



UNDG meeting

11 July 2014, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (EST)

DC1 – 21st Floor, Hank Shannon Conference Room

Meeting Report

Item 1: Fit For Purpose: Follow-up to CEB retreat and review of functioning of UNDG at headquarters

1. The UNDG Chair opened the second UNDG meeting of 2014 by briefing the group on the outcome of the CEB retreat on “Fit for Purpose” in April and outlining the envisioned follow-up by the UNDG.
2. The UNDG Chair highlighted that CEB Principals had a fruitful and forward-looking discussion on what it would take for the UN development system to be collectively ‘fit for purpose’ to deliver on the emerging sustainable development agenda. The new agenda represented a big shift from the MDGs and traditional North-South relations towards a universal agenda, which cuts across sectors and thematic disciplines and to which a multitude of diverse stakeholders would need to contribute. In order to support countries effectively to pursue sustainable development in a comprehensive and integrated manner, the UN development system itself would need to be joined-up and ready to work in close partnerships with other actors.
3. The CEB retreat had been informed by five key elements identified by the HLCP and UNDG - universality, integration, equality, human rights, and the need for a data revolution. The UNDG Chair highlighted that these principles would have a number of implications for the UNDG in operational terms: First, all UNDG member entities would need to commit to a culture of collaboration. This was critical as the message of collaboration had not yet resonated with every member of every UN Country Team, and at headquarters it had taken the UNDG two years to develop the Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One. The UNDG way of working therefore was in urgent need of new impetus and reform. Second, the UNDG needed a culture of obtaining and demonstrating results. Third, the UNDG would need to commit to cost-effectiveness and focus its scarce resources on its substantive work and less on representation. Noting that an increasing number of countries were formally opting for Delivering as One, the UNDG Chair emphasized that the SOPs were relevant everywhere and should be adopted by every UN Country Team.
4. At the Fit for Purpose retreat, CEB Principals identified three key areas for the UN development system to jointly address – inequality, human rights, and the use of data and technology. CEB Principals further prioritized five key areas for action – (1) effective country level collaboration, including increased alignment with national priorities and strategies; (2) policy coherence; (3) partnerships and alliances; (4) strengthened accountability for results; and (5) leadership by CEB Principals.
5. **The UNDG Chair requested the UNDG ASG Advisory Group to draw on these identified priorities and to provide UNDG Principals with further advice in view of the Secretary-General’s request to CEB Principals to report in writing to the CEB Secretariat by 1 September on specific actions they are prepared to take in support of a coherent and coordinated system-wide approach to render the UN system fit for purpose.**

6. The UNDG Chair highlighted that ECOSOC had decided in its latest resolution¹ to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system taking into account the post-2015 development agenda, including on the interlinkages between the alignment of functions, funding practices, governance structures, capacity and impact of the UN development system. It would be critical for the UNDG to prepare for timely, informed, and collective engagement in this process.

7. To this effect, the UNDG agreed to carry out a collective review of the current setup and positioning of the UN development system and a forward-looking assessment of whether the UN development system was currently well positioned to deliver effectively on the post-2015 agenda. The review should include a mapping of the emerging Sustainable Development Goals and related targets against the current mandates, footprints and capacities of UN agencies to deliver on them at country level.

8. In follow-up to the UNDG meeting of 6 February, Kanni Wignaraja, Director of DOCO, presented a review of the architecture and functioning of the UNDG working mechanisms, prepared by DOCO, including a set of options to ensure that the UNDG was optimally configured for the post-2015 period. She explained that the recommendations had been guided by three major principles, on which there seemed to be consensus within the UNDG - (1) the need to shift gear, whereby all UNDG-led processes should be firmly guided by the substantive results they were meant to support; (2) the need to move away from a headquarter-centred approach, including by ensuring that UNDG products were informed by a field perspective from the inception; and (3) the need to streamline and focus UNDG working methods and mechanisms, with each of them underpinned by a core common set of standards and working principles.

9. The DOCO Director highlighted that the options paper also contained recommendations for a UNDG membership reform with a view to ensuring inclusive representation of the entire UN development system in the UNDG and a more representative yet functional Advisory Group at Principal and ASG level. Pending review by the UNDG, the new UNDG working and membership arrangements were due to enter into effect by 1 January 2015.

10. UNDG members welcomed the recommendations of the UNDG Working Mechanisms Review. There was agreement on the need to ensure better linkages between the normative values of the UN and how these were operationalized at the country level. With regard to the proposed UNDG Working Groups, there was agreement that these would need to remain at the strategic level, be streamlined and based on a set of clear and interconnected terms of reference. While ensuring close links and collaboration, maintaining a clear division of labour with HLCP and HLCM would be critical so as to ensure complementarity and avoid overlap of the mandates of the UNDG/HLCP/HLCM working mechanisms.

¹ E/2014/L.3, OP44: Recognises its role in providing guidance to the UN Development System for the implementation of the operational activities for development on a system-wide basis, welcomes the dialogues held at the operational activities segment of its substantive session of 2014 regarding the role of the United Nations Development System in the changing development landscape and the need to align the UN system to address emerging challenges, and in this regard decides to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue involving Member States and all relevant stakeholders on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations Development System taking into account the post-2015 development agenda, including on the interlinkages between the alignment of functions, funding practices, governance structures, capacity and impact of the United Nations Development System, partnership approaches, organisational arrangements, and decides that the Bureau of ECOSOC will provide updates on progress in this regard to the Operational Activities Segment during 2015 and 2016, and requests the Secretary-General to reflect these discussions in his report on the QCPR to the General Assembly for consideration and action by member states in the QCPR 2016

11. The UNDG agreed on the need to streamline its working methods, including the accountability of UNDG working mechanisms which would need to be strengthened. It was agreed that decisions and guidance provided at the Principal and ASG level would be duly adhered to in all working mechanisms at the technical level. Issues on which no consensus could be achieved at the technical level, would be accelerated for decision to the ASG level.

12. It was also agreed that UNDG guidance and tools should be user-friendly and as lean and concise as possible. Noting that drafting by (sub) committee had often not resulted in this outcome, the UNDG agreed on the need for key documents to be drafted by a lead author and professionally edited before being released. DOCO was requested to provide this role and support.

13. With regard to the proposed SDG Working Group, it was highlighted that it would need to engage as soon as possible, on the required UNDG joint action in support of the SDGs, including by adapting existing tools such as the MDG Acceleration Framework, support to integrated policy and analytics, and exploring opportunities for closer collaboration with the Bretton Wood Institutions in support of the post-2015 agenda.

14. There was also agreement that the UNDG would greatly benefit from linking to UN system knowledge institutions such as the UN System Staff College, UNITAR and the UN University, in order to drive learning and capacity development of government counterparts and UN staff alike on the substantive SDG agenda.

15. UNIDO expressed concern with regard to the proposal that UNDG membership privileges at the global, regional and country level should be tied to UNDG member entities paying their full contributions according to the agreed UNDG cost-sharing formula. The UNDG Chair reconfirmed her view that all UNDG members should be expected to honour their contributions in full. While this was not the case in the current 2014/15 funding cycle, with the exception of the UN Secretariat all UNDG members had indicated their intention to make at least reduced contributions. For the next funding cycle in 2016/17, all UNDG members would be expected to contribute in full.

16. With regard to the participation in the ASG Advisory Group, UNIDO requested an exception to the “ASG only” rule, which would allow organizations without staff at that level to be represented by staff directly under the Principal level. UNHCR requested to look into the possibility of allowing participation below ASG-level for agencies that were based outside of New York. The UNDG Chair reconfirmed that no substitutions were allowed for participation in the Principals Advisory Group and that the same rule should in principle apply to the ASG level. The UNDG Chair, however, requested DOCO to determine what specific exceptions from the rule might look like.

17. The UNDG endorsed the recommendations contained in the UNDG Working Mechanisms Review in principle. The paper will be revised in light of the comments received at the meeting and complemented by a set of draft terms of reference for the proposed UNDG working mechanisms to be reviewed by the ASG Advisory Group. The final draft of the paper will subsequently be submitted to the UNDG for endorsement. It was agreed to establish the Joint Communications and Advocacy Working Group as soon as possible.

Item 2: Delivering as One SOPs Integrated Package of Support

18. Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, ASG Advisory Group Chair, presented the integrated package of support for the Standard Operating Procedures. She highlighted that the integrated package provided much needed practical tools

and assistance for UN Country Teams to ensure effective implementation of the SOPs in the areas of programming, budget planning and resource mobilization, as well as communications. She recommended that the package be professionally edited and significantly reduced in size prior to its release. The idea would be to issue the package not as a single hard copy edition but rather to refer to the individual tools and guidance materials via hyperlinks. Importantly, the package would be made available to all UN Country Teams irrespective of their status as formal Delivering as One countries, to draw on it to the extent possible.

19. The ASG AG Chair highlighted that the integrated package also identified the 'core elements' of the SOPs – those elements the UNDG would need to report on and which were a fundamental part of what the Secretary-General had called for when he requested the UNDG to move forward with the implementation of the second generation of Delivering as One at the CEB meeting in April. She further noted that UN Country Teams would be given the opportunity to sequence implementation of the various elements of Delivering as One so that there would be progressive build-up. To measure progress on implementation, the integrated package also contained a monitoring and evaluation framework for Delivering as One.

20. The UNDG endorsed the content of the SOPs integrated package of support. DOCO was requested to ensure the package would be professionally edited and shortened significantly before its release. DOCO confirmed that the final SOPs guidance package would ensure consistency between the core elements and the One Programme guidance.

21. The UN Coordination Survey, which will also provide inputs to tracking progress, and has been discussed with and inputs provided by the QCPR focals group, the DAO M&E task team and the ASG AG. This is done in close collaboration with UNDESA, who will be using the inputs from this survey for reporting required for the SGs annual report. The survey would be shared in July, with governments, Resident Coordinators, UNCTs, Programme and Operations Management Teams, and UNDG member entities.

22. DOCO confirmed that agreement had been reached on an indicator to measure progress of the implementation of the functional firewall for inclusion in the RC/UNCT performance management system.

23. The UNDG agreed to release the SOPs package to all UN Country Teams with a common message, and the request for all UNCTs, beyond DaO countries, to draw on it to the extent possible. To ensure consistent messaging by all UNDG members in support of the release as well as the overall implementation of the SOPs, DOCO was requested to draft a cover letter for consideration by the ASG Advisory Group, which each UNDG Principal would then sign and/or share directly with own staff.

Item 3: Review of progress of implementation and priorities for Q3 & Q4 2014

24. Kanni Wignaraja, Director of DOCO, briefed the UNDG on the status of implementation of the UNDG Work Plan for 2014. She noted that the top priority had been the development of the various elements of the SOPs integrated package of support, to which the UNDG working mechanisms had contributed. As additional key achievements was the global dialogues on the implementation of the post-2015 agenda led by the UNDG MDG Task Force, as well as the leadership reforms driven by the UNDG Working Group on RC System Issues with regard to revising the RC job description, preparing a code of conduct for UNCTs, revising the RC Assessment Centre, and reforming the RC induction process, which had recently been conducted for the first time in close

collaboration with OCHA, OHCHR and the UN System Staff College. Further notable progress had been made by the Steering Committee of the Delivering Results Together (DRT) in terms of revising the framework of the DRT-F to firmly focus on coherent policy results, as well as by the UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism with regard to the deployment of the first round of Human Rights Advisers to UNCTs and Regional UNDG Teams.

25. Overall, the UNDG had made significant progress against its Work Plan in the first half of the year. A detailed progress update highlighting strategic results and progress against the targets of the UNDG Work Plan would be conducted by the end of the year to inform the preparation of the next biennial UNDG Work Plan for 2015/2016. She highlighted that for future updates, it would be important to ensure a focus on strategic issues and results. DOCO would provide the working mechanisms with a common template to this effect.

26. The DOCO Director also provided an update on the status of the implementation of the UNDG cost-sharing agreement. She recalled that the total funding target for 2014 was USD 33.7 million. To date, DOCO had received a total of USD 18.9 million from 11 of the 18 participating entities. Eight UNDG members had contributed the full amounts (UNAIDS, UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNWOMEN, WFP)² while three entities had either not paid the inflationary adjustment (WHO) or made significantly reduced contributions (UNESCO, UNIDO). Five entities (ITU, IMO, WMO, ILO, FAO) had either signed or agreed to sign the cost-sharing agreement but had yet to pay. She highlighted that there was a major funding gap for 2015, which was largely due to the fact that the UN Secretariat would only start contributing to the cost-sharing starting in 2016, as well as the reduced contributions from several UNDG member entities, particularly UNESCO and UNIDO.

27. **The UNDG Chair emphasized that for the next funding cycle in 2016/17, all UNDG member entities would be expected to contribute in full as per the UNDG cost-sharing formula, including inflationary adjustments. To allow for timely budgetary planning by agencies, DOCO would provide the UNDG with a projected funding scenario for 2016/17, by early Fall.**

28. **With regard to the SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters, the ASG Advisory Group highlighted the need for the UNDG to be seized with its implementation as a matter of urgency considering that almost all of the 55 agreed actions were due to be accomplished by the end of the year. It was agreed that the ASG Advisory Group Chair would write to the ASGs with a proposal to assign ASG leads to the outstanding tasks with the request to convene a small ASG core group to oversee timely implementation.**

Item 4: Strategic UNDG engagement in global development processes and events

29. Under this agenda item, the UNDG considered opportunities for engaging jointly in upcoming key global development processes and events, including the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front initiative, the Third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Third Conference on Small Island Development States, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, and the deliberations of the Open Working Group on SDGs.

30. **Rights Up Front:** Flavia Pansieri, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNDG Vice Chair, briefed the UNDG on Rights Up Front (RUF). She noted that the work of the UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming

² In addition, ILO's full contribution for 2014 was deposited into the UNDP account on 11 July 2014, and this was recorded later that day.

Mechanism is being linked up with the RUF Action Plan. Since the launch of this RUF initiative, the UNDG had seen even greater demand for the deployment of Human Rights Advisers, against the background of limited resources. With wide recognition of the need for UNDAFs and UN programmes to be based on assessments of the human rights situation, this was causing more demand in terms of capacities, training and advisory support. One remaining challenge in this regard was the system-wide pooling and sharing of information with regard to human rights violations so as to allow for shared analysis and advocacy.

31. **The UNDG agreed to invite the Deputy Secretary-General's Office to its next meeting for a strategic dialogue on the Rights Up Front initiative and ways in which the UNDG can be supportive.**

32. **Third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction:** Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, briefed the UNDG on the preparations for the Third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai, Japan on 14-18 March 2015. She noted that six regional consultations had successfully been conducted over the past year, the outcome of which was published on the conference website. In September and October 2014, facilitated consultations on the outcome would be led by the two co-chairs of the WCDRR Preparatory Committee, Finland and Thailand. Ms Wahlstrom reminded UNDG members of their commitment, captured in the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction, to actively engage in the second preparatory committee session on 17-18 November 2014. UN organizations are expected to contribute to the technical sessions at Sendai with a view to further align the UN operational development work with the outcome of the WCDRR. Ms Wahlstrom confirmed her intention to hold further consultations with HLCPC and UNDG in the coming months. She also noted that the CEB is expected to issue a joint statement at Sendai, to be agreed before end of the year.

33. **Third Conference on Small Island Development States:** Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in UN DESA, briefed the UNDG on the preparations for the Third Conference on Small Island Development States to be held in Apia, Samoa on 1-4 September 2014. He highlighted the event's innovative focus of on partnerships, whereby the conventional ministerial roundtables would be replaced by six partnership dialogues. Beyond supporting the preparations of the conference, the UNDG is expected to play a central role in the implementation of its outcome. The UNDG Chair noted that the UNDG would organize a joint side event at the conference, which would focus on highlighting SIDS priorities for the post-2015 agenda, and showcase the joint efforts of the UN development system to deliver as one in support of sustainable development. UNDG members are invited to provide feedback on the draft concept note of the UNDG side event.

34. **Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC):** The UNDG Chair noted that the Mexico High-Level Forum in April had been a successful conference, focused on further advancing effective development co-operation per the agreed Busan commitments, whilst recognizing the importance of aligning the Global Partnership with the current post-2015 development agenda. The shift in gear from Busan to Mexico had been the recognition of, the reality and diversity of development partnerships and financing arrangements, and the new policy and institutional arrangements that such brings. The UNDG organized a well-attended session on 'Delivering as One in a Post-2015 World', which stimulated an animated conversation on how a joined-up UN development system could support MDG acceleration and the emerging post-2015 agenda.

35. Michael O'Neill, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, briefed the UNDG on the outcome of the recent GPEDC Steering Committee meeting, where UNDP was

representing the UNDG. He noted that the three new co-chairs of the GPEDC – Malawi, the Netherlands and Mexico – were determined to take a practical, actionable approach. He emphasized the need to streamline the processes between the GPEDC and the ECOSOC DCF. DESA confirmed that there had been ongoing dialogue between the GPEDC and the DCF and that the High Level Political Forum and the DCF provided the GPEDC with an opportunity to relate to implementation of post-2015 agenda. UNDP confirmed that it would continue to use its membership in the GPEDC Steering Committee to also represent the views of the UNDG. To this effect, UNDG members were invited to help shape the course of the conversation by providing inputs.

36. **Open Working Group on SDGs:** Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in UN DESA, briefed the UNDG on the work of the Open Working Group (OWG). He noted that the OWG consultations had morphed into de-facto intergovernmental negotiations, which would give the proposed list of SDGs and targets more weight than had originally been anticipated. This could also pose a challenge to communicating the import of possibly a very broad based platform for action as being all valid and had to be monitored, while countries would be tempted to prioritize a more manageable number of goals and targets per their country contexts. Mr. Gass cautioned that the proposal prepared by the OWG would be vulnerable until Member States were due to reach final agreement on the goals by the end of 2015.

37. With regard to the Secretary-General's synthesis report, Mr. Gass confirmed that a survey would shortly be sent to all UN entities through the UN Task Team. Agencies were about to be requested to identify gaps and proposed actions for the next phase so as to ensure the three dimensions of sustainable development could be better enforced. The UN Task Team would hold a retreat in early September to provide feedback on the survey results ahead of the drafting of the synthesis report.

38. The UNDG Chair highlighted that it would be critical for the report to achieve a synthesis of the consultations to date. The report would need to provide ideas for clustering goals and targets. A key achievement of the MDGs had been that the goals found their way into national plans and strategies. The Secretary-General's synthesis report was an important opportunity to ensure that the SDGs build on this success story by keeping the goals and targets to a manageable number that also enabled effective country level implementation. Adapting the MDG Acceleration Framework so that it could kickstart SDG implementation would be a positive step.