

Fit-for-purpose in the post-2015 era: which QCPR-mandated actions require accelerated and/or scaled-up implementation if the UN development system is to be ready for the challenges of the post-2015 development agenda?

Madam Vice-President,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues and friends,

Warm greetings from Tunis! Please accept my apologies for not being there in person. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to join this important dialogue via video link.

Madam Vice-President,

2015 is a critical year, as we sprint the last mile towards the finish line for the Millennium Development Goals and at the same time commit to the future global development agenda. 2015 offers a historic opportunity for the world to galvanize around a common, forward-looking agenda, a promise to and for the future.

This agenda is unfolding amidst dramatic demographic transformations: a population of 7.2 billion, projected to reach 8.4 billion by 2030; more young people than ever before bringing the potential for a demographic dividend; a global ageing transition that is a triumph of gains in health and well-being; and increasing mobility, including unprecedented urbanization.

The challenge of the post-2015 development agenda is to empower and enable all people to achieve their full potential while – and as a means of – sustaining inclusive economic growth and safeguarding our climate and environment.

People around the world – particularly the 1.8 billion young people and especially adolescent girls – are urgently calling for equitable and inclusive sustainable development that puts people, their human rights and dignity, at its very heart.

The post-2015 era must be one of equality and human rights, with choices and opportunities for all, and with priority attention to the rights of women and girls. We look to a post-2015 agenda that focuses strongly on adolescents and youth: on supporting, empowering and engaging them and investing in their capabilities. We look to a post-2015 agenda that directly addresses the importance of upholding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, especially for women and adolescent girls. We look to a post-2015 agenda that directly addresses population dynamics, respects cultural diversity, and ensures equitable and fair financing.

2015 is also a vital year for efforts to build a stronger UN development system that is an exceptional partner to Member States and national stakeholders for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Member States have started this conversation through the ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system. Within the UN, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its three pillars have for over a year now been reflecting on our “fitness for purpose,” both collectively as a system and individually as agencies. Together, we stand ready to actively engage in Member States’ deliberations, at your request.

Madam Vice-President,

In our fit-for-purpose deliberations, the current QCPR is without doubt a useful starting point. UNFPA is fully committed to the implementation of the 2012 QCPR, which is fully mainstreamed in our Strategic Plan 2014-2017. My colleagues have already touched upon a number of QCPR mandates that require accelerated, scaled up implementation, but let me talk about something that can be immediately translated into tangible benefits for the people we serve.

Simplification and harmonization of business practices can bring efficiency and real cost savings to our operations.

Let me give you one example: There is vast opportunity for considerable savings through joint procurement. We have been concretely exploring this opportunity for the past few years, with successful implementation in two main areas. First is the joint procurement of high-value commodities, such as vehicles and insurance contracts. Second is collaborative procurement at the Headquarters-level, through joint contracts for travel, stationery, courier services, electricity and telecommunications. The consolidated and strategic planned purchasing of vehicles, which amounts to a total yearly expenditure of over US\$ 300 million, will alone return overall savings (starting already in 2015) of somewhere in the region of US\$ 30-60 million – savings that can be used to prevent some 10 to 20 million unwanted pregnancies or tens of thousands of maternal deaths.

An indirect result of this work is better policy and operational coherence. The common legal and administrative models and contracts developed for these initiatives can be used for other high-value commodities, with minimal changes, and standardized frameworks for joint action can be established that can be applied to other areas.

The Joint Operations Facility in Brazil, an initiative carried out by HLCM and UNDG together with the UN Country Team, represents one of the possible integrated business models that are being explored for replication in other contexts.

There is no one size that fits all. But there are some common principles: transparency, accountability, results orientation, cost-effectiveness. All of these projects are being done within existing rules or with slight modifications. They need to be brought to scale. We have planted the seeds for integrated working approaches from which there is no going back.

The UNDAF roll-out countries provide an opportunity to implement the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and 2015 will be an important year to progress even further, particularly in business processes. Some of the Business Operations Strategy pilots anticipate considerable potential savings in ICT, human resources and other common services.

The SOPs make it possible for us to move forward in a more integrated way, making the most effective use of our combined ideas and skills, institutional experiences and capacities. With a flexible approach, and adapted to difference country contexts, the SOPs can be universally applied so that we can deliver the strongest possible results on the ground.

Madam Vice-President,

Integration will be one of the key elements of the new development agenda. Substantive integration of the three pillars of sustainable development needs to go hand in hand with the application of a human rights based approach and principles of equality to issues of economy and environment. Policy and planning for sustainable development must also address those at the high end of the income and consumption spectrum, a major departure for a development system that has focused on poverty reduction.

This also requires integration across institutional lines to best serve all people, particularly around the issues of data and youth.

Data is a priority area for the UN, particularly for UNFPA, and a powerful tool for development. Data is essential to make evidence-based decisions and drive accountability. Currently, the world knows the least about people who have the least – in other words, the very people we need to reach the most. The data revolution and the promise of big data have particular resonance for our work to promote equity and human rights and ensure that all women, adolescent girls and young people everywhere are able to achieve their full potential.

Measuring progress towards the new Sustainable Development Goals will require a steady flow of high-quality, timely, authoritative and accessible data. UNFPA will strengthen our leadership in the area of data, working with governments, sister UN agencies, civil society, the private sector and other partners.

As my colleague Helen Clark has already highlighted, capacity development will be key to advancing this transformational development agenda.

Jointly with other members of the UN Country Teams, UNFPA will intensify support to strengthen national statistical capacity to collect, analyze and use data both for planning and monitoring. This includes greater disaggregation and localization of national data, and addressing data “dark spots.” Better data means better development, particularly at sub-national levels, and we hope multilateral assistance will be increased to enable us to support countries in this area.

Together with our UN partners, UNFPA will continue to work towards the integration of human rights and the normative agenda into our work at all levels. We count on your support to help hold all our agencies accountable for advancing integration and coherence of policy, programme, funding and business operations. We also count on you to help create an enabling environment for further coherence through your policy and funding decisions.

Madam Vice-President,

Sustainable development calls for a UN system that can set policy and operational standards, which can be applied with flexibility in diverse national contexts. A fit-for-purpose UN system will continue to respond to the growing diversity of countries and needs, and provide differentiated support. Business as usual is not an option in middle-income countries because of the changing demands and evolved capacities in most countries.

Recognizing these changes, UNFPA’s new business model makes a distinction between programme countries in terms of their needs for implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, and their ability to finance development (GDP). This model has suggested greater upstream engagement—associated with the delivery of thinking, not things—in upper MICs and in lower MICs with lower needs. It has emphasized advocacy, policy dialogue and knowledge management as preferred modes of engagement in these countries. This requires greater emphasis on political scanning and policy analysis, diplomacy and greater engagement with national partners to invigorate the human rights agenda, empower local communities to demand and facilitate legislative and policy changes, and strengthen the negotiation and coalition- and consensus-building skills of staff.

Madam Vice-President,

We at UNFPA feel an urgent need to reposition our organization to be able to engage more proactively in the changing development and financial landscape. As Member States deliberate on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system in the post-2015 era and on the system’s “fitness for purpose,” I trust Member States to go beyond what is possible through the current architecture, resources, technologies and human capacities of the UN and look to a bolder UN which will deliver on its new mandates through broader partnerships. We look forward to continued engagement with Member States on this issue.

The ICPD beyond 2014 review demonstrated the importance of human rights and equity to individual well-being and resilience and sustainability; it reinforced the evidence for priority attention to youth, women and adolescent girls. It reaffirmed – with concrete evidence – the vision and consensus of the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action: respect, protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights are necessary preconditions for inclusive and sustainable development.

The MDGs gains over the past 15 years are also human rights gains. We must protect and advance these hard won gains and, where they are under threat, continue to raise our voices for the voiceless whose rights are most at risk.

When we speak with One Voice – and on difficult issues we are sometimes the only voice – people listen. Together we can do more, we can do better, and we can deliver on our promise to the world’s people.

I thank you.