

2024 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment Vice President's Summary

H.E. Mr. Tarek Ladeb, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council responsible for the ECOSOC operational activities for development segment

The 2024 ECOSOC operational activities for development segment titled “*The United Nations development system: improving delivery in support of programme countries and their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs*” was held from 14 to 16 May 2024, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. The segment considered the progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) on the comprehensive quadrennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR). This includes mandates related to General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the UN development system (UNDS), General Assembly resolution [76/4](#) on the review of the Resident Coordinator (RC) system and annual follow-up of ECOSOC and General Assembly resolutions on United Nations operational activities for development¹.

With humanity facing complex interlinked challenges – deepening poverty, rising inequalities, a pervasive climate crisis and multiple conflicts - and with the world significantly off track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the segment discussed how the UN development system could support countries’ efforts to achieve the SDGs with the urgency needed. The segment took place after the 2023 SDG Summit which had reaffirmed the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and stressed the need for accelerated action. and, ahead of the 2024 Summit of the Future, offering the opportunity to lay the foundations for more effective global cooperation to scale up commitments towards achieving the SDGs and help address multidimensional global challenges.

The segment was informed by:

1. the [report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system](#) (A/79/72-E/2024/12) including its [addendums on the analysis of funding of the United Nations development system](#) (A/79/72/Add.1-E/2024/12/Add.1) and the [Funding Compact](#) (A/79/72/Add.2-E/2024/12/Add.2) and the annexes containing the [QCPR monitoring and reporting framework, the latest United Nations system-wide funding data](#) and the new monitoring and reporting framework for the [Funding Compact](#);
2. the [report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group \(UNSDG\) on the Development Coordination Office](#) (E/2024/5) and its annexes on the [Overview of resources of the RC system special purpose trust fund](#) and the [Resident Coordinator System Results Framework](#).

The segment brought together high-level Government representatives, as well as senior UN officials from the country, regional and global levels (see [programme](#)). The Secretary-General virtually

¹ General Assembly resolutions 76/220, 77/184 and 78/166; ECOSOC resolutions 2022/25 and 2023/31.

presented his report on the implementation of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. The Deputy Secretary-General presented the UNSDG Chair's report on the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the RC system. She participated in the interactive dialogues with Member States.

Opening session

At the opening of the segment, **the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, H.E. Mr. Tarek Ladeb of Tunisia**, noted that, with a mere 15 per cent of SDG targets on track, urgent action was required to reverse the trend and fulfil the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"This year's Segment will bring the voices of a wide range of stakeholders, including host governments, contributing governments, resident coordinators, UN entities, UN country teams and civil society. It will be an opportunity to share experiences and good practices as we strive for sustainable development... This Segment will pave the way for the adoption of a new quadrennial comprehensive policy review".

H.E. Mr. Tarek Ladeb, Vice-President of ECOSOC

The SDG Summit in September 2023, offered renewed hope and through its Political Declaration, made a clear request to the UN development system to support SDG acceleration. The Vice-President noted that the segment's primary objective was to assess progress made by the UN development system on the implementation of the 2020 QCPR and provide guidance to the UN development system in supporting countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs. Through the reforms, there was now a more effective, coherent, transparent, and accountable UN development system which offered integrated, system-wide solutions to support SDG achievement. The reforms had yielded significant returns on investment, with \$533 million in efficiency gains in the past year. The re-energized Funding Compact would help strengthen the partnership between

Member States and the UN development system to foster a system that would be even more efficient, effective, and collaborative.

The Vice-President underscored that the segment would pave the way for the adoption of a new QCPR resolution to guide the UN development system from 2025 to 2028, just before the 2030 deadline for the 2030 Agenda.

In his statement, the **President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago**, noted that, while acknowledging the setbacks in SDG implementation, it was important to highlight the progress made by the UN development system in providing evidence-based, and integrated policy advice to help countries implement the 2030 Agenda, tailoring support to each country context. He highlighted that both the imperative and urgency of galvanizing efforts towards SDGs had motivated him to convene the General Assembly's first ever Sustainability Week in April 2024, focusing on the critical sectors of debt, tourism, transport, infrastructure and energy, which had the potential to drive economic growth and showed good prospects for leveraging development.

"This important ECOSOC segment is the ideal platform for the Member States to ensure accountability for delivery, especially at the country level. Let us use it to recommit to working with a renewed sense of purpose and collaboration – to deliver a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous world for all"

H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, President of the United Nations General Assembly

He mentioned that the upcoming QCPR, the Summit of the Future and the Fourth Financing for Development Conference would provide opportunities for additional efforts required to secure long-

term sustainable, and efficient funding for SDG acceleration. He underscored ECOSOC's accountability role for the UN development system.

“Securing sustainable and predictable funding is my main priority for the system this year. I count on Member States to consider my proposal and provide the system with the vital resources needed. Above all, we need solidarity – with countries more able to provide support helping those less able to do so.....As we embark in the next QCPR cycle, now is the time for ambition. In this era of SDG acceleration, let’s redouble our efforts for all people and the world we share.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres

In his video message, **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** emphasized the critical importance of the ECOSOC discussion in the context of the fast-approaching 2030 deadline for the SDGs. He highlighted the critical role of the United Nations development system, led by Resident Coordinators, in driving progress towards the SDGs. The UN is accelerating its efforts in six targeted areas where urgent transitions were needed to deliver SDG acceleration, and is supporting countries in capacity development, including efforts to strengthen policy and regulatory environments. The Secretary-General also mentioned the key role played by the UN development system in staying and delivering when UN missions closed or drew down, such as in Mali, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Secretary-General further noted the progress made with increasing coordination and efficiency within the UN development system. This was evidenced by positive government feedback, with 96 per cent of governments agreeing that UNCTs were aligned with their national priorities, with \$533 million efficiency gains in the past year

alone. He also noted enhanced efforts on results through the System-wide Evaluation Office which was now up and running. However, reduced core funding for the UN development system and critical gaps in voluntary contributions for the Resident Coordinator system threatened the UN development system's ability to deliver on its commitments. He called on Member States to consider his proposal to the General Assembly to provide funding from the regular budget to the Resident Coordinator system so that it could receive the vital resources needed. The Secretary-General further called for increased solidarity among Member States, aligning their funding ambitions to the needs of countries, and for the UN to demonstrate greater impact and results. The Secretary-General concluded with a call for the ambition in the next QCPR to match the scale and pace necessary to drive the acceleration of progress towards the SDGs.

In her address, **the Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina J. Mohammed** underlined that the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, with strengthened Resident Coordinator leadership supported by a minimum of core capacities in each Resident Coordinator office, is amplifying the reach and impact of the UN development system. She welcomed the closer alignment of the UN development system to national needs and priorities, anchored in robust common country analysis, including the greater participation by non-resident entities and international financial institutions in Cooperation Frameworks. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted an important shift towards collective policy support and a systems approach to accelerate the SDGs. She noted that Resident Coordinators are facilitating more access to pooled funding and financing for SDG solutions, helping to access US\$268 million in financial commitments from the Joint SDG Fund, for joint programmes with 31 UN entities and 119 UN country teams. She mentioned that a rigorous and conscientious approach has been adopted to strengthen accountability and transparency for results, citing the work of the Development Coordination Office in stewarding efforts by UN development system entities to realise delivery of operational efficiencies. However, she noted a 29 per cent decrease in UN country teams' perception of improved implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework, requiring the UN Sustainable Development Group to undertake a review to identify barriers and how to address them.

“Five years on, the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system has become the beating heart of the UN development efforts. The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system with the strengthened Resident Coordinator leadership, supported by a minimum of core capacities in each Resident Coordinator office, is amplifying the reach and impact of the UN development system.”

*UN Deputy Secretary-General
Amina J. Mohammed*

The Deputy Secretary-General called upon all United Nations entities to share the UNSDG reform checklist results with their governing bodies. She highlighted the importance of sufficient and quality funding for the work of the UN development system and the role of core funding in enabling agencies to shift their mindset from survival to collaboration. She called upon Member States to close the Resident Coordinator funding gap of \$65 million, to unlock the full potential of the system's reforms, and for them to constructively engage in the General Assembly Fifth Committee on the Secretary-General's proposal on this topic.

Summary of discussions and key messages

Working together as one and recognizing the individual development needs of each country is the focus for all operational activities. Customizing support to countries in special situations is key to accelerate the SDGs in these specific contexts.

The segment provided the space to discuss two country cases and how the UN development system is working together to provide tailored policy advice and technical support on SDG acceleration based on country-specific circumstances. The country cases of Chile and Sudan were discussed and the dialogue with host governments, Resident Coordinators and UN country teams gave detailed insights in how system-wide and intergovernmental cooperation can achieve tangible results on the ground.

It was evident that tailoring the UN development system support to countries based on their specific needs was crucial to delivering better and more coherent assistance. Delegations appreciated the valuable insights shared by the Resident Coordinators, UN country team members and Government

representatives from Sudan and Chile, on the joint work to align development cooperation with national priorities and identify gaps in the process. Sudan's case highlighted the importance of development assistance in preventing institutional collapse during conflict, with a focus on assisting the most vulnerable populations and those furthest behind. On the other hand, the case of Chile underscored the necessity of managing critical sectoral transitions to achieve the SDGs by leveraging national capacities.

Furthermore, the importance of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks was underscored as the result of a process of joint thinking between the governments, the agencies and funds and programmes of the United Nations. Effective coordination between governments and the UN development system, led by the Resident Coordinator in the countries, is crucial, along with aligning funding with government plans to maximize the impact of the operational activities on the ground.

The overarching challenge on the path to achieve the 2030 Agenda is to organize and ensure sufficient and sustainable financing for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN development system can improve its support for sustainable financing, including through increasing its role in supporting countries to leverage innovative financial instruments, engage the private sector and enhance cooperation with international financial institutions. Global inequity in access and the price of capital places enormous burdens on developing countries, with, among others, African and Middle-income countries facing significant challenges in raising sufficient capital. The necessity for strategic financing techniques and the need to de-risk to make investments more attractive were emphasized by the panel and Member States, respectively. The use of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) as a tool for national investment planning in developing countries was explored, alongside the need for international cooperation on tax and debt relief.

Various Member States shared their experiences and challenges in mobilizing financial resources for the SDGs. Member States discussed areas for further progress, including through enhancing connectivity and establishing comprehensive SDG strategies involving IFIs and the private sector. The commitment to financing the development agenda was reiterated as was the invitation to Member States to discuss international fiscal cooperation. Innovative financing mechanisms like green bonds, capacity building, and market listing were discussed as essential components of a comprehensive financing strategy.

The interactive discussion considered how UN support through instruments like the INFFs, can facilitate better engagement of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Member States highlighted challenges of continuing fiscal distress post-COVID-19, and the necessity of de-risking investments and co-financing. Mobilizing political will to address debt servicing issues and developing domestic markets is necessary, alongside the UN's potential to help de-risk investments in developing countries, including African nations.

Member States welcomed the new Funding Compact and expressed appreciation for the inclusive process that led to its development. They also welcomed plans for increased dialogue between donors and the UN development system at the country level and called for discussions in the governing bodies of UN entities to increase awareness and ownership of the Funding Compact. Member States also called for increased capacity building at all levels to advance the implementation of the Funding Compact.

The **Assistant Secretary-General of the Development Coordination Office** noted that the original Funding Compact had not had the desired impact, with a continued increase in tightly earmarked, project-level funding at the expense of core and other flexible types of funding. He highlighted that the proposed new Funding Compact is shorter, more strategic and more adaptable to the country context than its predecessor. He also pointed to the Compact's high level of ambition through commitments and targets that were more specific and clearer, which is essential for strengthening mutual accountability between the UN development system and Member States.

During the discussion, the Funding Compact was framed as a tool for making strategic choices to shift funding behavior for more impactful results. It was underscored, that, given the current global context, the UN development system needs to be agile, strategic and integrated, all of which requires more flexible funding. Member States called for strong Cooperation Frameworks, which articulate a coherent offer of support from the development system in countries, to incentivize this shift in funding. They also underscored the need to better reflect how flexible funding is translated for impact and results, including the achievement of outcomes in the Cooperation Frameworks.

The reformed Resident Coordinator system and the new generation of Cooperation Frameworks have helped to scale up joint planning and programming. Further UN development system commitments are necessary to fulfil the shift needed towards collective UN responses required to accelerate and deliver on the SDGs by 2030.

Member States acknowledged the key role of Resident Coordinators in bringing the UN development system together to better respond to the specific country needs in a coherent and effective manner, aligned to national needs. They however expressed concern over the recent data showing that in many countries, the programmes of individual UN development system entities are not all aligned with the Cooperation Framework. Concern was also expressed over the on-going competition for funding among UN entities. Member States stressed the need for more sustainable non-earmarked funding, but also for entities to strengthen focus on their comparative advantage at all levels, and avoid being driven by individual agency funding or management targets. Toward this end, the benefits of performance indicators that measure UN entities' efforts towards collective planning, strategizing and delivery was highlighted. Resident Coordinators should also be requested to contribute to the performance appraisals of UN country team members consistently.

Mainstreaming gender equality, youth and disability inclusion in the UN's work remains essential to deliver on the promise of leaving no one behind. The UN development system has made substantial strides in implementing system-wide policies that increase overall coherence.

Participants reaffirmed the importance of mainstreaming gender equality, youth and disability inclusion into the UN development system's work to fulfil the promise of leaving no one behind. Overall, the Resident Coordinator system showcased its added value in strengthening system-wide policies on gender equality, youth and disability inclusion.

Notably, participants expressed particular interest in the UN system-wide Gender Acceleration Plan. The acceleration plan builds on previous frameworks and aims to be transformative, addressing structural barriers with a specific leadership focus. To manifest systemwide ambitions, consulting women and girls at the country level is essential. Regarding disability inclusion, participants noted that there is still room for improvement in implementing the disability strategy. There was also a consensus on the importance of engaging youth in shaping key sectoral transitions for SDG acceleration. Participants noted the need to include cross-cutting issues in key events such as the

SIDS Conference, the Summit of the Future, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, and the Financing for Development Forum.

Overall, the lack of core and other flexible resources remains a significant barrier for strengthening inter-agency and system-wide actions. There was also recognition that the support of Member States is crucial in successfully implementing these system-wide policies, including through consistent dissemination of guidance to governing bodies.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) and digital cooperation as part of the engine rooms for enabling transformative solutions to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The UN development system plays a critical role in helping countries harness their immense potential.

Participants recognised that digital cooperation and STI offered transformative solutions for advancing SDGs. STI has not only improved the quality of life but also fostered entrepreneurship, reduced unemployment, enhanced service delivery and catalyzed important transformations in social protection, education and skills gaps, food systems and energy access. Achieving a just digital transformation requires efforts to enhance digital infrastructure connectivity, improve digital literacy, build capacities, ensure access to new technologies, promote an open, safe and secure online space and close the gender gap. The importance of reaching an agreement on a Global Digital Compact at the Summit of the Future was seen as a key step toward strengthening global action to overcome the digital divide and fostering a safe and inclusive digital environment.

The UN development system has played a critical role in bridging digital divides by facilitating technology and knowledge transfers and mobilizing diverse stakeholders. Participants appreciated the recent improvements of the UN development system in adapting it to the conditions of the digital age and various initiatives on digital technology undertaken by UN country teams. Examples of this were presented by the Resident Coordinator in Bhutan, showcasing how it helped improve food and nutrition in schools and hospitals, and to mitigate natural disasters and other hazards through improved early warning systems. Bringing a wide range of stakeholders together, including governments, academia, enterprises, and international financial institutions, was seen as crucial in scaling up these initiatives, especially to mobilize the necessary financing. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), worked closely with the Government of Indonesia, to develop Kartu Prakerja, an online programme to boost job skills development and entrepreneurial capabilities of diverse groups, including micro and small businesses, women, and persons with disabilities. At the same time participants underscored the challenges of digital education and the need to equip people with skills and knowledge to thrive in a digital age and avoid digital illiteracy.

Evaluations and assessments of the UN development system over the 2020 QCPR cycle have significantly contributed to review and course correct the shift towards a more coherent, effective and accountable UN development cooperation. . A system-wide approach is critical and must be strengthened.

There is an extensive body of evaluations and assessments by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the UNSDG System-wide Evaluation Office and UN entities' evaluation offices., These reports highlight the efforts, results and ongoing challenges in advancing the 2030 Agenda, including through the implementation of UN development system reform measures. Over the course of this QCPR cycle, the system has strengthened its joint approaches and its ability to support national efforts to advance the SDGs. Some of the evaluations found that further efforts should be made to strengthen system-wide coordination at the regional level. The discussion underscored the critical role of active Member

State's support and engagement throughout the evaluation life cycle, particularly to ensure follow-up, is important.

The recently established and now fully operational System-Wide Evaluation Office plays a key role in this effort, complementing the work of other evaluation bodies, including OIOS, JIU and the Board of Auditors, and through the development of a system-wide evaluation policy. Discussion focused on the need to establish common evaluation criteria across the system to further harmonize and ensure greater transparency in the work of the UN development system at all levels.

ECOSOC and the operational activities segment plays a critical role in ensuring accountability and oversight of the UN development system, including the resident coordinator system. ECOSOC can leverage existing mandates and tools for a more active role in guiding the system, as well as ensuring effective alignment and greater joint results across UN development system entities.

Member States emphasized the need for ECOSOC to address ambiguities and improve accountability and transparency within the UN development system, and in particular, vis-a-vis the Resident Coordinator system. Member States also agreed they had a shared responsibility to enable effective oversight by leveraging the full capacity of ECOSOC and its segment on operational activities for development. Several options were cited that could realize improvements, from dedicated preparatory meetings ahead of the ECOSOC segment to strengthening synergies with governing bodies, for example by requesting UN development system entities to present their reports for their governing bodies on the implementation of the QCPR to the ECOSOC segment on operational activities for development.

There was recognition that the system has delivered comprehensive and evidence-based reporting on the work of the UNDS to ECOSOC and to entity governing bodies, but there was also a reflection on the need to streamline and coordinate the resulting information flow to ensure that information is retained and enabling of follow up by Member States. Delegations identified capacity challenges in consolidating and absorbing the volume of reports and considered the merit of greater technical, background preparation to inform more effective deliberations and decision making.

The way forward

Amidst deepening poverty, rising inequalities, climate crises, and conflicts, the UN development system seeks to support SDG achievement by tailoring delivery to the country specific needs and challenges. To accelerate action towards the SDGs, the UN development system must bolster its offer around key transitions that can drive catalytic and multiplier effects across the breadth of the SDGs, leveraging the means of implementation as the essential engine rooms of these transitions.

The discussions confirmed Member States' commitment to the Funding Compact and understanding of the importance to implement its commitments. There was acknowledgement that more efforts will need to be invested to generate awareness of the potential value added of the Funding Compact for strengthening trust and partnership between the United Nations and development partners, particularly at the country level. Resident Coordinators can help in this effort by effectively communicating the Funding Compact to host governments and development partners in the country.

Leveraging sufficient and sustainable financing for the SDGs remains an urgent priority that should be addressed collaboratively with all stakeholders. The discussions underscored the need to address global inequities and enhance investment attractiveness. The commitment to and exploration of

Integrated National Financing Frameworks were highlighted as critical steps forward in achieving these objectives.

The implementation of system-wide policies remains crucial to ensure that the UN development system can fully integrate key priorities in its work to ensure its results leave no one behind. Member States welcomed the System-Wide Evaluation Office and recognized that the effective evaluation and oversight of the UN development system requires their active engagement. Member States also underscored the opportunities for further leveraging ECOSOC operational activities segment as the system's accountability platform.

Based on the discussions at the Segment, Member States will consider the possibility of a resolution to be adopted by the end of the current ECOSOC session, in July 2024.