Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards

Operationalizing the decisions of the QCPR, specifically taking into consideration climate change and building resilience

Monday, 19 June 2017, 10.00-13.00, Conference Room 4

*Intervention by Grete Faremo, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNOPS*

Mr. President,

Excellences,

Distinguished delegates,

The QCPR is a call on the UN Development System, with the support of Member States, to work more effectively.

UNOPS joins the call on all parties to unleash the efficiency gains we can realize by working more effectively together.

If we can help our UN partners to further improve their delivery with the support of our specialized services, we help to deliver more for less - more value for money.

Our UNOPS ambition is to contribute to working as one UN. And putting the aims and objectives of the QCPR into practice.

This process is vital in ensuring the UN responds to today’s development challenges, and those of tomorrow.

For UNOPS, projects and operations are core – underscoring our role to help countries implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

A recent survey we commissioned concluded that our services are in demand across all Sustainable Development Goals and we stand ready to live up to expectations.

Infrastructure.

Take infrastructure for example:

Better education needs schools.

Healthy societies need hospitals.

Cleaning our oceans requires addressing pollution at source – on land.

The list goes on - *infrastructure needs*, under different goals requiring multiple *competencies* from across the UN.
To propose these challenges can be separated is simply inaccurate.

In implementing a new QCPR, all parts of the UN development system will need to work collaboratively.

We must develop joint approaches in support of specific results that cut across sectors or mandates.

We must adopt comprehensive and integrated approaches, based on a full understanding of risk, bringing together planning, design and implementation.

But this does not mean that everybody must work on everything. Working together means providing those parts of total UN delivery which each of us is best at. Working together means avoiding duplication. And we cannot all work on all issues in every detail. Enhancing specialization should be our joint ambition.

If we don’t manage this the donors may walk away. They may encourage more open and transparent competition on project implementation within the UN to secure more efficient use of resources.

Responding to country needs

Mr. President,

Today, I want to share some practical examples of how we respond to national priorities, in partnerships across the UN system.

First: UN coordination on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience.

A key area of demand for our technical expertise from nearly every government.

It is growing, and in some cases, the situation is urgent.

For example in Bangladesh. We are working with the government on a joint UN resilience programme.

Bangladesh is one of the world’s most vulnerable countries to natural hazards and disasters. Monsoon, floods and cyclones strike the nation each year. Poverty levels and a high population density add to the challenge — some analyses state Bangladesh’s economy is more at risk to climate change than any country.

To address this situation requires more than a reactive approach. Long term strategies are needed, based on a full understanding of multiple risks combined, to enable local settlements to withstand and to recover quickly from crises. This is an initiative from UNOPS, UNDP and UN Women aligned to the Sendai framework – the global plan for disaster risk reduction. We come as one UN.

In Sri Lanka, after repeated flood disasters, the UN country team is embarking on a similar process.

In Maldives, we are working on a low emission carbon reduction initiative, addressing aspects of climate change including water and waste management.

This programme brings seven agencies together, to work towards a common goal.
In Afghanistan, the need for resilient infrastructure is also critical. The country is naturally prone to earthquakes, flooding, droughts, avalanches and landslides. And climate change only increases risks. To help tackle the problem, the UN working group on disaster risk reduction, chaired by our colleagues in WFP, asked we lead UN efforts, with UNEP and the World Bank, to develop a national strategic framework for resilience.

Its aim is to address country needs; supporting the government to coordinate resilience-building nationwide, to help save lives and livelihoods.

Procurement

In closing, I wish to echo requests from member states calling on the UN family to explore opportunities for collaborative procurement.

As I recently stated, we see procurement as simply a reality of nearly every UN activity. Every global goal: every mission; every operation.

Without medicines we have no health intervention; without safety equipment we cannot enter danger zones; without means of transport we can never reach those in dire need of help. Without the provision of goods and services, attempts to address the world’s problems would be impossible.

The UN itself procures around 17 billion dollar of goods and services across the globe each year.

Reform context

Mr. President,

We believe these are strong examples of the UN family working together to meet country needs.

They take advantage of the strengths of all parties.

But we all know it doesn’t always work that way.

The UN country team system can be an arena for collaboration, coordination and unified engagement with host governments.

I have said it before. But I firmly believe that a truly impartial UN Resident Coordinator, treating all agencies equally, is a pre-requisite for a well-functioning country team.

We should not underestimate the value of this role, and I fully support ongoing work to see how we can refine this model, to ensure country needs are paramount.

Thank you