

**Thirty-first Meeting of the Executive Committee
United Nations Development Group**

**14 November 2003
New York**

Summary of Conclusions

The thirty-first meeting of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group was held on Friday, 14 November 2003, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The meeting was hosted by UNDP in George Arthur Brown Conference Room, 21st floor, DC-1 building.

Present at the meeting were:

Chair: Mr. Mark Malloch Brown

Participants: Ms. Carol Bellamy UNICEF
Ms. Thoraya Obaid UNFPA
Ms. Sheila Sisulu WFP (via video conference)
Mr. Bertrand Ramcharan OHCHR
Mr. Mourad Wahba UNDP

Guests: Ms. Kathleen Cravero UNAIDS (via tele - conference)
Ms. Julia Taft Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery/UNDP
Ms. Anupama Rao Singh UNICEF/Team Leader of the Needs Assessment in Iraq

1. Adoption of the Draft Agenda

- The Executive Committee adopted the draft agenda.

2. Guidance on UNDG Work Priorities for 2004

- As background for the discussion on this item, the Director of DGO briefed the Executive Committee on the key UNDG tasks accomplished so far in 2003, a year-end report of which will be produced and submitted to UNDG members in January 2004. Ms. Fegan-Wyles also mentioned a number of areas that UNDG should pay more attention in 2004, including:

- Making the new procedures/tools developed in 2003 work on the ground;
 - Focusing on operationalising the MDGs;
 - Follow-up to CEB decisions on HIV/AIDS and WSSD;
 - Addressing concerns of non-UNDG Executive Committee agencies in decision-making regarding UNDG work;
 - Timely placement of the Resident Coordinator; and
 - Developing a communications strategy to better inform parties concerned, both at country and headquarters level, of activities related to UN reform, in order to get more “buy-in”.
- The Executive Committee agreed that a lot had been accomplished by the UNDG, providing a solid framework for moving ahead. The Executive Committee provided their guidance regarding future work of the UNDG, summarized below.
 - The UNDG now needs to focus on implementation of its guidance notes and decisions, with more focus on results-oriented work at the country level.
 - The UNDG should concentrate on a few key issues to be done well at country level, rather than adding on more new “tools”.
 - There is a need to help ‘non-roll-out’ countries to catch up with what going on in UN reform (‘roll-out’ countries were already receiving support).
 - Human rights- related work in the field should be speeded up.
 - UNDG communications strategy on UN reform needs to be stepped up. In this connection the Mr. Ramcharan invited the Chair of the UNDG (or a member of the Executive Committee) to come to the next meeting of the Commission on Human Rights to share success stories on UN reform.
 - Operationalisation of the MDGs at the country level, with more country ownership, needs to be enhanced to provide inputs to the Millennium Summit in 2005.
 - The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) will take place in 2004; this needs to be linked more clearly with UNDG efforts on UN reform.
 - Regarding the TCPR, the Executive Committee agreed that a meeting of the respective Evaluation Officers of the Executive Committee agencies should be convened to discuss how the work they are doing for the TCPR could be better linked with the UNDG efforts on UN reform.

3. Operationalisation of the MDGs

- In introducing the item, the Chair recalled concerns expressed by the UNDG on the Millennium Project and MDGs Campaign at the UNDG meeting on 30 October 2003. He mentioned that efforts would be focused on advocacy and country-level strategy to achieve country-specific goals. UN coordination at country level needs to be enhanced to ensure that the achievement of the MDGs would be on track. The Chair informed the Executive Committee of the ‘localized’ pilot case studies (10-12 countries were being considered). He also emphasized that while the UN system focuses on what resources would it take for a country to reach the MDGs, we need to engage the World Bank and the IMF which seem to focus on what resources are likely to be available. A ‘middle path’ needs to be followed, consistent with the

commitments made by both governments and donors at Monterrey. However, he noted that the World Bank had started to change its position on this in a positive way.

- The Executive Committee expressed their views, which are summarized below.
 - It is the responsibility of the national government to achieve the MDGs. The country should be aware of its own limitations or inability to achieve the MDGs, due to its domestic policy. In this connection, the Chair will share with the Executive Committee a copy of the letter he sent to Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Millennium Project, on this subject.
 - The UN should be cautious in not creating any false expectation of the UN by the government, while bearing in mind that the UN should do its best to leverage additional resources for the country.
 - The number of pilot case studies on MDGs is far too many; a maximum of 5-6 countries should be selected. The Executive Committee agencies should be consulted in the selection of the pilot countries.
 - The pilot case studies, to be carried out by local research institutions, should be closely linked with the ongoing efforts on formulation of domestic policies.
 - The Chairs of all Treaty Bodies on Human Rights will meet in June 2004; they should meet with the Millennium Project and MDGs Campaign Team.
 - Instead of creating a new ad-hoc group to oversee the pilot case studies on MDGs and exchange information on what is going on in the Project and the Campaign, the undg Programme Group should undertake that task. Focal points could be identified in each agency.
 - Report on progress of the Project and the Campaign should be a periodic standing item in meetings of both Programme Group and Executive Committee.

4. HIV/AIDS and its Linkages with Food Security and Governance

- In introducing the item, the Chair referred to a weak link between the various regional resources and the UN Country Teams (UNCTs). He suggested a discussion of what the undg could do, through the Regional Inter-Agency Regional Support Office (RIACSO) and the UNAIDS Inter-Country Team, to enhance operational support to the UNCTs.
- Ms. Sisulu was of the view that the undg should undertake to provide necessary support to the Regional Directors' group to carry out the assessment of UNCTs, in order to determine their capacity to implement the recommendations endorsed by the HLCP and CEB.
- Ms. Cravero agreed that the Regional Directors should take the lead in providing support to the UNCTs. She noted that there was already a set of agreements made by the Regional Directors group, which now needed to be implemented. She also suggested that there should be an in-depth analysis on the kind of support required by the UNCTs and that the respective Regional Directors should designate their focal points to work with Mark Stirling (UNAIDS Inter-Country Team), who would coordinate with Mike Sackett (RIACSO) in an assessment of the support required, and then report to the undg Executive Committee. She stressed that the

coordination between the existing structures should be strengthened and that all Regional Offices should work together more effectively

- Ms. Bellamy suggested that the assessment of the strategic capacity required by the UNCTs should be a starting point and that one should be more realistic, as to what the UN can do and do better, based on the existing capacity and resources. In this context, Ms. Sisulu mentioned that some UNCTs are very small and would require more strategic support in terms of human resources to do a better job.
- Ms. Obaid stressed that the investment should be made at the country level and that the UN system should avoid creating additional bureaucratic layers.
- In response to a question asked by Ms. Bellamy, the Director of DGO mentioned that the UNDG Guidance Note on "Operationalizing a Strengthened United Nations System Response to HIV/AIDS at Country Level" had just been endorsed by the Programme Group on a 'no objection basis. However, FAO had just provided some comments on the Note, which would be discussed with them in order to finalize the note to be sent to the field by early next week (this has now been done).
- The Chair said that the Executive Committee agencies needed to do what was agreed at the meeting in Maputo. He concluded the discussion by suggesting that the Regional Directors, rather than RIACSO, take the lead in providing country-level support. Each Regional Director should designate a focal point to work with Mark Stirling and Mike Sackett to field country missions to carry out the assessment and report back to the Executive Committee in early February 2004.

5. Iraq

- Ms. Julia Taft briefed the Executive Committee on the on-going "Consultation on UN Operations in Iraq, 11-16 November 2003, in Nicosia, Cyprus. She noted that it was unclear at the moment, as to who would provide the lead and continuity in the UN operations in Iraq, and that we should wait and see the outcome of the consultation. The Executive Committee agreed that there is the need for an 'ad interim' for the UN operations in Iraq.
- Regarding the agency participation in the Consultation in Nicosia, Ms. Obaid expressed her concern that UNFPA was not invited to this consultation, due to an inappropriate definition on 'agency absorptive capacity'. She stressed that in the case of the operations in Iraq and beyond, UNFPA might operate differently from other agencies (e.g. through NGOs and national partners), but this did not mean that UNFPA had 'no capacity', but UNFPA simply operated differently.
- Ms. Taft also briefed the Executive Committee on the progress of the UNDG/World Bank Multi-donor Trust Fund for Iraq, using a 'pass through' mechanism. She noted that, as agreed, UNDP will manage the Trust Fund on behalf of the UNDG and that an appropriate information system is required. She informed the Executive Committee that UNDP is recruiting a manager of the Trust Fund. She invited the Executive Committee to second their representatives to help manage the Fund. The Executive Committee discussed the issue of 'appropriate' fees for managing the Fund, using the 'pass through' mechanism. The Chair concluded that no matter what, the Fund should be managed in a cost effective manner.

- Mr. Ramcharan informed the Executive Committee that he wrote to the Secretary-General regarding the issue of the protection of human rights in Iraq, including the suggestion that the report of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council should have a chapter on human rights. He also mentioned that OHCHR has the capacity to contribute to the drafting of the constitution for Iraq. The Chair noted that DPA, DPKO and UNDP should also be involved in this and that the UN contribution on this should be done at an appropriate time.

6. Other Business

Needs Assessment in Liberia

- Ms. Julia Taft briefed the Executive Committee on the planned needs assessment in Liberia, which would benefit from the experience of Iraq. She took the opportunity to thank Ms. Anupama Rao Singh of UNICEF, the Team Leader of the Needs Assessment in Iraq, which was much appreciated by both Iraqi people and donors. She noted that the needs assessment in Liberia would be on a relatively modest scale, building on existing information on needs assessment done two years ago, which covered 12 sectors. She mentioned that she would request UNDG agencies to provide staff to do the needs assessment for a period of two weeks, the outcome of which would be used for a donors' conference, planned for the end of January/early February 2004, in New York. She informed the meeting that WHO had agreed to Mr. David Nabarro acting as the Technical Coordinator for the needs assessment in Liberia, who would work in collaboration with the UN Country Team.
- Ms. Bellamy cautioned that the needs assessment in Liberia must be on a modest scale and geared towards the need of the country. She questioned the necessity of the proposed donors' conference, in view of the upcoming launch of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) next week. Ms. Taft noted that the SRSG and the UN Country Team in Liberia were adamant on the need to raise donor funds for reconstruction needs, not covered by the CAP.
- Ms. Obaid questioned whether the same approach would be used for other crisis/post conflict countries. Ms. Singh responded that the UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition Issues was working on this, the report of which would be completed by the end of December 2003, for a joint UNDG/ECHA/ECPS meeting in January 2004.
- The Chair concluded the discussion, noting that generally a CAP was not well funded (except for food) and it would be worthwhile to convene a donors' conference, especially in view that there were a number of potential donors who had already expressed their interest in contributing.
