UNDG support to be able to keep the UN coordination presence light included the following: a) avoid building heavy UNRC office bureaucracy; 2) instead making UN system expertise readily available to RCs, including from NRAs; 3) forge partnerships with non-UN actors; 4) make upfront investments in the areas with potential for cost- saving in longer run, including for joint programmes; 5) balance efficiency consideration of individual agencies with corporate benefits; 6) usage of existing mechanisms; 7) balanced approach in mobilization of national and international expertise;
- Several agencies took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of developing a communication strategy for the pilots to ensure that decisions and directions of senior management are communicated to the field. The experiences and lessons learned from the pilots could also usefully inform the rest of the field. Measures should also be taken to keep governing bodies well informed and consulted during the process;
- The UNDG voiced their support to the idea of the establishment of conflict resolution mechanism to address issues arising during the implementation of the pilots;
- The fundamental principals behind the implementation of the pilots was national ownership and leadership, which would provide diversity of experiences, models and lessons learned to be analyzed and used in furthering reform processes.

In responding to the above issues, the Chair concluded that the pilots' implementation gave the UN system a certain flexibility that should be explored to enable UN agencies to 'Deliver as One', but not to become 'One UN' in terms of one organization. He further highlighted the importance of joint efforts to select and supervise the RCs.