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All Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers
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Excellency,

As Co-Chairs of the System-wide Coherence process we are writing to update you on our work and the way forward. As delegations may recall, since our appointment by the President of the General Assembly on 20 February 2009 we have convened thirteen meetings, some in the format of informal plenary consultations and some as informal interactive meetings, in order to discuss the different areas included in the System-wide Coherence process. We have done our best to conduct the process in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, bearing in mind the need to allocate sufficient time to discuss the various issues at stake.

As outlined in our plan of work, following the plenary informal consultations held on 22 June, we have had informal meetings with regional groupings and individual delegations in order to build consensus on the areas that could be part of a decision by the General Assembly during the present session. The meetings have proved to be very useful in order to frame the broader discussions held in the previous months and identify elements for common ground.

At this point, the Co-Chairs consider that the documents prepared by the Secretary-General and transmitted to all Member States on the reform of the gender architecture, governance and funding of UN operational activities for development, as well as statements made by delegations in the plenary informal consultations and interactive meetings, the executive summaries prepared by the Co-Chairs, and the informal meetings between the Co-Chairs with regional groupings and individual delegations, provide a good basis for a single, integrated, substantive, balanced and consensual decision by the General Assembly on the issues pertaining to System-wide Coherence by the end of the 63rd session.

Regarding the reform of the UN gender architecture, and as stated in the executive summary on this matter prepared by the Co-Chairs, it is our shared recommendation that the General Assembly take action during the current session and decide on the establishment of a composite entity that should build on the existing four entities (OSAGI, DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW) while consolidating them into one entity that would perform the functions broadly outlined in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General. The new entity should recognize the universal nature of gender equality and women's empowerment in view of the obligations that all Member States have in that regard. The new entity would, in particular:

- provide normative support to the UN intergovernmental bodies which will continue to be the overarching policy-making bodies;
- advance gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system;
- provide an effective link between the normative functions and the operational activities;
- carry out operational activities more effectively and on a larger scale with a demand-driven field presence that would build upon current assistance with a view to strengthening the impact of its support to Member States;
- have strong leadership and be led at the level of Under-Secretary-General;
- be supported by funding from the UN regular budget to support normative core functions and from voluntary contributions for the operational activities.

Regarding the intergovernmental oversight mechanisms for the proposed new gender entity, there is general consensus that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, including the Commission on the Status of Women, would remain the overarching normative and policy-making bodies. As regards the intergovernmental oversight mechanism for the operational activities, the Co-Chairs sense an emerging recognition that a decision on an Executive Board to oversee the entity's organizational work in a manner similar to that established in GA resolution 48/162, is important in order to achieve appropriate oversight and guidance on the entity's development during the transitional period. We will continue consulting with delegations on this matter.

Should the General Assembly decide to establish the composite entity, a transitional arrangement process could be envisaged in order to ensure the necessary leadership and required preparatory work, including consultations with stakeholders, in the process leading to the establishment of the future entity. During such a period, the existing entities would continue to perform their current operations.

In the area of the governance of the UN system operational activities for development, there is broad consensus around the need to improve the functioning of existing intergovernmental bodies, with a view to support developing countries in their national development strategies, and in full respect of the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and national ownership.

The need to address the effectiveness of existing bodies with a view to improving strategic overview, policy coherence, coordination, funding and accountability was repeatedly underlined. However, it is our assessment that the General Assembly is not ready for a landmark decision on this matter and further options may need to be requested from the Secretary General, bearing in mind the principles outlined above. In the same vein, advancing voluntary, common country programming is seen as critical to strengthened national ownership of UN development cooperation. Further discussion will be needed on how to strengthen its modalities, including options for the review of common country programmes at the intergovernmental level.

The General Assembly could also recall the urgency for the Funds, Programmes and specialized agencies to continue their efforts to align their planning cycles with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

The need to assess system-wide efficiency, effectiveness and performance of the UN system at the country and global levels also met with general support. In this regard, we are of the view that the General Assembly should request the Secretary General to propose modalities for the establishment of a system-wide evaluation mechanism.

There is a widespread view in the membership concerning the need to enhance transparency and intergovernmental review of the activities developed by the UN system interagency bodies. In that regard, the General Assembly could also call for an improved and effective use of their reporting mechanisms at the intergovernmental level.

Finally, the General Assembly could also encourage the continued and increased cooperation, coordination and coherence between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Turning to funding of the UN system operational activities for development, there is ample consensus that the most urgent priority for UN development cooperation is an adequate, predictable and stable funding base, responsive to national development plans of programme countries. The General Assembly has often emphasized the links among effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the UN operational activities for development, the need to achieve results in assisting developing countries in their national development strategies, and the overall resourcing of the UN development system in line with commitments made in various fora.

In this regard, there is also broad concern about the impact of volatility in resources flows, the long-term decline in the share of core resources of overall contributions, the earmarking of non-core funding, and the imbalance between core and non-core resources. The broad membership has repeatedly signaled the need of greater flows and greater predictability in funding, and the necessity of implementing intergovernmental commitments in a serious manner. The General Assembly could reinforce the commitment to the increase of the voluntary contributions to core budgets of the UN development system bodies, according to the principles of sustainability and predictability.

As far as non-core resources are concerned, the General Assembly could request further analysis of the implications of various forms of such funding in terms of predictability, country-ownership and impact on the balanced implementation of intergovernmental mandates.

Finally, many delegations have recalled the need to improve the intergovernmental overview and monitoring of funding flows and commitments. We recommend that the General Assembly requests the Secretary General to create a central repository of information on UN operational activities for development, with disaggregated statistics on all funding forms and expenditures, and appropriate access and updating of information.

On the issue of the Delivering as One approach, having heard delegations, including those representing pilot countries, it is our understanding that the General Assembly is in a position to acknowledge progress made and challenges remaining in efforts to increase coherence in country-level programming.

In line with the resolution 62/208 on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR), and building on developments taking place on the ground, the General Assembly could reiterate its call on the Secretary General to support pilot countries to undertake their own country-led evaluations. Furthermore, the General Assembly should underline the necessity for a truly independent evaluation, as mandated by the TCPR, and agree on the principles that should guide this exercise, such as inclusiveness, transparency, objectiveness and independence.

Finally, on harmonization of business practices, the General Assembly can similarly reiterate its call on the Secretary General to continue progress in this field, while requesting that ECOSOC and relevant intergovernmental bodies are regularly informed about progress made and challenges encountered in this regard.

Our aspiration is that all delegations should be able to feel that these elements address many of their main priorities and concerns. We have tried to address all the issues on the System wide Coherence agenda in a balanced and objective manner. We believe that the General Assembly should be ready to take action in the areas where there is broad consensus and, in those areas needing further progress, set the roadmap for the continuation of the process. In that regard, in future sessions further efforts to strengthen governance of UN development cooperation will be required, in alignment with improvements in the funding architecture, and dealing effectively with challenges presented by voluntary paradigms currently developing on the ground. We all agree that changes are required and that in maintaining the status quo, we would be victims of inertia and short-term institutional and national interests. We must as a collective demonstrate the political will and vision required to make the necessary progress.

All in all, we consider that these elements provide the basis for a balanced and fair compromise outcome to the deliberations of the General Assembly during the current session. Therefore, it is our intention to use the elements contained in this letter as the outline for a draft resolution, to be circulated in early September with a view to its adoption by consensus of the General Assembly before the end of this session.

We thank all delegations for their positive cooperation and call on them to continue to be engaged in this process in a constructive manner. In doing so, the General Assembly would be making the best use of this opportunity to enhance the authority, relevance and credibility of the United Nations and, above all, to improve its ability to address effectively the development challenges of our time.



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