

## **Note to the Deputy Secretary-General**

Subject: Strengthening the links between UNDG and ECESA

The following is a jointly developed proposal for bringing closer the normative, analytical, and operational dimensions of the UN system's development work, specifically by strengthening the links between the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA). The proposal takes into account the recommendations in this area put forward by the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence. It also responds to the 13 February decision of the Policy Committee meeting on system-wide coherence issues, which included a request that UNDG and ECESA prepare such a proposal for presentation to the Deputy Secretary-General.

Without prejudging the Secretary-General's decisions on the Panel's report or the outcome of the intergovernmental consultations, the steps we suggest could be taken immediately. They would also ensure that mechanisms are in place to enhance support for continued implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and broader UN Development Agenda.

The Development Group Office (DGO) and ECESA Secretariat have reviewed the respective functions of UNDG and ECESA. This work ascertained that each of these executive committees has a set of functions specific to its constituency. UNDG, for instance, provides managerial/secretarial support to operational activities of its member agencies at the country level; ECESA plays a substantially different role, in guiding programme planning processes for the UN Secretariat entities that are its members. The upshot is that there is no value added to be found in merging these functions, which should thus continue to be performed independently by the two committees. In the same vein, it should be borne in mind that the character of the two committees is also quite different, with UNDG's membership including most of the UN agencies and ECESA's membership including exclusively UN Secretariat entities.

The key area of mutual interest, where the functions of UNDG and ECESA intersect, is in the development of policy responses to global challenges and their implications, particularly in terms of operational strategies at the country level. We thus suggest that UNDG and ECESA should work closely together in the area of policy development and recommend the following specific steps toward that end.

UNDG and ECESA should identify a limited number (two or three) of substantive priorities for the year 2007 (e.g. decent employment, sustainable development, South-South cooperation). Each priority would be discussed by a joint thematic group comprising a limited number of interested members drawn from the two committees. The members most engaged and competent on the thematic issue, would lead the work, which would aim to develop a global policy response to the challenge in question. The overall strategic vision and policy approach would be approved by Principals of the two committees. Operational implications would be further elaborated by the UNDG for implementation at the country level, and by ECESA to pursue in policy analysis and in substantive support to the intergovernmental process. DGO and

the ECESA Secretariat would need to ensure that the lessons learned in these areas at country level feed back in to the UN's normative and analytical work. The Annual Ministerial Reviews of progress toward the development goals conducted by ECOSOC, which also include voluntary presentations by countries of their experiences, could be a key vehicle for this.

To support such collaboration between UNDG and ECESA, the core membership of the two committees should convene together once a year at the Principals level to agree on a broader agenda, organized into three parts: one set of priorities to be supported by both committees, one to be supported mainly by UNDG, and one to be supported mainly by ECESA.

The secretariats of UNDG and ECESA should establish a Joint Standing Committee at the working level, akin to the joint UNDG-ECHA Working Group, which would serve to guide further discussion on the agenda of thematic issues to be addressed collaboratively and to spur the work on these issues.

UNDG and ECESA should establish a reciprocal flow of information and a dynamic relationship with the Development Cooperation Forum, to be convened biennially by ECOSOC. The Forum could request UNDG/ECESA to address certain thematic issues, and UNDG/ECESA could guide the identification of priority issues to be put on the Forum's agenda.

The implementation of these steps would be greatly facilitated by the establishment of a dedicated and effective support structure to shore up and adequately support ECESA's work. As explained in the note submitted to you on ECESA under separate cover, the current mostly "virtual" ECESA secretariat is no longer in a position to absorb the scope and scale of the existing coordination tasks. The note suggests setting up a modest, enhanced ECESA secretariat, along the DGO model.

We would be grateful for your feedback on these suggested steps, which will be submitted for review and approval by the Principals of UNDG and ECESA during the meeting to be organized at the margins of the April meeting of the UN Chief Executives Board.

Ways to proceed on this matter will also be influenced by the outcome of CEB's review of its own functioning, which is expected to touch on, among other things, the relationship to CEB of UNDG and, possibly, other UN executive committees (such as ECHA) which have come to assume certain inter-agency coordination functions.

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