



## **United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Functioning and Working Arrangements**

### **I. Institutional context**

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) unites the UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments, and offices that play a role in development in over 150 countries. The UNDG was constituted in 1997 following the UN General Assembly's endorsement of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme of Reform" ([A/51/950, para. 73](#)).

Since 2008, the UNDG has been one of the three pillars of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system. The CEB brings together the executive heads of UN organizations under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General to provide broad guidance, coordination and strategic direction for the system as a whole in the areas under the responsibility of executive heads. Focus is placed on inter-agency priorities and initiatives while ensuring that the independent mandates of organizations are maintained.

Within the CEB structure, the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) promotes system-wide cooperation, coordination and knowledge sharing in programme and operational areas. The High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) identifies and analyzes administrative management reforms with the aim of improving efficiency and simplifying business practices, while the UNDG is responsible for coordinating UN operational activities at the country level.

The UNDG is chaired by the UNDP Administrator on behalf of the Secretary-General. The UNDG Chair is supported by the UNDG Vice-Chair and an inter-agency UNDG Advisory Group. The UNDG Vice-Chair and the Chair of the UNDG ASG AG are always at the ASG level. The UNDG Vice-Chair serves for two years. The Chair of the UNDG ASG Advisory Group rotates among its members every two years.

The UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO)<sup>1</sup> is the Secretariat and technical and advisory support unit of the UNDG. It brings together the UN development system to promote change and innovation to deliver together on sustainable development. UN DOCO works under the leadership of the UNDG Chair and guidance of the UNDG. The team provides field evidence to inform policy, facilitates the achievement of shared results, and promotes excellence in UN leadership and coordination. The core objective is a relevant and impactful UN contribution to development.

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<sup>1</sup> UN DOCO was originally established in 1997 as "UN Development Group Office (UNDGO)"



## **II. Overall objectives**

The UNDG was established to facilitate joint policy formation and decision-making, encourage programmatic cooperation and realize management efficiencies within the UN development system. The UNDG's common objective is to deliver more coherent, effective and efficient support to countries seeking to attain sustainable development.

In pursuit of this objective, the UNDG seeks to

- Serve as a policy development and management instrument geared to contributing to, and affecting, policy, administrative and operational decisions by each of the member entities in support of the development work of the United Nations;
- Contribute to strengthening policy coherence and cost-effectiveness of UN development operations by reducing duplication and by pooling resources and services so as to maximize programme impact and minimize administrative costs;
- Provide a forum for heads of entities to consult on submissions to their governing bodies on both substantive and administrative matters relating to operational activities that have implications for other members of the group as a whole;
- Promote a more unified UN presence at the country-level through, inter alia, providing a forum for concerted directives to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and field representatives in order to ensure a greater unity of purpose and coherence in performance at the country level;
- Assist the Secretary-General in leading the process of change and instituting sound management throughout the Organization; and
- Advocate the comparative advantages and results of UN multilateral development cooperation.

In response to resolutions by the General Assembly, particularly on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, guidance from ECOSOC, the Secretary-General's priorities, and the evolving international development and cooperation environment, the UNDG defines common strategic priorities and a work plan, which give direction to UNDG efforts at the global, regional and country level to facilitate a step change in the quality and impact of UN support at the country level.



### **III. Working methods**

#### Global UNDG

The UNDG serves as a high-level forum for joint policy formation and decision-making. It agrees on the UNDG strategic priorities and work plan and endorses all formal UNDG guidance, policy papers and position statements, in close consultation with the other pillars of the CEB.

The UNDG shall convene three to four times a year under the chairmanship of the UNDG Chair. The UNDG shall be composed of senior representatives, preferably at the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) / Assistant Director-General (ADG) level, designated by the executive heads of UNDG member entities. UNDG representatives shall be entrusted by their executive heads to take decisions on their behalf. Normally, there shall be one representative from each UNDG member entity who may be accompanied by an organizational expert for substantive presentation and discussion.

Decision-making shall be based on consensus among UNDG members, with the adoption of the opt-in/opt-out principle when circumstances call for it which would require the UNDG Principal to inform the UNDG Chair in writing accordingly. Decisions of the UNDG shall be binding across the UNDG working mechanisms.

UN DOCO assists the UNDG Chair in preparing the UNDG agenda, arranging the meetings, preparing the meeting reports and ensuring the UNDG Working Groups, Regional UNDG Teams, and Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams are informed of the decisions and views of the UNDG. UN DOCO also facilitates the link with the CEB Secretariat on work planning and reporting to the CEB.

#### UNDG working mechanisms

Implementation of the UNDG strategic priorities and work plan is driven by a core set of UNDG working mechanisms – Working Groups and Task Teams – with focus on fostering system-wide norms, standards, and policies, as well as operational effectiveness. UNDG Working Groups report to the UNDG and the UNDG Chair, with guidance from the ASG Advisory Group. The UNDG working mechanisms are guided by common working methods (Annex 1) and outlined in the UNDG organigram (Annex 2).



### Regional UNDG Teams

At the regional level, six Regional UNDG Teams play a critical role in driving the UNDG strategic priorities by supporting UN Country Teams with strategic priority setting, analysis and advice based on their four core functions: (i) technical support to UN Country Teams; (ii) quality assurance of UNDAFs; (iii) performance management of Resident Coordinators; and (iv) troubleshooting in difficult country situations. They provide reinforced support to UNCTs for strategic priority setting and addressing cross-fertilization of best practices among countries to ensure that UN operational activities are rendered to maximum effect and are consistently aligned with national priorities in areas of UN comparative advantage.

### Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams

At the country level, Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams implement the UNDG strategic priorities by identifying the national policies, programmes and capacity development gaps and challenges, to which the UN system can best contribute under national ownership and leadership by mobilizing the full range of mandates and expertise of the UN development system.

## **IV. Membership**

UNDG membership shall be inclusive, transparent, and open to the entire UN development system, in alignment with CEB membership criteria and the definition of the UN development system (UNDS) put forward in the reports of the Secretary-General.

To be eligible for UNDG membership, an entity must be:

1. Member of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), in recognition of the fact that the UNDG is a subsidiary pillar of the CEB; and
2. Part of the UNDS as defined in the reports of the Secretary-General (i.e. it must receive contributions for operational activities for development);
3. Fully engaged in the UNDG, and importantly in field operations through UNDAFs and UNCTs; and
4. Contributor to the global UNDG cost-sharing arrangement in support of the Resident Coordinator system.

The following special provisions apply:

- UN entities that are classified as “Other Entities” in the UN system are also eligible for UNDG membership and are otherwise treated analogously to UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies;



- UN Secretariat departments and offices and the UN Regional Commissions, are eligible to become UNDG members in their own right, provided they are part of the UNDS;<sup>2</sup>
- UNDG working mechanisms at headquarters may decide to extend participation rights to additional UN entities that have a relevant role in the respective area of the associated working mechanism. The membership of the global UNDG shall remain unaffected by these arrangements.

### UNDG observer status

The following entities are eligible for UNDG observer status:

1. UN entities that are members of the CEB but not part of the UNDS;
2. UN research and training institutes;
3. Subsidiary bodies of UNDG member entities.

UNDG observer rights:

- UNDG observers are invited to attend UNDG meetings and may be requested to contribute to UNDG products and policy positions as appropriate.
- UNDG observers do not take part in UNDG decision-making and do not have voting rights regarding endorsement of UNDG guidance products, position statements etc. Observers are consequently not bound by UNDG decisions;
- UNDG observers can receive a standing invitation to a UNDG working mechanism by the respective Co-Chairs where the observer's continuous engagement is deemed essential to the working mechanism's mandate. In such case, the observer will be bound by the agreements reached in the respective UNDG working mechanism, and will be expected to comply with jointly developed products and positions.
- UNDG observers may be invited by the Co-Chairs of a UNDG working mechanism to participate in specific meetings of UNDG Working Groups or Task Teams where their substantive input is considered beneficial to the discussions.
- Observers cannot become members of the UNDG Advisory Group;
- Observers are not expected to contribute to the global UNDG cost-sharing arrangement.

UNDG membership and observer criteria shall also apply to Regional UNDG Teams and UN Country Teams, where the principles of engagement for members and observers shall be applied analogously.

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<sup>2</sup> At the UNDG meeting of 14 November 2014, it was agreed to "grandfather" membership rights for the existing UNDG members OHRLLS, OSAA and SRSG/CAAC.



## Annex 1

### UNDG Working Mechanisms' Working Methods

#### UNDG Working Groups

- Implementation of the UNDG Strategic Priorities and Work Plan is driven by a core set of standing UNDG Working Groups:
  - Three Working Groups<sup>3</sup> focus on fostering integrated, system-wide policy approaches and advocacy and guide implementation of the respective global policy agendas at regional and country level in support of the UNDG Strategic Priorities.
  - Five Working Groups<sup>4</sup> drive operational effectiveness for results as outlined in the strategic approaches of the UNDG Strategic Priorities.
- A Chair or two Co-Chairs shall be jointly responsible for directing the work of each Working Group and will be accountable to the UNDG and its Chair for driving the relevant segments of the UNDG Strategic Priorities and Work Plan. At least one of the Co-Chairs shall be at the ASG/ADG level and, where possible, be a member of the ASG Advisory Group so as to foster close horizontal linkages and engagement across the UNDG Working Groups. Co-Chairs are appointed for an initial period of two years. There is no alternate Co-Chair, i.e. if a Co-Chair is unable to participate the other Co-Chair will facilitate alone.
- The UNDG Chair will call for expressions of interest for new Co-chairs of UNDG working mechanisms, at the last full UNDG for the year. These will be forwarded to UN DOCO, who will consult with those interested and convey to the UNDG Chair. The UNDG Chair has the privilege to select and appoint from those interested to lead the various groups.
- Working Groups shall be open for participation by all UNDG member organizations. They shall adhere to the principle of balanced representation to capitalize on the breadth and depth of expertise of UNDG members. UNDG observers may be invited by the Co-Chairs of a Working Group to be members where relevant, or to participate in specific meetings where their engagement would be beneficial. Each organization shall speak with one voice in each Group.
- Participation in the Working Groups shall be at senior decision-making levels (if possible D1/D2/ASG) to ensure system-wide support for the respective policy and advocacy agendas. Members must have knowledge and experience in the Group's area of work. While bringing to the Group their organization's knowledge and experience, they should keep in mind a system-wide perspective and not only that of their individual organization. Organizations shall designate an alternate representative.
- Organizations must allow adequate time for their participants to contribute effectively to the Groups' expected results. Working Group members need to keep their organizations informed on the progress of the Group's work and ensure their representatives at the UNDG are fully briefed.

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<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Development Working Group; Human Rights Working Group; UN Working Group on Transitions

<sup>4</sup> Communications and Advocacy Working Group; Leadership Working Group; Programme Working Group; Fiduciary Management Oversight Group; Business Operations Working Group



- For those UNDG Working Groups which extend beyond the UNDG to include other UN system entities due to the mandate of the Working Group, such as the UN Working Group on Transitions and the Leadership Working Group, formally invited non-UNDG members will comply with associated decisions of that Working Group.
- UN DOCO shall provide technical, advisory, administrative and logistical support to the Working Groups, as secretariat, in collaboration with each Working Group Co-Chair's organization.

### **Task Teams**

- To ensure timely and effective implementation of the UNDG Work Plan, UNDG Working Groups may establish Task Teams as needed, which shall report to them.
- Task Teams must have clear terms of reference, be task-specific and preferably time-bound. Task Teams shall decide on the appropriate form of organizing their affairs. Only standing Task Teams will be reflected in the UNDG organigram.
- Technical, administrative, and logistical support of the Task Teams shall be provided by a lead agency that is a member of the Working Group. Temporary Task Teams will not be reflected in the UNDG organigram.
- Participation in Task Teams may be at the technical level. Members must have knowledge and experience in the Task Team's area of work. While bringing to the group their organization's knowledge and experience, they should keep in mind a system-wide perspective and not only that of their individual organization.
- Design and validation of all types of guidance materials directed at the country level shall include inputs from field colleagues. To this effect, field colleagues shall participate in relevant UNDG Task Teams, to ensure a field perspective and reality check on products and processes, from inception to validation.

### **UNDG Knowledge Networks**

- The two existing UNDG knowledge networks – the UN Human Rights Policy Network (HuriTALK) and the Coordination Practice Network (CPN) support strategic knowledge management for the UNDG and facilitate dialogue, and the capturing of good practices and lessons-learned among expert practitioners and partners, particularly on driving implementation of integrated system-wide policy coherence and vice-versa. This is essential to ensure that policies are rooted in well-grounded field lessons and experience. Both networks are hosted by UN DOCO.

### **Decision-making**

- Guidance and products developed by the Working Groups shall be shared with all members of the Working Group for review and agreement before being submitted for endorsement to the full UNDG with a UNDG decision sheet.
- Decisions of the UNDG shall be binding across the UNDG working mechanisms.



- Decisions shall be taken by consensus whenever possible so as to maximize system-wide impact. Co-Chairs shall escalate issues on which consensus cannot easily be reached, to the ASG Advisory Group.
- A quorum will be achieved when at least two-thirds of the group's member organizations are represented, or have indicated in advance that they are able to attend.

### **Work Plans and Reporting**

- Each UNDG Working Group and Task Team shall prepare an annual work plan, which will be an integral part of the UNDG Work Plan. Work plans will be aligned to UNDG Strategic Priorities and reviewed by the ASG Advisory Group.
- Work plans shall contain expected results, deliverables, budgets, appropriate indicators, lead agencies, and, if applicable, external partners.
- Work plans shall also indicate how the working mechanism's deliverables will be communicated and disseminated to UNDG members and colleagues in the field.
- Each UNDG Working Mechanism shall submit mid-year progress updates to the UNDG and report against its work plan at the end of every year.

### **Logistics**

- UN DOCO shall also provide logistical support to the Working Groups in collaboration with each Working Group Co-Chair's organization. Task Teams will need to be self-supported by an agency that is a member of the Working Group.
- An up-to-date list of UNDG Working Groups and Task Teams will be maintained on the UNDG website. Working Groups shall maintain up-to-date membership lists.
- Supporting documents for meetings of the UNDG and its working mechanisms shall be circulated at the latest 5 working days in advance of the meeting.
- All formal meetings of UNDG Working Groups shall be recorded with brief summaries of action points, which capture the main agreements of the meeting. These minutes shall follow the UNDG template.
- Draft meeting records shall be shared with meeting participants for comment no more than one week after the meeting takes place. Meeting participants shall be given one week to comment on the draft records. Finalized records shall be shared with all working mechanism members and meeting attendees.
- Final records shall be published on the UNDG website. If (part of) the meeting records are deemed inappropriate for the public domain (e.g. information related to personnel issues, security, or sensitive human-rights matters), they shall be clearly marked as "confidential". In this case, they shall not be posted on the UNDG website, but UN DOCO will keep the official copy of the records on file, which can be made available on request to those who are authorized to access it.

Annex 2

### UNDG Global Working Mechanisms

