

FIFTH HIGH-LEVEL INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON DELIVERING AS ONE: TIRANA CONFERENCE

Opening Remarks by Helen Clark, Chair of the UN Development Group

Tirana, 27 June 2012 at 10.00am

It is a pleasure for me to address this Fifth Intergovernmental High-Level Conference on Delivering as One.

Let me begin by sincerely thanking the Prime Minister and the Government of Albania for hosting this conference, which exemplifies this country's commitment to UN reform.

Allow me also to extend my thanks to HE Mr. Ferit Hoxha, the Permanent Representative of Albania to the UN, for having steered the consultations of the Delivering as One community in New York and for his stewardship in facilitating the preparations of the outcome document. I thank also Secretary-General Gazmend Turdiu for leading the preparations of the conference, as well as the Resident Co-ordinator and UN Country Team for their important contribution.

In today's challenging global environment, an effective and results-oriented UN development system, which is responsive to country needs, is more important than ever.

The challenges we are confronted with are not minor – the urgent need to accelerate MDG achievement, advance sustainable development, tackle rising inequalities, and address the needs of countries in transition – to name but a few.

Against this backdrop, the world is experiencing great financial uncertainty, and some of the traditionally most reliable supporters of development are faced with serious fiscal constraints.

The United Nations development system is uniquely placed to assist developing countries address the challenges they are confronted with and help them achieve the transformational change they seek. Indeed, the system has much to offer:

its universal presence in developing countries and its commitment to results;

its legitimacy and convening power;

the breadth and depth of its expertise;

its normative responsibilities, including its commitment to human rights-based approaches and equity, including gender equality;

its operational role in assisting programme countries to strengthen their capacities to achieve the MDGs as well as overcome post-crisis and humanitarian challenges and ensuring smooth transition from emergency assistance to reconstruction and development and;

its capacity when well co-ordinated to support countries to tackle complex and cross-cutting issues.

In the 2007 TCPR, the General Assembly called upon the UN development system to be “as coherent, effective, and efficient as possible” in its operational activities for development.

Indeed, in the context of multi-dimensional challenges the world is currently facing, fragmented approaches and solutions are simply no longer acceptable. The UN development system must be part of the solution, not part of the problem. This conference clearly demonstrates our commitment to improve the way we work for better development outcomes on the ground.

This is clearly reflected in the recently released Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One, which provides an important contribution to the discussion on the future of UN reform and how we can best work together for the benefit of all.

One of the Evaluation’s most significant findings is that through the Delivering as One approach, the UN development system has been better positioned to apply the kind of integrated policy solutions and responses needed to address the multi-dimensional and interlinked challenges of our time.

The Independent Evaluation has identified other successful elements of the approach:

it has been driven by national ownership and leadership;

it has reinforced the relevance of the UN development system;

it has delivered results, particularly on the cross-cutting, multi-dimensional issues;

it has increased overall transparency, predictability, and accountability in the support provided, and reduced transaction costs for governments and development partners, although not at this point in a significant way for the UN system, and;

it has been unique in that it delivers an interlinked reform package of programming, funding, management, and accountability.

Overall, these positive findings show that the Delivering as One approach has been instrumental in bringing about important improvements in the way the UN development system has been working in the eight pilot countries.

Challenges do remain, as identified in the Evaluation, including the need to:

further reduce parallel processes, thereby simplifying and reducing transaction costs of programming;

enhance monitoring and evaluation, particularly of joint results;

harmonize and streamline reporting;

implement the principle of mutual accountability, including strengthened incentives for contributions to system-wide results;

ensure that the capacity for Resident Co-ordinators and UN Country Teams to exercise their leadership role is in place;

streamline governance procedures to reduce duplication and transaction costs; and

increased efficiency through further simplification and harmonization of business practices.

Overall, the challenges identified are valid, and I am sure that none of them are particularly surprising to those who have worked so hard to make the Delivering as One approach a success.

UNDG is committed to lead and must be in the lead of the next generation of reforms of the development system and its strategic positioning, including by building on the lessons of the Independent Evaluation. The Independent Evaluation's recommendations are very clear in calling on the UNDG to lead the way forward. In doing so our goal will be to ensure that the development system offers:

relevant substantive leadership;

appropriate configurations and responses in the diverse range of countries we serve;

stronger focus on results and accountability;

reformed programming instruments;

increased effectiveness and efficiency; and

system-wide cost-sharing of the RC system.

For the UN development system to be able to deliver truly coherently, it also helps when national governments are well co-ordinated, and when member states' decisions are coherent across the General Assembly and the UN development system's governing bodies.

The upcoming Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) presents an important opportunity for the General Assembly to ensure that the UN development system is well placed to be effective in today's changing development context. A good way to do this would be for

the QCPR to institutionalize the significant progress achieved through the Delivering as One approach.

The Secretary-General has just released his first report on the QCPR. The Report echoes many of the opportunities and challenges identified by the Independent Evaluation, so there is already significant convergence.

The undg has jointly identified what we believe could be the elements of a successful QCPR, including:

make the UN development system fit for purpose in a range of country development contexts;

position the UN development system at the centre of country-level implementation of new global development agreements, such as that coming from Rio;

establish an even stronger results orientation for the UN development system;

equip the RC system with the necessary tools to provide effective country-level co-ordination;

increase the flexibility and national ownership of common country programming and instruments;

provide a long-term and predictable funding base for UN operational activities for development; and

make further progress on simplification and harmonization.

The QCPR will also shape the next set of strategic priorities for the UN development system, an exercise which I look forward to leading later this year.

Conclusion

After five years of implementing the Delivering as One Approach – first working with the eight pilot countries, and then with a range of self-starters – and after numerous reports, evaluations, and conferences, we are reaching a turning moment in the process of UN reform.

This conference therefore takes place at a pivotal point in time. The discussions on the QCPR start in only a few weeks, and now is a unique occasion at which to identify concrete recommendations on the way forward, based on what we have learned.

I sincerely hope that all present will take advantage of this important opportunity.

Let me finish by thanking first the Governments of the Delivering as One pilot countries and ‘self-starter’ countries. Without your vision, leadership, and advocacy the UN development system could not have come this far in this ambitious reform process.

Second, allow me to express gratitude to our development partners. Your political backing, advocacy, and funding have been, and will continue to be, indispensable.

Third, I place on record my great appreciation of the work of the dedicated Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams who have driven Delivering as One forward in both pilot and self-starter countries.

To you all, I say that the UN development system counts on your continued commitment to UN reform, and your support for UNDG-led work to reposition the development system strategically and make it the very best it can be in the support it gives to programme countries. Your advocacy and leadership on both these matters are essential, not least over the next few months in New York.

I look forward to our deliberations over the next three days and regard what happens here as being a critical contribution to discussion both at ECOSOC in the next two weeks and during the QCPR later in the year.

Thank you.