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Statement at the 2016 Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UNICEF/UN-Women/WFP

“Working in Fragile Contexts, Including in Middle-Income Countries”

CR3, United Nations HQs, New York

10.30 am, Friday, 3 June 2016

I am pleased to join this Joint Board meeting to discuss the challenges of working in fragile contexts, including in Middle Income Countries (MICs).

Conflict and fragility are among the biggest obstacles to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Almost two-thirds of countries in fragile contexts failed to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing extreme poverty rates by half by 2015. In 2030, on current trends, it is forecast that there will be an even greater concentration of extreme poverty in fragile contexts than today.
Thus, eradicating poverty from the face of the earth will require the root causes of fragility to be addressed – not least inequality and marginalisation, governance challenges, access to justice, and exposure to disaster risk.

The importance of working together

To achieve that, and to achieve the aspiration of the 2030 Agenda to ‘leave no one behind’, major efforts must be made to work more effectively across the humanitarian, development, political, human rights, and peacebuilding spheres. As underlined in the background paper prepared for this segment, the collective resolve of the United Nations system to move in this direction is gaining strength. New approaches are already showing how we can work better together to ensure that the SDGs can be advanced in fragile settings, including crisis-affected Middle Income Countries.

For example:
• Important lessons were learned from the UN’s support for
  *New Deal* implementation processes in the last five years.

  Somalia’s New Deal compact is a good example of
  Government-led planning and national ownership, with
  support from development partners. The New Deal process is
  embraced by self-identified fragile states and their partners.

• At the *World Humanitarian Summit*, commitments were made to
  embed risk management in humanitarian, peacebuilding, and
  development efforts. An example of this is already at work in the
  Resilience Analysis Unit (RAU) for the Horn of Africa set up in 2014.
  It is supported by UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and FAO, and is helping
  governments to undertake systematic risk analysis to inform
  prevention of and preparedness for disasters and conflicts.

• As the *Ebola* crisis showed, fragility is multi-dimensional.
  While the Ebola-affected countries were making noteworthy
  progress in economic growth, they lacked the capacity to
  respond in a timely and comprehensive manner when the
  disease appeared. The consequence was significant
  development setbacks. This reminds us of the importance of
building institutions and capacities which can respond to and be sustained through shocks. Work in this area must continue to be a critical part of recovery from the Ebola crisis.

- *Building resilience* is now central to the way in which the UN is responding to fragility. Gustavo Gonzalez from UNDP’s Regional Hub in Amman will shortly share our experience with the 3RP – the *Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan* – in the countries adjacent to Syria where UN agencies are investing in the capacities of local people, refugees, and host communities. The conference on Syria in London in February provided a huge boost to this approach.

- There is growing acknowledgment that we must work to sustain development in even the most fragile and crisis-affected settings. Brian Williams, RC/RR in Albania, will share with us how the financing of peacebuilding contributes to protecting development progress and preventing setbacks.

UNDP itself has stepped up its work on sustaining development initiatives during *protracted crises*. This has been
a focus for our work in Syria, Yemen, and now in Libya, for example, where we strive to support livelihoods and access to basic services. These efforts are often, of necessity, focused at the local level where institutions may still be functioning and communities retain some cohesion.

- The UN Development Group has developed a shared approach to support countries in implementing the SDGs called "MAPS"—mainstreaming, acceleration, and policy support. Working within that framework, and acknowledging that tailored approaches are needed for fragile contexts, UNDP is backing a coalition of UN agencies, think-tanks, bilateral and multilateral partners, civil society and governments of countries experiencing fragility to define the most effective ways of supporting SDG implementation there.

We look forward to today’s discussion on these issues, acknowledging the importance of ensuring that the many, many millions of people living in fragile contexts are not left behind.