



STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, BEFORE THE SECOND COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEM 90 (B): OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT: TRIENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (New York, 4 November, 2004)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

The G.77 and China attaches a great importance to this debate on the UN operational activities and the ways to ensure its wider impact on development. The TCPR is not a routine exercise. It is an opportunity to take stock of the results already achieved in the reform process of the UN operational activities, and to identify clear guidelines on how to make further progress in light of the evolving international development agenda and the challenges developing countries continue to face. The report of the Secretary-General as well as the support documentation presented at the substantive session of the ECOSOC held last July, provide a valuable framework for this debate.

Overview

The G.77 and China would like to emphasize some key goals and guidelines that should orient the next steps in the reform process of the UN field operations and to present the Group's views on some specific recommendations contained in the report on the TCPR.

The credibility and effectiveness of the UN development assistance are embedded in its universality, neutrality and multilateralism. The UN system conveys a vision of development, defined by the MDGs and the internationally agreed goals, that is holistic and comprehensive. As the report of the Secretary-General correctly indicates, the credibility of the UN assistance depends on its relevance to developing countries' needs and on its role in supporting the national policies set by developing countries themselves.

The concepts of "ownership" and "demand-driven" operations in the language of the development community shows a wide consensus in the international development community on the need to "root" the external assistance into the national policies and poverty reduction strategies set through national decisions-making processes. It is time to ensure that this is the reality that guides development assistance. The measures that are being taken by the UN system to improve its organization and planning at the country level should respond to two criteria: (i) be based on the national development agendas, and (ii) be geared to assisting developing countries in achieving the MDGs and other internationally agreed goals through their national strategies.

Ownership may remain an abstract notion unless it becomes an objective *per se* of the development assistance: national capacities to design and to implement endogenous development policies need to be enhanced and effectively supported by the UN field operations. The national planning institutions need to be supported, in particular by providing them with new technologies, and national capacity-building strategies need to be enhanced and sustainable.

Funding UN system Operational Activities

Credibility and effectiveness also depend on the resources. We fully share the concerns and recommendations of the Secretary-General on the need of ensuring predictable, stable and adequate funding for the UN development assistance. New funding mechanisms should be explored. More progress is needed in the harmonization and simplification measures in order to avoid or reduce the transaction costs of the field operations. However, it is important to stress that the quality and not only the quantity of the resources determine the impact of the UN operational activities in the field: there is a contradiction between advocating an effective multilateral assistance, on the one hand, and increasing the financing of UN operations through short-term, ear-marked voluntary contributions outside the core funding mechanisms. Core budgets, un-earmarked resources and multi-year budgets should be the main financing instruments of the multilateral development cooperation, since they ensure predictable planning and a coherent response to multilaterally agreed goals.

Engagement of Non-Resident UN Entities

Another important principle that should guide the reform process regards the complex nature of development processes. The development agenda is made by a range of interrelated domains, encompassing growth policies, environmental concerns, social, health and education needs, rural development, employment, trade, investment, finance policies, science and technology needs and other policy areas - all of them necessary to achieve the MDGs. The diversity of the UN system expertise in all these areas should be fully utilized, by designing integrated and coherent UN operations matching the needs of the recipient country. Flexibility and pragmatism should guide further progress in ensuring the role of all the UN entities according to each country's demand: it is important to facilitate the substantive participation of the non-resident entities in the country-level operations as required by the national development agendas. The structure of the UN country planning and financing should not become a straight jacket set once for all since different development situations require different solutions.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are part of the development processes and need to be integrated in the country programmes as one of the main goals of the UN assistance. Tapping the full potential of the contribution women can make in the development process is crucial in the attainment of the MDGs and of the internationally agreed development goals.

Transition from Crisis to Development

The UN support to transition from crisis to development requires an accurate articulation of peace building, conflict prevention and post-conflict assistance. This kind of assistance should not be assimilated to the short-term needs arising from the crisis itself: the assistance required during the recovery phase entails different instruments and additional funding. Peace-building, rehabilitation and recovery and the quest for sustainable development are long-term goals that if not secured can undermine the consolidation of lasting peace.

Regional Dimensions and South-South Cooperation

The increasing relevance of regional and sub-regional economic arrangements has to be introduced in the design of the multilateral development assistance, particularly in case of transboundary initiatives. The UN system has a valuable regional expertise that can allow the definition and delivery of assistance based on the knowledge of the ground and therefore tailored to the local needs. The regional dimension of development cooperation should also be taken into account in the interagency arrangements within the UN system. The deepening of South-South cooperation in economic, social, technological and cultural areas needs to be reflected in the organization of the UN development activities, and has to be supported through networking and exchanges not only among developing countries but also in cooperation with other donor partners.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Finally, effectiveness and credibility rely on concrete development results. One basic principle is to ensure the appropriate assessment of the UN assistance, that should be based on development benchmarks agreed with the recipient country. The monitoring and evaluation functions of the individual organizations as well as within the UN system as a whole deserve the highest priority.

Non development Expenditure

Another issue the G-77 and China wishes to raise is that the need to ensure that the development funds are used most efficiently and are devoted to the core function of supporting development activities cannot be overemphasized. All efforts should be made to ensure that non-development expenditures are minimized.

Mr. Chairman:

Recommendations in the Report of the Secretary-General

The G77 and China support the recommendations included in the Report of the Secretary-General. However, in light of the principles and guidelines I just mentioned, I would like to elaborate on the position of the Group on some of those recommendations.

This reform process was launched in 1997 by a General Assembly resolution continues to be the reference and the framework of the ongoing reforms. The same resolution made clear the key role of the Resident Coordinator as "team leader" as well as the role of the UNDP in the organization of the UN field operations. It is also clear that the CCA/UNDAFs are the main planning instruments aimed at ensuring the division of labour among the UN entities -

including the non-resident entities in response to national strategies. In this structure, the UNDG has a monitoring role aimed at ensuring the overarching coherence of the UN system in the field of development.

The report of the Secretary-General contains practical recommendations aimed at increasing and deepening the inter-agency arrangements, particularly through modalities that ensure the effective involvement of the non-resident agencies according to the needs of the recipient country, and taking into account the comparative advantage of these non-resident entities. The Resident Coordinators and the UN Country teams should use various means, such as networking, shared experts, and regular contacts among agencies, in order to facilitate the participation in the UN operations of the entities that do not have a country presence. Similarly, non-resident entities should explore and implement practical ways of collaboration within the system so as to ensure that their knowledge and expertise is used in the most appropriate and efficient manner.

The recommendations of the Secretary-General indicate that the planning done through the CCA/UNDAFs should be supportive of the national plans and poverty reduction strategies - where they exist. However, it is not clear how the financial and technical assistance provided by the Bretton Woods institutions, including the PRSPs, will interact with the CCA/UNDAFs. As we said, development processes are complex. Development entails ensuring coherence between all the different policy components. It also entails the country's ownership of all these policy components, so that the recipient country can decide what kind of financial and technical assistance it wants to receive from which UN entities, including the World Bank and the IMF. At the same time it should avoid overburdening the institutions of recipient governments and unduly blowing up transaction costs .

The relevance and effectiveness of the CCA/UNDAFs will remain limited if the assistance provided by the Bretton Woods institutions is not properly articulated with the assistance provided by the rest of the UN system. In general, the CCA/UNDAFs are mainly focused on humanitarian, social, environmental and micro-economic domestic issues - while macroeconomic policies such as finance and trade, as well as poverty reduction measures are addressed through the PRSPs, and therefore linked to the assistance of the Bretton Woods institutions. This is an artificial segmentation of the development agenda. It belongs to each developing country to decide how to ensure the coherence between these different instruments according to its own needs. In this same context, we should examine the role of the assistance provided by the WTO in the area of the international trade rules. The report of the Secretary-General correctly calls for interagency partnerships and knowledge networks, including the non-resident entities. This recommendation should also encompass the Bretton Woods institutions. These interagency arrangements should be flexible and pragmatic, based on a genuine cooperation among equal partners of the multilateral system, and aiming at maximizing the benefits of the diverse expertise existing in the UN family.

Regarding the recommendations on the funding of the UN field operations, the ECOSOC should establish an intergovernmental working group to examine the predictability, stability and adequacy of the funding of UN development operations, as well as new and alternative funding mechanisms. The ECOSOC should also undertake, on a regular basis, a comprehensive review of the trends and perspectives of the financial resources of the UN system development cooperation as compared to other forms of international development assistance. In light of the shared consensus on the need for coherence in the pursuit of development objectives, donor partners have examined carefully whether their approaches to funding with regard to the UN systems operational activities, the BWI and other bilateral initiatives are consistent with the goals of coherence, coordination and cost effectiveness.

Equally important is to make progress in the management of the UN field operations. Decentralization, delegation of authority, simplification of financial regulations, flexible arrangements regarding the personnel, shared services and premises, need to be systematically considered in view of effectiveness and results. Greater interagency collaboration, in the field as well as at the headquarters, is a priority: the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the UNDG should ensure the involvement and the inclusion of all the UN entities in the field operations, including the non-resident entities.

Mr. Chairman:

The debate we are having today on the role of the UN system in the development assistance cannot be de-linked from the current situation of the international relations. Development is, and will continue to be in the forthcoming years, one of the main responsibilities of our multilateral system. Collective security has two faces: the security and the economic components. The UN and all its members have to address both dimensions and with an equal attention. The efforts to prevent conflicts are meaningless if the economic roots of the conflicts are not addressed. In all the developing countries, development is part of the political agenda because it is closely related to stability, poverty alleviation, employment, economic growth and sustainable development, human rights, and democracy. We all have common interests in ensuring that development is at the top of the multilateral efforts, and that the economic collective security is a top priority of multilateralism.

