

An Explanatory Note to the
Draft Discussion Paper on
The Longer-term Positioning of the UN Development System
in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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This explanatory note expresses solely the views of the authors

Nature and Character of Paper

The draft discussion paper on the 'Longer-term Positioning of the UN Development System (UNDS) in the post-2015 Development Agenda' is the work of two independent external authors. It was presented and discussed at the 15 December 2014 first session of the ECOSOC Dialogue on the role of the UNDS in the changing development landscape. The analysis takes as a central premise the Sustainable Development Goals as articulated by the Report of the Open Working Group. In response to ECOSOC resolution 2014/14, the independent paper analyzed the inter linkages between the alignment of functions, funding practices, partnerships, organizational arrangements/capacity, impact and governance of the UNDS.

Member states expressed a wide variety of views on the ideas presented in the paper. Since the discussion paper was an independent contribution to the dialogue, it was decided that it should retain its character and the authors were requested to provide a brief explanatory note clarifying the process and reflecting on the debate.

The purpose of the discussion paper was threefold: to analyze the inter-linkages between the different elements specified in the ECOSOC resolution; to put forward a number of ideas that would stimulate a vigorous debate; and to provide some elements of an analytical framework that would facilitate further discussion by member states. In this respect, the underlying premise of the analytical framework in the paper is that it is function which must drive each of the other elements. Finance must align to function and provide incentives that are supportive and do not distract from purpose. Organization, capacity, the measurement of impact and Governance must all align to function.

Member states will have to identify the role of UNDS in implementing the unified and universal sustainable development agenda, which will be endorsed by the General Assembly. This framework addresses the elimination of poverty as a central challenge.

The paper does not contain negotiated text or seek to find common ground. Consensus and agreed language should follow a vigorous and robust debate around very complex issues, including some raised in the paper, that do not lend themselves to obvious or simple answers. As an independent paper, it does not reflect the views of ECOSOC members, the Secretariat or UN organizations. It contains some concepts that are widely used in the international development community but not necessarily agreed to in official UN intergovernmental decisions. This is duly acknowledged by the authors. However, bringing some new elements into the dialogue was considered to be a key criterion for judging the value added of the paper.

Key Issues/Questions Raised in the Paper

A number of the key issues, which need to be addressed include the following:

- For the 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with a population of almost 900 million that have limited access to external resources as well as very limited capacity, both the role of ODA and the role of the UNDS will remain highly significant. How can further special focus be given to the operational requirements of the LDCs?
- The paper suggests that strengthening norms and setting standards approved by member states, and facilitating the provision of global public goods (a concept widely

under discussion in the new development landscape) are critical dimensions of the UNDS contribution to a unified and universal agenda. Member states had a range of views regarding the concept of global public goods.

- A key post 2015 priority will be to strengthen the capacity of countries to be able to deal with the new development agenda
- How can UNDS position itself to be a champion of evidence-based policy?
- While core-resources remain an indispensable financing component of the UNDS financing architecture, the paper makes the case that it is time to go beyond the current debate between the role of core and non-core resources.
- The paper asks the question as to the consequences of a strong normative agenda for the financing of this function. Is there not a case here for assessed budgets? Several governments asked for a fuller analysis of the implications.
- In a global economy where the great majority of countries have access to a wide variety of resource flows, UNDS needs to address the challenge and extraordinary opportunity of how best to leverage existing external flows and how to access innovative sources of financing.
- There is a need to deepen and expand issue-based coalitions at the global, regional and national levels as key partners for the implementation of SDGs and develop a clear accountability framework that can underpin and monitor such partnerships.
- In countries where the UN's work is stretched across a broad range of critical issues that demand a coherent and proactive response, further measures to integrate the UN's presence and to rationalize funding flows should be given high priority.
- The logic of the analysis in the paper points to the need for results measurement systems to be aligned to changing functions, supportive financial incentives and partnerships.
- Noting that the only level at which the entire UNDS is extensively engaged is at the country level, the paper suggests that governance of UNDS operations could to a large extent be devolved and exercised at the country level. This would require adjustments in but in no way diminish the role of the Executive Boards.
- Recognizing the relative diminution in terms of volume of operational delivery in many Middle Income Countries (MICs), the paper suggests the need to innovate with new models for UNDS presence in MICs where the implementation of the universal agenda will require strategic and coherently provided advisory services.
- The adoption of a principle that matters requiring intergovernmental decisions should only be debated and considered in one intergovernmental forum would be a contribution both to effectiveness and efficiency.

- The strength of the emerging post-2015 agenda is deeply rooted in the need for more integrated approaches to the different dimensions of future development challenges. It would be logical to draw from this a political commitment for a new level of coherence in the overall governance of the entire UNDS that would be commensurate with the commitment to a more coherent sustainable development paradigm.

The Way Forward

The analysis provided and the questions that the paper raises were intended to provide a launching pad for an intensive dialogue on some of the key challenges confronting the UNDS. The analysis is grounded in the vision embraced by the emerging post 2015 development framework.

The authors are well aware that the paper does not contain a complete list of the issues. Member states on December 15 already identified a number of other key issues, such as technology transfer, and there will no doubt be others. Member states may wish to delete some items and they will surely have to prioritize.

The authors felt seriously challenged by the complexity of the linkages between the different elements they were requested to analyze. Given the complexity of the issues, it is critically important that the opportunity exists to review the data and for a variety of perspectives to continue to be heard and debated.

The authors believe that there was strong support at the December 15 meeting for the core hypothesis underlying the discussion. This is that the UNDS needs to champion the transformative agenda to be laid out in the post 2015 framework by demonstrating itself that business as usual is not an acceptable option.