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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS AT OPENING OF THE OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT SEGMENT OF THE SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE 2014 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)

New York, 24 February 2014
Your Excellency Ambassador Carlos Enrique García González, Vice-President of ECOSOC,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to address this important ECOSOC meeting today.

We live in turbulent and exciting times. The challenges are great, but the opportunities are equally great.

The world has changed dramatically since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals in 2000.

But we are only beginning to grasp the far-reaching implications of the new global landscape for development cooperation and for the role of the UN development system.

Member States are deliberating on a new universal and unified post-2015 development agenda with focus on poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development.
The UN development system will need to respond coherently in linking the normative, standard-setting and operational dimensions of our work.

This will require new thinking and new approaches to our work models and to financing to guarantee our operational effectiveness.

We will need to adapt both to the rapidly changing development cooperation environment and the varying development needs of programme countries.

The Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review is the mechanism by which Member States give us guidance on the changes needed so we can be best equipped to meet the demands placed on us.

I see three focus areas.

First, many programme countries have crossed the threshold into middle-income status.

For a long time, development policy was framed on the understanding that poor people and the poorest states shared the same space.

This is no longer true.
It is now estimated that as much as 75 per cent of the world's poorest people live in middle-income countries.

We must seriously consider how this affects our development policies.

Second, programme countries increasingly expect policy support from the UN system, often in areas that require simultaneous interventions across different sectors.

This requires a high level of expertise.

Third, the emergence of new global challenges is leading to growing demand from both developing and developed countries for new forms of collective response and new mechanisms for international cooperation.

These changing needs raise important questions about the response of the Organization in the post-2015 era.

How can the UN system strengthen its catalytic role?

How can our respective strengths be used collectively to respond to the needs of developing countries?
Our response needs to include greater emphasis on strengthening the link between the normative and operational role of the UN system.

We will need new business models, less fragmentation, renewed partnerships, as well as new accountability frameworks and monitoring mechanisms.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is not only the needs of programme countries that are significantly changing.

The funding environment for UN development operations is also evolving.

The UN development system remains the largest multilateral partner representing a total of $23.9 billion dollars, or 17 per cent of total global ODA.

While long term funding trends have generally been favourable for the UN development system, the most recent are a cause for concern.
As you recall, the General Assembly requested the Executive Boards of the Funds and Programmes and the governing bodies of Specialized Agencies to organize dialogues in 2014 on how to finance the development results agreed in their new strategic plans.

Such dialogue is needed to strengthen the ownership by Member States of the functions, strategic priorities and financing requirements of the Agencies, Funds and Programmes.

As the UN development system continues to expand its efforts to work with new partners, the funding base has become increasingly diversified.

Earmarked contributions are now the dominant feature in the funding architecture of the UN development system.

While I see this as a vote of confidence in the UN system, I suggest that more efforts are made to avoid fragmentation and high transaction costs, by taking a holistic approach.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
The UN development system must continue to build on its core strengths. These are its universal presence, its legitimacy, its convening power, and its depth and breadth of expertise.

This is essential if we are to be a strong partner to countries in achieving their development needs and if we are to support Member States in translating global norms and standards into national policy.

Member States must continue to benefit from the diverse and specialized strengths of individual UN entities.

But at the same time, the system needs to explore opportunities for promoting collective action and support.

The Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review gives – for the first time - an intergovernmental recognition to the “Delivering as One” model.

“Delivering as One” is now a well-tested working model.

While it remains a voluntary option, the situation on the ground indicates that it is being adopted by an increasing number of countries.
Experience shows that, through this approach, the UN is better positioned to apply integrated policy responses to address poverty eradication and to build longer-term resilience.

A more cohesive UN at the country level is a dynamic model for building long-term sustainability.

Important progress has been made in recent years in enhancing policy integration, programme coherence and harmonizing operational practices.

It is now time to take the next steps.

The UN system should be fully equipped to draw on the strengths of individual entities to support programme countries in developing an integrated approach to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

We simply have to become “fit for purpose” in the post-2015 era.

I urge you to critically review the ability and potential of the UN system to serve programme countries in the most effective manner.
It is time to ask tough questions and provide the answers that will enable us to meet the aspirations of people everywhere for a life of dignity for all.

The Secretary-General and I are committed to supporting you in this endeavour.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.

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