ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment (24-26 Feb 14)
Dialogue with the Executive Heads
Looking to the future: Current and emerging strategic priorities
Monday 24 February 2014, 3.00-6.00PM
7 minutes for speech

Mr. Vice-President,

Distinguished Members of the Economic and Social Council,

I start with a reflection to set the context for my remarks today on the theme of our dialogue: looking to the future.

Last month, I visited the DRC together with my colleagues from UNHCR and WFP, to identify stronger synergies in contexts where all 3 agencies are responding to the needs of the most vulnerable. The visit was first of all a reminder that while we carry out emergency assistance, we also work on development and building resilience. This is essential to allow affected populations to make a new start and break the cycle of vulnerability.

It also reminded us that we need to focus on the concrete results that we can deliver at country level. It is this drive for results that should guide us as we look to the future. The QCPR provides us with a valuable tool for this.

Today, I would like to focus on two messages. First, the progress we are already making on the QCPR. And second that, looking ahead, we need to remain agile and adaptive and continue our focus on results over process.

First: we are progressing well on QCPR implementation since the resolution was adopted 14 months ago. My colleague from UN-Women has already shared some of the challenges and dilemmas in implementing the mandates in the QCPR. Let me complement him by now highlighting examples of progress in two areas of the QCPR.
The first area of the QCPR I would like to highlight is the substantive (i.e. WHAT): national capacity building and development effectiveness. For the first time, UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UN-Women, WFP and UNICEF aligned their respective new Strategic Plans with the QCPR, both in timing and in content as well as in relation to common indicators in our respective results frameworks.

The convergence of our strategic plans provides us an opportunity for a joint and complementary response to the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and inequity. Our diversity in mandates allows for a multifaceted approach that is needed to address the challenge of poverty and vulnerability from many angles - including food security, health, education, livelihoods, gender and human rights. For example, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNV, UNICEF is collaborating with the Government of Kazakhstan through a multi-sector programme aimed at addressing social and economic effects of inequities on lives of children and ensuring access to social services for the most vulnerable. With an aim to strengthen national capacity, the programme has introduced new models of integrated social services in health, child protection and social policy. Local authorities are also supported in enhancing child-centered programmes and budgets. Furthermore, the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF are specifically working with the Government for enhancing the national monitoring system for more effective allocation of resources on child well-being and vulnerable populations.

The same multi-faceted approach is applied when building resilience, which is fundamental to sustaining human development and national capacity development. For example, in Somalia, WFP, FAO and UNICEF have developed a multi-agency strategy to improve interventions across preparedness, relief, rehabilitation and development efforts. The multi-agency strategy is based on three pillars: (i) helping develop productive assets, employment opportunities, and access to food; (ii) enabling the provision of basic social services; and (iii) making safety nets locally available to provide a minimum level of social protection to seasonally
and chronically at-risk populations. Central to this three pronged strategy is national capacity development for resilience based programming.

The second area of the QCPR I would like to highlight is on improved functioning of the UN development system (i.e. HOW). The second generation of DaO benefits from a stronger results culture which is also embedded in the Strategic Plans of individual agencies. The recently introduced standard operating procedures as well as the renewed headquarters commitment, through a plan of action, on addressing specific systemic bottlenecks and challenges in implementing DaO are important steps forward. Results over process is our vision of the second generation DaO, which will build on lessons learned and flexible approaches in response to country.

One milestone to make the Resident Coordinator System work better at the country level was reached with the UNDG cost-sharing agreement for the RC System which came into effect on 1 January 2014. Our contributions to the RC system are a reflection of our joint commitment and ownership of this system.

Furthermore, agencies are making efforts to reduce operational costs at country level by consolidating support services, where it makes sense to do so. That is where they can demonstrate both cost savings and better results.

This brings me to my second message today: reinforcing the importance of results over process and staying agile and adaptive.

In the next four years, over 80 countries are rolling out new UNDAFs at the country level. This provides a huge opportunity to (i) develop a strategic UNDAF that strongly focuses on supporting national results; (ii) link our work on poverty, vulnerability, equity and resilience; (iii) apply good coherence principles, such as joint planning, joint
programming and joint results monitoring, in all settings. UNICEF is fully committed to a results focused coherence agenda and is advocating with all field offices to apply these good coherence principles in practice. Our lead role within the UNDG in collaborating with DESA to develop a single comprehensive result-based monitoring framework, which is a key highlight of this ECOSOC segment, demonstrates UNICEF’s highest commitment to UN coherence and delivering as one.

Measures that make operational sense must deliver results for people, particularly the most vulnerable. The reality of the world today is that the largest number of poor people and children are living in middle income countries. The reality confronting us in these countries – and as a matter of fact in all countries - is that gains and deprivations are unevenly distributed. Women’s and children’s chances differ depending on whether their country is rich or poor; whether they are born girls or boys, into families rich or poor or whether they live in the countryside or city. These gaps and inequities must be addressed as a matter of urgency. And, this is where our coherence matters the most, not just as funds and programmes, but the UN system as a whole. For us to be fit for purpose and remain coherently relevant, the UN system must be strategic and adaptive. To achieve this, we need your full support as member states so that together we can focus more on results over process.

As we navigate the challenges and opportunities of a post-2015 world, and as a new universal development agenda is charted in response, we need to make sure that the tools we use to frame our operational activities are adaptable and responsive to the rapidly changing reality. And, as we continue to celebrate women’s rights with the Beijing anniversary, mother’s health with the ICPD anniversary and children’s rights with the upcoming 25th anniversary of the CRC, let us keep the people, their lives and their rights at the heart of all policy, programme and operational frameworks.