

**ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment 2025**  
**Effective accountability: UN system evaluation:**  
**Thursday, 22 May 2025, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, NY time**  
**ECOSOC Chamber**

**Part 2.**

**Short presentation to highlight how recent and on-going evaluations are leading to strengthened oversight of UNDS results**

**Ms. Andrea Cook, Executive Director, UN SDG System-Wide Evaluation Office**

I will present key findings and conclusions of this important evaluation introduced in earlier. The report will be available in June and will trigger the preparation of the management response by the UNSDG.

The evaluation confirms that the vision for a ‘new generation of UNCTs’, that derive priorities from a Cooperation Framework and re-configure to deliver collective CF results, remains highly relevant. However, there is a gap between the strategic intent and the operational realities

Many key foundations have been established, also reported in the summary of evaluation evidence on the RC system we published in 2024. For example, there are notable improvements in common country analysis, and widespread appreciation for the reinvigorated RC system. Participation of non-resident entities in UNCTs is improving.

The evaluation finds examples of behaviours and approaches which match the ambitions reforms in terms of delivery of more joint, integrated, strategic UN development solutions – the evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative also provides such examples.

However, overall, the Cooperation Framework has not yet become the ‘most important instrument for the planning and implementation of UN development activities in each country’ and UNCTs have not yet significantly ‘re-configured’ in line with its priorities.

The UN development offer remains broadly aligned with and relevant to national priorities, but the elements of the repositioning this evaluation examines have not yet resulted in the fundamental shift toward a more coherent, integrated and strategic offer that maximises SDG progress.

**‘Alignment and derivation’ is a largely administrative exercise.** Whilst UNCT entity country programmes are broadly ‘aligned’ with Cooperation Frameworks, there is little evidence that the substance of those programmes is significantly affected by the Cooperation Framework process. Derivation compliance points and timeframes can cause friction.

Ambitions on “configuration” were operationalised through country level **‘UNCT configuration exercises’**. These largely administrative exercises generally disconnected from entity decision points on country level resourcing. They have not meaningfully contributed to more tailored, needs-based country presence based on Cooperation Framework priorities. Although they have expanded the engagement of non-resident entities in UNCTs.

**Cooperation Framework implementation:** Collective UNCT ownership and use of the tools used to support CF implementation (including joint workplans, joint resource mobilization strategies and coordination structures) has been weak, limiting the potential for these tools to deliver a

more prioritized, strategic and coherent set of interventions in response to CF priorities.

Turning to factors which explain this:

1. There are some challenges relating to the Cooperation Guidance and the MAF in terms of clarity on key issues and their practical application.
2. HQ and regional support systems to Cooperation Framework cycles have focussed on the design phase, and technical levers, with less attention to external and horizontal engagement to facilitate coherent CF implementation
3. Increased joint programming and more coherent/strategic approaches, are usually more attributable to UNCT member and RC leadership than to technical processes and instruments
4. UNSDG entity buy-in to the reforms is weaker at HQ and regional levels. Overall, UNSDG entities have not fully integrated the necessary accountabilities and incentives within their own structures.

There are important broader enabling environment and systemic factors:

1. **Competition within UNCTs and limited transparency** are major impediments – such dynamics are connected to project-based business models, donor behaviour and the primacy of entity-specific accountabilities.
2. **National engagement in CF cycles** is critical to ensure full alignment and coherence and is a key driver of UNCT coherence, but this is variable.

3. The existing **governance arrangements of the UNDS**, with entity-specific oversight, are a limiting factor – they tend to prioritise entity-specific accountability, visibility and results attribution rather than UNCT coherence.
4. **Funding pressures and donor approaches at country level** are an impediment. Funding Compact implementation has been limited – earmarking continues to fragment efforts and undermine coherence.

The evaluation identifies seven key areas for attention, which need to be addressed holistically by a range of UNDS stakeholders, to better realise the vision for a new generation of UN country teams that are more coherent, effective, efficient, and accountable to contribute to SDG progress at country level.

These include Member States oversight both in capacities as programme country governments and in the governing bodies to hold the UN development system to account for improved performance; greater progress on the Funding Compact and commitment to a more ambitious efficiency agenda to tackle the critical institutional obstacles that challenge coherence and joint work – also highlighted by the Spotlight Initiative Evaluation.