

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**  
for COUNTRIES ADOPTING the  
**“DELIVERING AS ONE”** APPROACH

August 2014









GUIDE TO  
**COMMUNICATING  
AS ONE**



**UNITED NATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT GROUP**



-  **Communicating as One** facilitates coherent messaging and advocacy on normative and operational matters, and a consistent and teamed-up strategic dialogue with host countries;
-  **The One Programme** unifies the UN system under one national development strategy/plan, and is underpinned by integrated policy positions and services, and real-time monitoring through joint work plans;
-  **The Common Budgetary Framework**, with all planned and costed UN programme activities presented transparently in one place, provides a shared view of the UN's contribution as a whole to the country;
-  **The One Fund (optional)** provides performance-based support to the UN's integrated policy approaches;
-  **The One Leader** and the UN Country Team (UNCT) leadership, is based on mutual accountability, with an enhanced co-ordination function led by the Resident Coordinator, involving all of the UNCT in team leadership, to carry responsibility for the role and results of the UN in the country; and
-  **Operating as One** provides options to build ever more cost-effective common operations and service support.

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) is an instrument for UN reform created by the Secretary-General in 1997 to improve the effectiveness of UN development work at the country level. Bringing together the operational agencies working on development, the UNDG is chaired by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The UNDG develops policies and procedures that allow the UN system to work together and analyse country issues, plan support strategies, implement programmes, monitor results and advocate for change. These initiatives increase UN impact in helping countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION



Even though Communicating as One was not part of the original mandate of the “Delivering as one” approach, it has been adopted in all “Delivering as one” countries. The importance of Communicating as One was highlighted by the independent evaluation of “Delivering as one” in 2012, which concluded that “concerted communication on issues of concern based on mandates and expertise of United Nations entities is widely seen as a major step forward.”

The SOPs outline the following elements of Communicating as One:

1. Set of key **common advocacy messages** on critical topics in which the United Nations is engaged;
2. Country-level **United Nations Communications Group** (UNCG) and identification of ground rules to guide participation in Communicating as One;
3. **System of mutual accountability and resolution** of differences for joint communication and common messaging, as well as mechanisms to refer regional/transnational and sensitive issues to the regional undg team for advice or further action, as needed;
4. **Joint communications strategy** that includes shared messaging in support of the One Programme and the development of standard joint communication products, as well as shared crisis communications; and
5. **Common, established visual identity** for joint United Nations products and communications.

This guidance note addresses three priority areas, including the two core elements of Communicating as One: a coherent image of the United Nations, the UNCG and United Nations joint communications strategies. It builds on existing guidance issued by the United Nations Department of Public Information on [United Nations Communication Groups \(2006\)](#) and [Communication in Crisis Settings \(2009\)](#), and provides references when relevant. The guidance focuses on external communication and does not address internal UN Country Team (UNCT) communication.

These guidelines will be reviewed periodically and enriched based on country experiences. While the focus is on the three priority areas mentioned above, further guidance may be developed in due course for other aspects of joint communication.

PROMOTING  
**CONCERTED  
COMMUNICATION**  
ON ISSUES OF  
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ENTITIES

## 2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Guiding principles for Communicating as One—also applicable at the regional level—are:

- **Emphasize the shared values, norms and standards of the United Nations system.**<sup>1</sup> Joint United Nations communication strengthens development processes and results through promoting linkages with the realization of human rights, gender equality, and other principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter;
- **Adapt the guidance to the country context.** This guidance is to be interpreted according to the particular country context and applied flexibly to meet local needs and capacities. It is important to tailor approaches to the development context of a country (low-, middle-, upper-middle- and high-income countries) and/or special situations (conflict, post conflict and transition);
- **Agency-specific messages must be consistent with agreed common positions** and should complement joint UNCT/United Nations mission efforts;
- **Consistent and coherent messaging is a shared responsibility among all UNCT members.** Communicating as One does not mean that only one person speaks (such as the Resident Coordinator) or acts as the spokesperson for the UNCT. The UNCT may jointly agree to designate the Resident Coordinator and/or another UNCT member as spokesperson on a particular system-wide issue or to lead communication and advocacy initiatives in sectoral/thematic areas according to mandates and technical competence. On certain system-wide issues, for example, on matters of security, the Resident Coordinator is expected to speak on behalf of the United Nations family; and
- **Coordination and sharing timely information among UNCT members is important,** particularly on agency-specific communication activities covering critical or sensitive issues or issues that may have system-wide implications. Coordination on these issues with regional and headquarters levels is equally important.

<sup>1</sup> [UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism Operational Plan 2011-2013.](#)

# 3. COHERENT IMAGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS



## 3.1 OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNICATING AS ONE

The objective of Communicating as One is to improve coordination of communication among United Nations agencies within the country context, in support of shared objectives, including as outlined in the One Programme.

Communicating as One strengthens the image and the reputation of the United Nations system by:

- Presenting a coherent and unified United Nations at the country level;
- Positioning the United Nations agencies as effective development partners by transparently communicating actions taken by the United Nations and its partners, and results achieved;
- Inspiring trust in the development cooperation system, motivating people to believe in and support United Nations agencies' mandates;
- Improving the visibility of the United Nations and its agencies in their contributions to improving people's lives;
- Promoting the values, norms and standards of the United Nations; and
- Responding rapidly to time-sensitive matters.

With regard to the last objective, it is important to emphasize that joint communication should not result in over-consultation and negotiation at the expense of a rapid response to a query or an urgent coherent positioning of the United Nations system on a particular issue.

## 3.2 CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEVERAGING BRANDS OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

While it is important to establish agreed common UNCT positions, United Nations entities must continue to support mandate-specific strategies, policies, messages and products, using agencies' own brand identities, provided that mandate-specific messages are consistent with agreed common positions and complement joint UNCT and United Nations mission efforts.

Mandate specialization and accountability, country presence, and comparative advantages of each United Nations agency are taken into account when deciding whether to join forces or leverage the individual strengths of the agencies. These decisions are further guided by the social, political, economic and cultural contexts of the country.

United Nations organizations may adopt a number of approaches to communicating together in a cohesive manner, namely, they may:

- Be presented jointly under the United Nations identity, given the common norms and standards of the United Nations Charter. This approach is particularly useful when communicating with government partners on critical policy issues and sensitive topics;

A COHERENT  
AND UNIFIED  
UNITED NATIONS  
AT THE  
COUNTRY LEVEL

THE IDENTITY  
OF THE UN AND  
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IDENTITIES OF  
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AGENCIES ARE  
GLOBALLY  
RECOGNIZED,  
HIGHLY VALUED  
ASSETS,  
PROTECTED  
BY LAW AS  
INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY.

- Take a collective approach, presenting the United Nations agencies as a group of separate, but coordinated entities. This approach may be leveraged to convey that there are many agencies contributing to a development goal or that there are many agencies committed to making change happen. It may be used to show shared accountability as authors or partners; or
- May join forces on UNDAF priorities, coordinating their mandate-specific communication in a complementary manner on particular themes, for a synergistic effect. This approach is broader in scope, and requires envisioning the entire communication plan and the complementary roles that the agencies can play in reaching out to stakeholders.

These approaches guide the modes of presentation outlined below.

### 3.3 REPRESENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS AND UNITED NATIONS AGENCY IDENTITIES

The identity of the United Nations and the respective identities of individual United Nations agencies are globally recognized, highly valued assets, protected by law as intellectual property. Decisions to represent the identity of the United Nations or its individual agencies can be made only with agreement of the UNCT or the United Nations agency's representative in the UNCT or its headquarters, as relevant.

The official United Nations logo is the only logo that can be used to represent the organization. According to the official [Guidelines on the Use of the United Nations emblem](#), the logo cannot be altered by changing colors or adding elements such as taglines or slogans. Agencies' logos and branding must follow the agency's regulations on use and clearance processes.

All logos are in effect an endorsement of the contents on which they appear; the use of logos on published materials indicates that an item has been cleared by the agency country representative and/or designated official. Prominent placement of logos is given only to contributors accountable for the published material. Specifically, logos are used for the agencies that are accountable as an author of or contributor to the content or have been a financial contributor to its production. This decision conveys the accountability of the participating partners and reinforces transparency.

### 3.4 MODES OF PRESENTATION<sup>2</sup>

There are three presentation formats:

- 1) presenting the United Nations as one identity with supporting agencies;
- 2) presenting United Nations agencies together in partnership; and
- 3) presenting the individual agencies separately.

These modes apply to all published materials, such as websites, statements, press releases, signage, publications, events, etc. UNCTs have flexibility in deciding which approach responds most appropriately to a given communication initiative or product. For joint communication products, the UNCT may feature the name of the country in the publication or website title, for example, "United Nations in country X".

<sup>2</sup> The examples given in this section are fictional, and are examples of templates that may be used in practice.



• **Presenting the United Nations as one identity with supporting agencies:**

This method is for jointly produced or supported communication materials, or on communication materials which aim to strategically communicate that the United Nations is a single entity. This presentation features the identity of the United Nations, represented by the United Nations logo, with supporting agencies in subordinate prominence through use of logos or an attribution list.

This format might be used when four or more agencies are accountable partners for the communication production. The United Nations logo may be placed on the cover and the logos of the participating agencies on the inside front cover or back cover in alphabetical arrangement in visually equal size and prominence, or a list of agency names may be included in lieu of logos. Alternatively, agencies can be listed in alphabetical order either on the inside front or inside back cover of the publication.

Examples: Publications



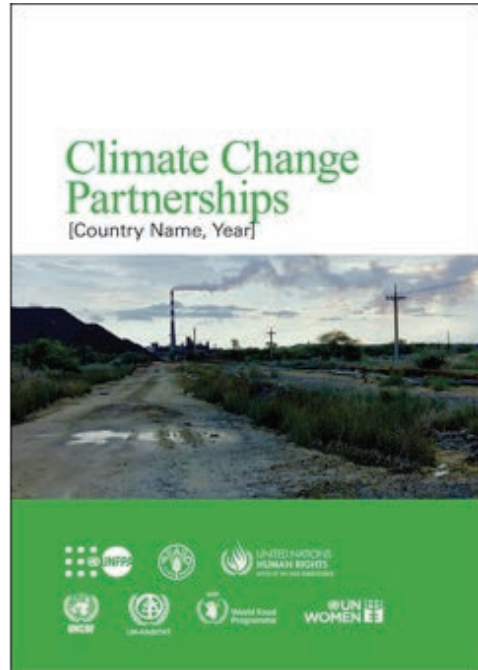
Example: Website



• Presenting the United Nations agencies together in partnership:

This coordinated presentation features multiple agency identities and conveys that the agencies are working together in partnership or are co-authors of the published materials.

Examples: Publications



Examples: Websites

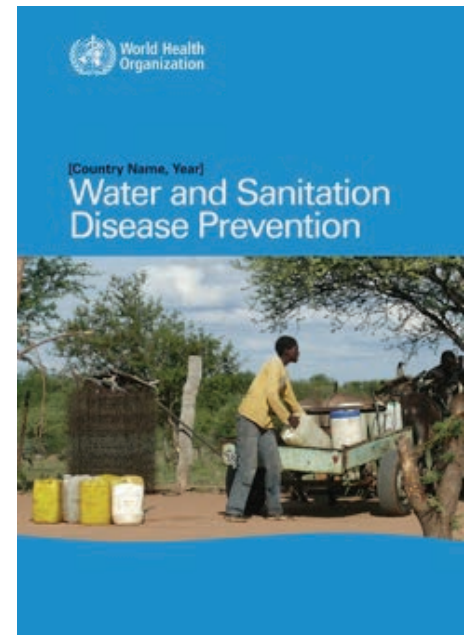
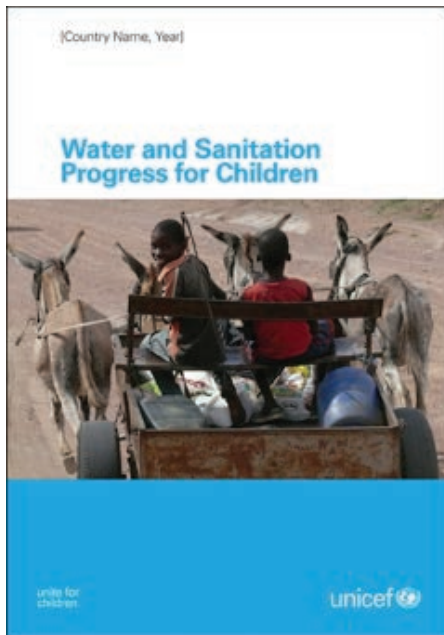


- **Presenting individual agencies separately:**

For mandate-specific communications, it is recommended to use a separate, singular identity presentation that shows one agency logo and its brand, in accordance with agency-specific guidance<sup>3</sup>. Coordination may still be achieved using mandate-specific communication products by engaging in joint planning of

the communication materials, with each agency communicating a country priority through the lens of its own mandate and with its own brand presentation. For example, when communicating on water and sanitation, the WHO publication may focus on this issue from a health perspective, while the UNICEF publication may focus on how water and sanitation impact and matter to children.

Examples: Publications



<sup>3</sup> Not all agencies have brand requirements.

## 4. UNITED NATIONS COMMUNICATION GROUP AT COUNTRY LEVEL



### 4.1 SETTING UP A UNITED NATIONS COMMUNICATION GROUP

The UNCT oversees the establishment and work of the UNCG. The UNCG does not supersede or replace the communication efforts of individual agencies. On the contrary, it enhances these individual efforts by pooling communication resources and expertise, coordinating public information, advocacy and media campaigns, and promoting coherent messaging. The UNCG serves as a forum that helps all UNCT members to think and act together.

While varying from country to country, a UNCG typically serves as a coordination mechanism that ensures that agency communications are complementary rather than competitive. There are different options for establishing a UNCG, such as pooling inter-agency human resources on communication, creating dedicated United Nations country positions on communication, or maintaining an active e-network of communication focal points across agencies. Recognizing the uneven communication capacities within agencies, it is important that the communication coordination mechanism is light and flexible to ensure sustainability.

### 4.2 ACCOUNTABILITY

The UNCG is accountable to the UNCT, and will report to the UNCT on activities at the country level. The UNCT decides on UNCT communication priorities and captures them in an annual work plan with corresponding funding needs.

Coordination of communication is funded through the UNCT coordination budget, since communication is one of the 10 functions covered by the global Resident Coordinator cost-sharing arrangement. In case UNCTs are also planning substantive joint communication activities that go beyond the limited UNCT coordination budget, these may be funded through the Results Groups Joint Work Plans or through cost-sharing among agencies or the One Fund, or a combination thereof, with the agreement of the agencies concerned.

To ensure that the work of the UNCG is carried out, agencies must assume, whenever possible and in light of available resources, the responsibility of ensuring that sufficient human and financial resources are in place. This contribution can be in the form of dedicated time and resources from existing agency structures, including at the regional and headquarter levels, in order to support joint communication work without additional costs to the UNCT.

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW TO SEE EXAMPLES OF TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR UNCGS.

1. [Ghana](#)

2. [Tanzania](#)

3. [Uzbekistan](#)

4. [Viet Nam](#)



The UNCT shall decide on the format for planning joint communication activities and measuring results thereof. System-wide or joint communication activities can be reflected in the annual UNCT work plan, UNCG Joint Work Plan and/or UNCTs may opt to integrate relevant joint communication activities in the work plans of the Results Groups. The United Nations joint communication strategy can further guide the annual planning of the joint communication activities.

Review and reporting of the UNCG is addressed through the annual report of the Resident Coordinator, and joint communication results will be captured in the annual United Nations Country Results Report, either as a separate section or integrated within the relevant priorities identified in the One Programme.

The UNCG will endeavor to make all decisions by consensus. In case there are differences/disputes around joint communication and sensitive topics, it is the Resident Coordinator's responsibility to identify a solution in consultation with the UNCT. In the event that this is not possible, the Resident Coordinator and UNCT members can seek guidance and advice from the Regional UNDG and respective regional and headquarters levels, as appropriate.

### 4.3 MEMBERSHIP

Participation in the UNCG should be open to communication focal points of all United Nations

entities operating in the country, including those related to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, humanitarian emergencies and non-resident agencies. Since not all agencies have dedicated communication specialists, focal points may be appointed by agencies as appropriate.

The Resident Coordinator's Office, when feasible, provides secretariat support to the work of the UNCG and helps to ensure coherence between joint communications, the One Programme and the One Leader. In countries where there is a UNIC, it may serve as the secretariat.

Each UNCT can choose a UNCG configuration that best meets its needs. It is strongly recommended that a UNCT member chair the UNCG, on a rotational basis, to ensure that communication issues are adequately reflected in UNCT discussions and decisions. Some UNCTs have found it helpful to allocate a percentage of each participating United Nations agency communication officer's time to joint communications. This can help ensure that incentives and accountability are appropriately in line. Some "Delivering as one" pilots, such as Viet Nam, offer models on co-location of the UNCG.

The UNCG works closely with the Results Groups. Good practices from some "Delivering as one" countries show that it is helpful for communication focal points to actively participate in the Results Groups in order to ensure timely and effective communications support for programme delivery and joint programming.

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GROUP

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW FOR EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF CHAIRMANSHIPS FOR THE UNCG.

1. [Rwanda UNCG led by the RC.](#)
2. [Tanzania UNCG led by the head of the UNIC.](#)
3. [Zambia UNCG co-chaired by the RCO Communications Officer and United Nations agencies on a rotational basis. by the RCO Communications Officer and United Nations agencies on a rotational basis.](#)

#### 4.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

UNCG responsibilities include:

- Provide strategic guidance to the UNCT on communication in the country and enhance inter-agency collaboration in communication on a timely basis;
- Promote a coherent image of the United Nations, and ensure quality and consistency of messaging on critical issues for which the United Nations needs to communicate with one voice and develop common statements on key policy positions;
- Strategically position the United Nations as an effective and strategic development partner that speaks up when necessary to promote and protect human rights and other international instruments, norms and standards;
- Facilitate identification of key advocacy messages for the United Nations and develop an information kit and/or a joint calendar of advocacy events and special occasions, and/or other appropriate communication tools;
- Promote issue-based communication ensuring the synergy of information, messages and branding, and identify areas for shared results and development themes, such as human rights and gender equality;
- Manage a joint website and periodic newsletters or other information dissemination tools;
- Develop and support implementation of a joint communication strategy for the UNCT for the period of the UNDAF or the One Programme, and in support of the UNDAF and national development priorities;
- Identify new and innovative ways to demonstrate how United Nations programmes are delivering results and leverage the annual United Nations Country Results Report for advocacy purposes;
- Produce joint press releases on priority United Nations issues to increase the media profile of the organization and its role in promoting joint development goals, and to enable the media to report objectively on development issues, including the contributions of the United Nations;
- Organize capacity-building on producing high-quality communication materials for United Nations communication officers, as relevant;
- Capture and share lessons learned from both joint and agency-specific communication work to support improved knowledge management at the country level;
- Alert the UNCT on sensitive issues that require close monitoring, including issues related to the media or safety of journalists; and
- In a crisis or emergency context, the UNCG plays a critical role in managing information and messages, both internally and externally. The group must be guided by the document [Communicating together in times of crisis: Standard Operating Procedures for the United Nations System, endorsed in June 2009.](#)

# 5. JOINT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



The purpose of a joint communication strategy is to strengthen inter-agency cooperation, ensure consistency of messaging, and increase the profile and transparency of United Nations activities at the national level. A joint communication strategy strives to position the United Nations as efficient, effective and results-oriented. As much as possible, the strategy aims to focus on norm- and issue-based communication to strengthen UNCT messages and products. The strategy should be flexible enough to respond to emergencies and crises, and to anticipate risks.

A joint communication strategy is based on the UNDAF, and aligned with national development and United Nations system priorities. It is developed in line with the UNDAF or the One Programme cycle. Reviewing the strategy annually helps ensure that it is updated with relevant national priorities and developments.

The joint communication strategy is developed by the UNCG through a consultative process and approved by the UNCT. UNCTs are discouraged from developing parallel joint communication strategies exclusively focused on any of the other “Delivering as one” pillars.

## 5.1 ELEMENTS OF A JOINT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### Introduction

An introduction provides the overall context of the United Nations in the country, mentioning the United Nations common strategy and underscoring major areas of importance as found in the UNDAF and national development priorities. It also conveys the benefits that an integrated communications capability will bring to the United Nations system.

### Contextual analysis

The contextual analysis is a description of what the United Nations does and stands for in the country, building on the Common Country Analysis (emanating from the UNDAF preparations). The contextual analysis could be based on a brand awareness study, partnership surveys, or any other surveys assessing public awareness and attitudes towards and perceptions of United Nations activities, priorities and image. Some countries use a SWOT<sup>4</sup> analysis that summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations system from a communications point of view.

### Objectives

The objectives set out what the UNCG wants to achieve. The objectives should be clear and specific, realistic and measurable. A strategy ideally includes only a few objectives.

### Common messages

The UNCT is accountable for developing common messages and policy positions. While these messages and policy positions differ depending on the country context and strategic priorities of

<sup>4</sup> Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; for an example, see: [http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_05.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm).

the UNCT, they must be premised on the shared norms and standards of the United Nations system. They should reflect an accurate representation of the situation on the ground and contain constructive advice on how to address country challenges. As such, they must be periodically revisited.

Key messages should be forward-looking and revolve around specific issues of common concern to the agencies involved, keeping in mind the values, norms and standards of the United Nations system. They often touch on cross-cutting issues, such as human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, capacity development and other issues that the national government or UNCT have identified as priorities.

Once established and agreed, common messages and policy positions can be used by any agency in their individual public awareness efforts. As agencies continue to carry out their own communication strategies and speak according to their specific mandates, it is important that the overall messaging remains consistent and complementary, as the United Nations system must work together and speak together.

### Key audiences

Identifying the key audiences that the UNCT wants to reach is important. These audiences can and should be segmented and specific messages identified for each to maximize impact. Audience segmentation is often based on an analysis or survey that has been conducted.

Mapping different audiences can save a tremendous amount of valuable time and resources. Key audiences can include a range of stakeholders in the national context, from the most vulnerable segments of the population, local grass-roots partners, government entities, national employers' and workers' organizations, to other global and regional partners including foundations, international financial institutions and donors.

### Key communication approaches

Some countries have found it useful to identify communication approaches that can help achieve the objectives of the joint communication strategy. For example, a country might use capacity building and evidence-based communication approaches to achieve common communication objectives.

In some contexts, the communication strategy may focus on initiating or engaging in public discourse. This may include developing strategic networks and partnerships to leverage and amplify United Nations messaging, engaging in policy dialogue and/or building strategic partnerships with local communication specialists and organizations that share the values of the United Nations, such as media councils, national human rights institutions and civil society.

Using a joint, issue-based communication approach (rather than organization-based) has the potential to increase the reach and power of United Nations communications and enable the development of stronger, more broad-based platforms, networks or movements for change.

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW TO SEE EXAMPLES OF COUNTRY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.

1. [Cambodia \(2008-2010\)](#)

3. [Moldova \(2008-2011\)](#)

5. [Zimbabwe \(2012-2015\)](#)

2. [Ethiopia \(2012-2015\)](#)

4. [Viet Nam \(2010\)](#)



## Communication channels

It is useful to specify the channels of communication, such as public relations arrangements and social media outreach. This provides the UNCG with a list of options that can be effectively used to disseminate joint products, spread key messages, and engage with public and policy audiences. The list of options can also include agency-specific communication channels, such as their social media outlets and websites.

## Joint activities and products

The observance of United Nations Commemoration Days and other special occasions provide good opportunities to showcase the mandates and work of the United Nations, and rally greater support for these. While each agency will continue observing days relevant to their respective mandate, a selected number of days, as appropriate, could be celebrated jointly.

Joint websites and newsletters accessible to national audiences have also been encouraged in “Delivering as one” pilot countries as a vehicle to showcase the work of the United Nations in support of the country. Other joint products are:

- Press releases;
- Calendars of media and public events;
- The annual United Nations Country Results Report;
- Field missions for media;
- Electronic newsletters; and
- United Nations system information kits.<sup>5</sup>

IDENTIFYING  
THE KEY  
AUDIENCES  
THAT THE UNCT  
**WANTS TO**  
**REACH** IS  
IMPORTANT

<sup>5</sup> For more guidance, please see the [Basic Operating Model for the UNCGs](#) adopted by the United Nations Communication Group in March 2006.



For more information: [UNDG.org](https://www.undg.org)



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