

Thirty - second Meeting

Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group

**Friday, 27 February 2004
New York**

Summary of Conclusions

The Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group held its thirty-second meeting on Friday, 27 February 2004, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. The meeting took place in George Arthur Brown Conference Room, 21st floor of DC-1 Building.

Present at the meeting were:

Chair: Mr Mark Malloch Brown

Participants:

Ms Carol Bellamy	UNICEF
Ms Thoraya Obaid	UNFPA
Mr Jim Morris	WFP (via video-conference)
Mr Zephirin Diabre	UNDP

Guest: Ms Imelda Henkin UNFPA,
Vice-Chair of the UNDG
Management Group.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda.

The Executive Committee adopted the draft agenda

The Chair expressed his appreciation to UNFPA for UNFPA's contribution to the UNDG in the form of Heidi Swindells, who retired on Thursday 26th February, after 30 years of service to the UN.

2. UNDG Priorities for 2004, including follow-up to the Executive Committee Retreat on 6th January.

The Chair invited the Director of DGO to introduce the draft UNDG Priorities for 2004.

UNICEF gave a general endorsement of the priorities, but made the following points:

- The targets set for joint offices will need to be modified in light of the discussion under agenda item 4.
- While follow up on transition issues is well in hand, that relating to the implementation plan for Action Point 2 presents challenges: many details have still to be worked out; there are significant cost implications; implementation has significant implications for many countries and these have to be thought through carefully, especially in terms of support requirements; and there is a potential for duplication and overlap between UNDG and ECHA on this.
- The paper on the joint Boards is very important in view of the TCPR and the secretariats to the Boards have to be fully involved in the preparation of the paper.
- We need more realistic timelines for the preparation of the communication strategy and the RC/UNCT appraisal.

UNICEF stated that joint programming on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia came up at the Dublin meeting.

UNFPA also endorsed the priorities, but asked for a further examination of how UNDG structures could be streamlined more effectively and indicated that more information was required with regard to the work UNDP is doing for the UNDG with OECD/DAC. UNFPA felt that the UNDG should be more courageous in calling upon donors to honour their commitments and reward the UNDG members for their efforts in UN reform. Part of the work around the MDGs in 2005 should reflect this.

WFP encouraged the ExCom to do better at mobilizing political support for substantive issues such as girls' education, school feeding, nutrition and HIV/AIDS.

It was agreed that:

- A UNDG Task Team will be established under the Programme Group, led by UNDP, to ensure better information sharing on the DAC. UNDP (BDP) will prepare a one-page summary on DAC issues to brief the ExCom Principles.
- The UNDG priorities will be revised based on the comments made by the Executive Committee and submitted to the full UNDG at their April meeting..
- WFP will prepare a paper on substantive priorities for discussion by UNDG.

3. Background Paper for the SMG – the Evolving Role of the Resident Coordinator

The Chair explained that the original rationale for the SMG paper had been to encourage greater understanding and support among the SMG of the role of the Resident Coordinator and to encourage better communication and linkages when members of the SMG visit countries.

UNICEF agreed that it was useful for the SMG to have the discussion and the paper, but that the operational agencies are best placed to guide the work of the Resident

Coordinator. UNICEF noted that useful models of leadership and collegial behaviour are emerging from countries in transition. UNICEF enquired about when the report of Mr. Ahmed's review of the assessment would be ready and stated that ExCom principals should have adequate time and opportunity for discussion of the report before it is widely shared be it during the SMG discussion or elsewhere.

WFP prefers to capture more the spirit of collegiality, and would favour enhanced authority rather than increased formal authority. An inclusive style would focus on how we become colleagues. Both WFP and UNFPA called for emphasis on collegial leadership to be part of Resident Coordinator orientation.

It was agreed that:

- DGO was requested to inform the ExCom of the date for Rafi Ahmed's review, and to ensure that the outcomes of that review are incorporated into the paper.

4. Joint Office

UNICEF expressed concerns about the paper and felt that it did not reflect what was discussed in the past two years. It was felt that it should be a piloting only and it should be only for the two countries discussed. It should be piloted on a small scale to see lessons learned first.

It was clarified that it was not a phase from Option 1 to 2 to 3 to 4, but start with Option 1 with common operations and representation, and decide after each phase if further options should be adopted. It was agreed Joint Office in general does not have to be UNDP-based. It could be based/managed by UNICEF.

UNDP and UNFPA were ready to go ahead with Malaysia where there is a UNFPA staff member as an RC and it has graduated to a middle-income country.

UNICEF questioned the use of a consultant for a Project Coordinator. It was agreed that it should be some one with in-depth knowledge of the funds and programmes' operations at the country level, preferable knowledge of the more than one agency, but not necessarily.

WFP would not participate as it did not fit the Programme's operational needs and structure, with decentralized Regional Bureaux and large emergency operations. WFP further noted that it did not have a presence in the Maldives or Malaysia.

It was agreed:

- To pilot in Maldives and Cape Verde the Joint Office, starting with Option 1.
- It should be driven at the country level. They would rely on the UNCTs to do this as a pilot, as far as they can take it. Thereafter they could review the experience.

- Any of the agencies with the largest operational presence could be the one to run the office.
- A Project Coordinator would be identified to shepherd the process and that it should be some one with in-depth knowledge of the funds and programmes' operations at the country level.
- This exercise is not relevant to WFP, and they are not expected to participate.
- UNDP and UNFPA would explore possibilities in Malaysia and keep it open for UNICEF to join.

5. Follow-up to the Executive Committee Regional Directors' Meeting on 14th January 2004.

Introducing the item the Chair reiterated the critical role that the Regional Directors have in ensuring the link between the Executive Heads and the field. The vision is for a genuine intermediate management layer, which feels sufficient buy-in to be able to manage UNCTs on behalf of the Executive Heads.

The Director of DGO highlighted the growing willingness of the Regional Directors to support UNCTs. The configuration of which countries report within which agency's regional structure however is proving somewhat of an obstacle. The Executive Heads were asked how they viewed the issue of alignment of countries within regions.

UNICEF supported the Chair's position that much could be achieved by a more active role of the Regional Directors in oversight, quality assurance and support and endorsed the suggestion that the ExCom Principals jointly write to them seeking 2004 workplans and asking for regular reports on progress. UNICEF noted that roll out countries in Africa would need special attention given the diverse locations of the support offices.

It was agreed that:

- The Regional Directors should concentrate on working together more intensively before issues of alignment and location are discussed.
- The Executive Committee will write a joint letter to all Regional Directors asking for details of their respective regional workplans, as well as dates and agenda's for their quarterly meetings. Interim progress reports from each region should also be given to the Executive Committee. Then, if need be, in a year's time the ExCom would review the situation.

6. Other business

- Concerns were raised by the Executive Committee with regard to staff access and visa applications for entry into the US and Italy. It was agreed that a note will be prepared by DGO for the Executive Committee to send to the Secretary-General,

copy to Ms Bertini, with specific suggestions for the Secretary-General to raise with the Host Government(s). This could be an item for a future ExCom meeting.

- While there will be no specific follow-up by the Executive Committee, the success of the MDG Support Group in Stockholm was noted. UNICEF expressed its appreciation of the statements made by the Administrator and Mr. Bruce Jenks in this regard.
- It was agreed that UNDG will co-sponsor the follow-up to the Rome Meeting on Harmonization, to be held in Paris in 2005.
- The Executive Committee approved the suggestions of the Resource Mobilization Group, and agreed that the Secretary-General will be encouraged to advocate for additional core funding for the Funds and Programmes.
- Although Mr Brahimi was unable to attend this meeting, it was noted that the invitation to him was a useful practice that should be encouraged as appropriate with other guests.