Statement on the extent to which the SOPs met its objectives as well as QCPR mandates

Thank you, John.

Mr. Vice-President,

Members of the Economic and Social Council,

Colleagues, distinguished delegates, friends,

The 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review – QCPR – is indeed a landmark resolution, not least in its ambitiousness. The UN development system took to heart the clear message sent by the Member States for a strong UN development system that is strategically relevant, nimble and ready and able to help deliver sustainable development results.

The QCPR gives – for the first time - an intergovernmental recognition to the “Delivering as One” model as a working modality, though it remains a voluntary option. In moving forward towards a more results-based second generation of “Delivering as One,” the Member States requested the UN system to build on the best practices and lessons learned by the first generation of “Delivering as One” countries and formulate an integrated package of support including standard
operational procedures and guidance. The Member States also requested the UN system to identify and address the headquarters level challenges and bottlenecks that have prevented the UN Country Teams in “Delivering as One” countries from fully realizing the efficiency gains.

In response to these requests – and as reported to the Council at the last Operational Activities Segment in July 2013 - the United Nations Development Group – UNDG – prepared the Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Wishing to Adopt the “Delivering as one” Approach – or SOPs – that was endorsed by all UNDG members mid last year. Since then, the elements of the SOPs have been implemented in the “Delivering as One” countries, as well as in a number of non-“Delivering as One” countries (and my colleagues and fellow panelists will later share both “Delivering as One” and non-“Delivering as One” countries’ experience in implementing the SOPs). The SOPs are being introduced to all 40 countries that are rolling out their new UN Development Assistance Frameworks – UNDAFs – this year, to encourage and give options to non-“Delivering as One” countries to adopt elements of the SOPs to advance coherence efforts in their country contexts. Over the next two years, there will be over 80 countries adopting new UNDAFs that would benefit from the guidance and strategic direction articulated in the SOPs.
In addition, the UNDG has been working jointly to develop a series of guidance tools and materials for each of the five “Delivering as One” pillars. This is currently being finalized for roll-out during the first quarter of 2014 to further support operationalization of the SOPs at the country-level.

Perhaps most importantly, on 6 February the UNDG endorsed the SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters, thereby committing to jointly address the headquarters level bottlenecks over the next two years. The Plan of Action contains 55 actions that the UNDG - in close collaboration with the High-Level Committee on Management or HLCM - needs to implement at the headquarters level. All 55 actions are essential accelerants for the required “stepping up” of coherence efforts in “Delivering as One” settings, and many can have positive spin-offs in non-“Delivering as One” settings as well.

Each UNDG member has committed to actively promote implementation of the Plan of Action through individual agency follow-up and collective monitoring.

Individual agencies have started to review existing policies and procedures in line with the SOPs and the Plan of Action for Headquarters.

In order to ensure that the SOPs, guidance tools and materials and the Plan of Action for HQ are implemented across all levels of the UN development system,
one of the priorities for the UNDG in 2014 will be to track the implementation of the SOPs and the Plan of Action for HQ. This will be part and parcel of the development of an M&E framework to track the implementation of the Delivering as One approach and its contribution to greater relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and coherence.

While the SOPs emphasize the need to align agency instruments and replace wherever possible with joint instruments, there are admittedly areas where the UNDG was prevented from being more ambitious, such as having a common country programming tool for One Programme in lieu of agency-specific country programming instruments. Here, we faced the dilemma of balancing the call for coherence and simplification on the one hand and the drive for enhanced accountability for agency-specific results on the other. The UNDG thus agreed on maximum simplification and harmonization of agency-specific country programming instruments, committing to full alignment of UNDAF outcomes and agency-specific country programme outcomes.

Many of the 55 actions are already being implemented, and most actions are expected to be completed by the end of the year. Where progress is slower are the areas that the UN development system alone cannot work on addressing the
bottlenecks, such as issues that require our respective governing bodies' approval or issues that need to take into consideration our different business models. We have a real dilemma between the drive for harmonization and simplification of business operations versus the diversity of our business models that are defined by how the individual agencies are best able to deliver results. There will need to be realistic expectations in terms of the UNDG making timely progress in these areas.

The SOPs are the vision of “Delivering as One” in the future and a small but important step towards an UN development system that is more “fit-for-purpose.” The QCPR has given recognition to “Delivering as One” as the model for going forward, and it is expected that an increased number of countries will be adopting the “Delivering as One” approach. In so far as meeting the objectives set out in the SOPs and mandated by the QCPR to provide simple, clear and flexible information and integrated guidance to the UN Country Teams, Governments and other stakeholders, there are a number of areas where I believe the SOPs will make real difference.

The first area is improved policy coherence. Leaner, more strategic UNDAFs at the outcome level, developed over a shorter period of time, will define how the
UN Country Teams will align with and contribute to national development priorities and results through integrated strategic approaches that bridge operational activities and normative work.

Secondly, through the introduction of Results Groups, there will be strengthened joint planning, joint implementation and joint monitoring and reporting. Results Group will serve as the principal mechanism through which to monitor progress in programme implementation and improve real-time joint monitoring and reporting against joint results and resources.

The third area is transparency and accountability. The Common Budgetary Framework is a major innovation that will provide the Government, the UN Country Team and other partners with a holistic overview of required, available and expected funding and act as an agreed joint source of financial information on available resources and expected funding.

Finally, there will be increased harmonization and efficiency in business operations and better synchronization of operations and programmatic efforts. The piloting of system-wide, multi-year business plans at the country level aims to
provide strategic and cost-effective common operational support to the 
implementation of the One Programme by capitalizing on existing agency 
capacities and consolidating service provision, to the extent possible. It is 
envisaged that the savings achieved from this would ensure maximum level of 
allocation of resources towards country programming.

The second generation of “Delivering as One” will benefit from the stronger 
results culture embedded in the Strategic Plans of individual agencies, as well as 
renewed headquarters’ level commitment towards UN system-wide coherence 
and implementation of QCPR recommendations. As called for by the Secretary-
General’s Five-Year Action Agenda of 2012, these second generation “Delivering 
as One” countries will be firmly focused on joint results, strengthened 
accountability, enhanced monitoring and evaluation, harmonized and streamlined 
reporting, and improved outcomes.

Much as they were empowered by the QCPR itself, the SOPs have empowered the 
UN Country Teams in the 36 Delivering as One countries and others to strengthen 
coherence through innovation, under the principles of “one size does not fit all” 
and of national leadership and ownership. The SOPs will continue to contribute 
towards enabling the UN development system to better support countries in their
efforts to apply integrated approaches to multi-dimensional and interlinked development challenges. However, the SOPs alone will not able to achieve this. Even the most coherent of UN actions will only succeed if the Member States are coherent.

Before handing over the floor to my colleagues from the field, where every day real contributions to greater relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of the UN system are being made, I would like to underline that this year will be a critical one in transitioning towards a more results-based second generation of "Delivering as One." I have already mentioned a number of dilemmas inherent to the UN development system, and yesterday you heard UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner talk about the centrifugal forces driving us away from coherence. Some of these relate to external change dynamics and others to inconsistent accountability, funding and leadership structures and patterns. Together we must squarely address these dilemmas and disintegration forces in order for instruments like the SOPs can achieve their intended purpose.

The UN development system looks forward to working together with the Member States to jointly address the remaining – and granted difficult – obstacles that are more of systemic in nature, so that we can together create a more enabling
environment for the UN development system to continue to be relevant and deliver results in a coherent manner to the peoples and purposes of the UN.

Thank you.