Thank you, Mr. President,

It is my honour to present the report of the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP to Panama and El Salvador. The aim of this visit, which took place from 23 March to 1 April 2014, was to enhance Executive Board members’ understanding of the role of the United Nations development system in general and especially that of the specific organizations concerned in the region.

The delegation learned about the role and functions of the Panama-based United Nations Regional Team in supporting and coordinating United Nations country teams and national Governments in the region and also interacted with the Resident Coordinator and the UNCT in Panama.

In Panama, the delegation and the United Nations Regional Team started to consider the development of a "Delivering as Region" modality for Latin America and the Caribbean, an approach that should be further explored in the future. The delegation closely observed the role played by UNCT in El Salvador in its efforts to achieve sustainable development, especially the Millennium Development Goals, in the light of the challenges it faces.

As a lower middle-income country, El Salvador has made tremendous progress in development in recent years but is still faced with various challenges. The visit provided a unique opportunity to see how El Salvador achieved progress in the past and how it is preparing to meet the challenges ahead, especially in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, and the nature of support it requests from the United Nations development system. Despite being classified as a lower middle-income country, some aspects of El Salvador suggest that it might be regarded as non-typical of this category.

The visit was the first joint field visit to Latin America in over 10 years. With El Salvador being the second country to implement ‘Delivering as One’ in the region, the visit provided an opportunity to observe closely the role of the United Nations development system. In contrast to last year’s visit to Myanmar, which provided an insight into the Asia Pacific Region from the perspective of a least developed country, this year’s visit focused on the Latin America and Caribbean Region, and especially the situation of middle-income countries.

The delegation visited the UNICEF regional office in Panama City, held meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, the regional UNDG team and UN country team.

In El Salvador, the delegation was received by the President, H.E. Mauricio Funes, and held meetings with the Vice-President elect and his transition team; the First Lady and Secretary for Social Inclusion; the President of the Supreme Court; the President of the National Assembly; the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the UN country team; members of the diplomatic corps; and representatives of multilateral and bilateral agencies, the private sector, civil society, academia, the media, children, adolescents and youth.

During the visit, round table discussions were conducted on various themes with the focus on the role of the United Nations in El Salvador. The delegation also undertook site visits of
various agency-specific and joint projects in San Salvador and other cities and areas. The head of the delegation participated in a national TV interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a press conference was held by the heads of the delegation at the end of the visit.

Mr. President,

Latin America and the Caribbean, a region with around 8 per cent of the world's area and home to more than 600 million people, faces several challenges including poverty, persistent inequality and climate change. El Salvador, geographically one of the smallest countries in the region, is making efforts to achieve socioeconomic development primarily through its own efforts, but with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies. The United Nations has been playing an important role in this regard. In the 22 years since the signing of the peace agreement between the conflicting parties facilitated by the UN, El Salvador has been on a democratic path with significant progress in the socioeconomic sphere.

The current Government, which took office in 2009 under President Funes, has built upon the achievements of previous administrations in the social sphere as well as introducing various policy measures to address the prevailing rampant inequality, exclusion and poverty. As a result, there has been remarkable progress in health, education and poverty reduction. With the election of a new president from the incumbent ruling party, it is expected that these policies will continue, and this will help to achieve further progress in addressing inequality.

This visit focused on the role of UN development system with regard to El Salvador's progress towards achieving the MDGs and the challenges ahead in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. President,

I would now like to summarize briefly the main findings and recommendations arising from the joint field visit. Time limits do not allow me to do justice to the range of issues we encountered on our visit to this dynamic and complex country. I therefore refer delegations to the report for a complete description of our visit, and the members of the team and I would be happy to address any questions in the ensuing discussion.

First, regarding Delivering as One, the UNCT should make best use of the upcoming review of the UNDAF with a view to the “One Programme” to be designed. The UNCT should examine whether the instruments chosen for policy dialogue had the desired catalytic, results-oriented effects, if the division of roles and responsibilities was clear enough to promote effective collaboration and if the comparative advantage of the UNDS was adequately presented and utilized.

In order to maximize delivering of combined results, the UNCT should implement fully the standard operating procedures, in particular with regard to a joint annual work plan, a common budgetary framework, and a common results reporting system.
Second, the UNCT should clarify the roles its members will utilize, such as technical adviser, advocate, convener, facilitator and/or capacity builder, and ensure that these roles are mutually reinforcing.

Third, while planning its activities and projects in the country, the UNCT should take into consideration follow-up actions based on positive results and lessons learned from completed (joint) programmes. As it is important to support the country’s preventive efforts in tackling problems at an early stage, the UNCT should assist in effective coordination between various stakeholders in relevant areas.

Fourth, the UN should provide advice where necessary on policy topics and solutions in the priority areas assist in their implementation and provide further support to the Government in institutional capacity-building while making use of its full technical expertise and normative mandates.

Fifth, gender equality and women’s empowerment should be strengthened as a cross-cutting issue across the UN programmes, including full use of tools such as the System-wide Action Plan. The UNCT should continue to support as a matter of priority the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment and their mainstreaming across national policies. Similarly, helping in awareness-raising within society and among public officers/civil servants is important. The challenges in the area of rule of law and the issue of access to justice, also within the framework of fighting impunity, should be a key focus.

As women are faced by many structural challenges and are victims of violence, inadequate health services, lack of education, unemployment etc., the UNCT should promote the potential of women’s empowerment for the economic development of the country and sustainable social inclusion, both through projects specifically designed to address the needs of women as well as through mainstreaming gender in all projects.

Sixth, when addressing the problem of violence, the role of the whole community, the family situation and school relations should be taken into consideration, in addition to the challenges outside these environments. The UN should further support regional solutions for regional challenges with regard to violence.

Seventh, special attention should be dedicated to youth with focus on skills training, education, building a culture of peace, human rights awareness, participation in decision-making processes and strengthening social relations.

Eighth, the UNCT should strengthen cooperation with civil society to identify areas where delivery should be left to NGOs. The UNCT should therefore further promote constructive collaboration with NGOs and strengthen their partnership with authorities.

Ninth, the UN should support the building of integrated strategies for disaster risk management, continue to support risk reduction projects in public infrastructure and promote the involvement of community organizations, including women, and the incorporation of the gender perspective into every phase of disaster risk management, response and recovery.
Tenth, the UNCT should work in close collaboration with the Government and other development partners towards sustainable agricultural development in order to achieve food security and good nutrition. Special focus should be given in this regard to women and smallholder farmers and securing land tenure rights.

Eleventh, the UNCT should give special attention to combating malnutrition in all its forms, with a special focus on children in the first 1,000 days of their lives, as malnutrition imposes high economic, social and human development costs. Complementing this approach, focused interventions are required to ensure that children are brought out of poverty and that their levels of exclusion are addressed in a sustainable manner, including through the strengthening of national integral child protection systems.

Twelfth, the UNCT should assist the Government in improving national data and statistics as well as the incorporation of the data collected into strategies and actions.

Thirteenth, the UNCT should strengthen its support and facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives.

Fourteenth, the UNCT should continue to assist the Government in building further on the socioeconomic progress achieved in recent years and continue to provide policy advice for inclusive and sustainable economic development. The potential for further advances in the areas of education, health care systems, food security and nutrition and social protection should be properly addressed with a view to reducing poverty and inequality. Migration-related challenges need further collaborative support on the part of various actors. The UNCT should also continue to support and assist the Government on tax reform.

In closing, Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation, I would like to express our gratitude to UN-Women, which served as the coordinating agency for the joint field visit, as well as the UN country teams of El Salvador and Panama and the UNICEF and UNDG regional teams, for organizing the visit in a very professional manner. We also thank the Governments of El Salvador and Panama, the numerous stakeholders who participated in events and the staff and stakeholders of the projects we visited, who invested great effort and time to host the delegation.

Thank you, Mr. President.