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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

Draft resolution submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Mrs. Carmen María Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador), on the basis of informal consultations

Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 62/208 of 19 December 2007 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, Assembly resolution 63/232 of 19 December 2008 on operational activities for development and Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/2 of 18 July 2008 on the progress in the implementation of Assembly resolution 62/208,

Reaffirming the importance of the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development, through which the General Assembly establishes key system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the United Nations system,

Underscoring that there is no “one size fits all” approach to development and that development assistance by the United Nations development system should be able to respond to the varying development needs of programme countries and should be in alignment with their national development plans and strategies, in accordance with its mandates,

Reaffirming the need to strengthen the United Nations with a view to enhancing its authority and efficiency, as well as its capacity to address effectively, and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the full range of development challenges of our time, and emphasizing that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should be



valued and assessed on the basis of their impact on the programme countries as contributions to enhancing their capacity to pursue poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development,

Acknowledging the importance of delivering assistance in order to overcome the challenges to improving human life through implementing General Assembly resolution 62/208,

Recalling the role of the Economic and Social Council in providing coordination and guidance to the United Nations system so as to ensure that policy orientations established by the General Assembly are implemented on a system-wide basis in accordance with Assembly resolutions 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, 61/16 of 20 November 2006 and 62/208 and other relevant resolutions,

Results achieved and measures and processes implemented in follow-up to General Assembly resolution 62/208

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the results achieved and measures and processes implemented in follow-up to General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,¹ and of the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the identification of results and fine-tune targets, benchmarks and time frames, in line with paragraph 7 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/2;

2. *Notes* the advances in some areas made by the United Nations system in implementing General Assembly resolution 62/208, including through the development of guidance by the United Nations Development Group reflecting the principles and guidance contained in resolution 62/208;

3. *Reiterates* the call of the General Assembly for the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations development system to take appropriate actions for the full implementation of resolution 62/208;

4. *Also reiterates* the request of the General Assembly to the executive heads of those organizations to continue to report annually to their governing bodies on measures taken and envisaged for the implementation of resolution 62/208;

5. *Reaffirms* that the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should be, inter alia, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism, as well as their ability to respond to the development needs of programme countries in a flexible manner, and that the operational activities are carried out for the benefit of programme countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development;

6. *Notes* the improvements in respect of the participation of United Nations system organizations in the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including through streamlining of inter-agency governance and management structures;

¹ E/2009/68.

7. *Acknowledges* the interim assessments of the progress made and the challenges remaining in efforts to increase coherence in country-level programming, including in the “programme country pilots”;

8. *Notes* the voluntary efforts made to improve coherence, coordination and harmonization in the United Nations development system, including at the request of some “programme country pilot” countries; encourages the Secretary-General to support “programme country pilot” countries in evaluating and exchanging their experiences, with the support of the United Nations Evaluation Group; and emphasizes, in addition, the need for an independent evaluation of lessons learned from such efforts, according to the principles contained in General Assembly resolution 62/208, with regard to national ownership and leadership, and in the context of system-wide norms and standards, for consideration by Member States, without prejudice to a future intergovernmental decision;

9. *Encourages* United Nations system organizations to take the necessary steps to further enhance their participation in United Nations country-level coordination mechanisms, including through decentralization, the delegation of authority, and multi-year programming and encourages the participation of the United Nations development system, by invitation and ex officio, in current and new aid modalities and coordination mechanisms, at the request of the programme country, and invites the United Nations development system to enhance its participation in this regard;

10. *Recalls* the underscoring by the General Assembly, in paragraph 96 of its resolution 62/208, that resident coordinators, supported by the United Nations country teams, should report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and requests the Secretary-General, through the United Nations Development Group and its member organizations, to develop a standard operational format on reporting for this purpose, bearing in mind the need to reduce the administrative burden and transaction costs;

11. *Encourages* the United Nations Evaluation Group to continue its work on the harmonization of evaluation practices across the system, to bring evaluation practices up to standard, and to professionalize evaluation capacities;

12. *Reiterates its encouragement* to all United Nations organizations involved in operational activities for development that have not already done so to adopt, as appropriate, monitoring and evaluation policies that are in line with system-wide norms and standards and to make the necessary financial and institutional arrangements for the creation and/or strengthening of independent, credible and useful evaluation functions within each organization;

13. *Encourages* the United Nations Development Group to develop indicators to assess the sustainability of capacity-building activities of the United Nations system and reiterates that the United Nations development system organizations should use national execution, available national expertise and technologies, and national procurement systems in the implementation of operational activities in line with paragraph 39 of resolution 62/208;

14. *Recalls* paragraphs 48, 49, 51 and 52 of General Assembly resolution 62/208, and calls upon the organizations of the United Nations development system to continue to mainstream support to South-South and triangular cooperation in their

strategic plans and operational activities for development, including through United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, at the request of recipient countries;

15. *Encourages* regional, subregional and international organizations to strengthen their support for South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation;

16. *Calls upon* the organizations of the United Nations development system, within their organizational mandates, to further improve their institutional accountability mechanisms, welcoming in this regard the development of performance indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment (the scorecard) by the United Nations Development Group and encouraging their systematic use by United Nations country teams, and to include, in particular, intergovernmentally agreed gender equality results and gender-sensitive indicators in their strategic frameworks, and takes note of their progress in this regard;

17. *Reiterates* paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 63/232, in which the Assembly urged the funds and programmes and encouraged the specialized agencies to carry out any changes required to align their planning cycles with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including the implementation of midterm reviews as necessary, and to report to the Economic and Social Council on adjustments made to fit the new comprehensive review cycle;

18. *Recalls* the decision of the General Assembly in its resolution 63/232 to hold its next comprehensive policy review in 2012 and subsequent reviews on a quadrennial basis, and in this regard, requests the Secretary-General to continue to submit to the Economic and Social Council detailed reports on results achieved and measures and processes implemented, in accordance with paragraph 142 of Assembly resolution 62/208, at its substantive sessions of 2011 and 2012;

Functioning of the resident coordinator system, including its costs and benefits

19. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits;²

20. *Requests* the United Nations Development Group, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, to further develop approaches and tools for measuring and reporting on the costs and benefits of coordination, including input on best practices and lessons learned from the field on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, and requests the Secretary-General to include in his report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2010, information on challenges and achievements;

21. *Urges* the accelerated coordination of efforts by headquarters units and mechanisms within the United Nations development system to provide relevant, efficient and timely support and guidance to resident coordinators, bearing in mind their various coordination functions;

22. *Encourages* the United Nations Development Group, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, as manager of the resident coordinator system, to develop standards for the type and level of staff and options for operational support that need to be provided to ensure effective United Nations

² E/2009/76.

system coordination in addressing the many interlinked development needs, including for those countries in transition from relief to development, taking into account countries in complex situations and their challenges as well as the country-specific character of those challenges;

23. *Reiterates* the request of the General Assembly to the United Nations development system to provide further financial, technical and organizational support for the resident coordinator system, and requests the members of the United Nations development system to include the provision of resources and support to the resident coordinator system in their respective strategic plans and budgets and to continue to include information on their support to the resident coordinator system in their reports to their respective governing bodies;

24. *Encourages* the United Nations development system to continue broadening the system-wide support provided to the resident coordinator system and to improve the response to requests for support from United Nations country teams, bearing in mind the national ownership and leadership of programme countries, and to ensure that the cost of funding the resident coordinator system does not entail a reduction of the resources that are destined for development programmes in programme countries;

25. *Stresses* that the contribution of non-resident agencies in country programming processes, in response to the priorities of national Governments, should be appropriately facilitated, as necessary, by working through the resident coordinator system and strengthening the accountability of the resident coordinator, and underlines the need for participating non-resident agencies, where they have commitments in relation to programme planning and implementation, to provide the resources necessary to fulfil those commitments;

26. *Requests* United Nations system organizations to support efforts by the United Nations Development Group to strengthen the capability of the United Nations system for improving the process through which the resident coordinators are selected and trained, as well as for attracting and retaining suitable and high-performing resident coordinators, without infringing upon or prejudging the decisions of the General Assembly;

27. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports to the Economic and Social Council on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, information on the operational modalities and the implementation of the management and accountability system of the United Nations development and resident coordinator system, including the functional firewall of the resident coordinator system, and to report on the independent comprehensive assessment thereof to the Council at its substantive session of 2012, within the framework of the comprehensive analysis of implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208;

28. *Requests* the United Nations funds and programmes to reflect in their appropriate annual reports to the Economic and Social Council and to their governing bodies, their specific contributions to and challenges faced in the implementation of the management and accountability framework of the United Nations development and resident coordinator system, including the functional firewall of the resident coordinator system, bearing in mind the authorities established for the Council and the executive boards, including by the General

Assembly in its resolutions 61/16, 60/265 of 30 June 2006, 57/270 B, 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and 48/162 of 20 December 1993;

Country-level capacity of the United Nations development system

29. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on human resources challenges within the United Nations development system at the country level;³

30. *Encourages* the United Nations development system to assess, when appropriate, the adequacy of human resource capacities in United Nations country teams with a view to improving their capacity to deliver results in response to the priorities within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, in line with national development priorities and plans;

31. *Calls upon* the organizations of the United Nations development system to continue their efforts to achieve gender balance within the United Nations system at all levels, both in headquarters and at field duty stations;

32. *Recalls* paragraphs 125 and 126 of General Assembly resolution 62/208, and the need to adopt comprehensive policies and strategies for human resources and workforce planning and development, and in this regard, stresses the need to address obstacles to inter-agency mobility, rapid deployment of qualified national and international staff to situations of crises, and the transparency and competitiveness of the recruitment processes for senior high-level posts, while not infringing upon or prejudging the decisions of the Assembly, and to integrate these issues in the annual reports on the results achieved and the measures and processes implemented in follow-up to resolution 62/208;

Funding of United Nations system operational activities for development

33. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2007⁴ and notes the progress made on broadening and improving the reporting, in line with paragraph 28 of General Assembly resolution 62/208, and in this regard, requests that future reports include further analysis of the current situation and perspectives in respect of core and non-core funding for the United Nations development system;

34. *Also takes note* of the note by the Secretary-General on the review of trends and perspectives in funding for development cooperation;⁵

35. *Stresses* that core resources, because of their untied nature, continue to be the bedrock of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

36. *Notes* that non-core resources represent an important supplement to the regular resource base of the United Nations development system for supporting operational activities for development, thus contributing to an increase in total resources, while recognizing that non-core resources are not a substitute for core resources and that unearmarked contributions are vital for the coherence and harmonization of the operational activities for development;

³ E/2009/75.

⁴ A/64/75-E/2009/59.

⁵ E/2009/85.

37. *Notes with concern* the continuing imbalance between core and non-core resources received by the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and the potential negative impact of non-core funding on the coordination and effectiveness of United Nations operational activities for development at the country level, while recognizing that thematic trust funds, multi-donor trust funds and other voluntary non-earmarked funding mechanisms linked to organization-specific funding frameworks and strategies, as established by the respective governing bodies, constitute some of the funding modalities that are complementary to regular budgets;

38. *Also notes with concern* the negative impact of the financial crisis, and urges countries in a position to do so to increase the voluntary contributions that they provide to the United Nations development system, on a predictable basis, to support development activities at the country level;

39. *Calls upon* the United Nations development system to strengthen its ability to support national efforts at the country level to mitigate the impact of the crisis;

40. *Recalls* the request of the General Assembly, in paragraph 23 of its resolution 59/250 of 22 December 2004, that the Economic and Social Council undertake triennially a comprehensive review of trends and perspectives in funding for development cooperation and requests the Secretary-General to integrate all the elements of that review in his biennial report to the Development Cooperation Forum, as of 2012;

41. *Emphasizes* that increasing financial contributions to the United Nations development system is key to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and in this regard recognizes the mutually reinforcing links among increased effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the United Nations development system, achieving concrete results in assisting developing countries in eradicating poverty and achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development through operational activities for development and the overall resourcing of the United Nations development system;

Simplification and harmonization of the United Nations development system

42. *Takes note* of actions taken by the executive boards and governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies in the area of simplification and harmonization of the United Nations system to reduce transaction costs, enhance efficiency and achieve financial savings, to be invested back in country programmes;

43. *Encourages* United Nations system organizations to continue to work towards simplification and harmonization under the guidance of their executive boards and governing bodies;

44. *Notes* that, while progress is being achieved towards the simplification and harmonization of business practices within the United Nations development system, many procedures require further harmonization, as identified in the Plan of Action for the Harmonization of Business Practices in the United Nations System, developed by the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations

System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its functional networks,⁶ and requests the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies to explore sources of financing to support the implementation of this Plan, including discussion with their respective governing bodies on the allocation of funds through their respective support budgets;

45. *Urges* the Secretary-General, through the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to step up efforts to standardize and harmonize the concepts, practices and cost classifications related to transaction costs and cost recovery, while maintaining the principle of full cost recovery in the administration of all non-core/supplementary/extrabudgetary contributions, including in joint programmes;

46. *Recalls* the importance of continuing to strengthen national execution, bearing in mind the importance of building national capacity and simplifying procedures and aligning them with national procedures;

47. *Requests* the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies that practice cash transfer to accelerate the roll-out of the harmonized approach to cash transfers;

48. *Urges* the United Nations funds and programmes and encourages the specialized agencies to ensure that adequate information is included in the existing reporting on simplification and harmonization to their respective executive boards and governing bodies so as to enable intergovernmental bodies to make informed decisions on policy changes in a timely manner, and requests the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to ensure that information on the Plan of Action for the Harmonization of Business Practices, as well as periodically updated information on its implementation, including related costs and possible savings, is made available.

⁶ CEB/2008/HLCM/10.