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UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
AFFAIRS**

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**Economic and Social Council  
Operational Activities for Development Segment**

**ECOSOC Chamber  
Tuesday, 23 May 2023**

Distinguished Vice-President of ECOSOC,  
Distinguished Vice-President of the General Assembly,  
Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Zimbabwe,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to join you today at the opening of the 2023 Operational Activities for Development Segment.

I thank the Vice President of ECOSOC for his outstanding leadership in convening this year's Segment.

We have reached halfway on the timeline set for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Just over seven years ago, we made a collective promise to transform our world to one free of poverty and hunger, where all life can thrive.

Ours was a pledge of common action to realise a world where no one is left behind.

But we have been failing deliver at the scope and speed needed to enact real change. As outlined by the Secretary-General's most recent special edition of the SDG progress report, the SDGs are in deep trouble.

Under the current trends, only one-third of countries will meet the target to halve the national poverty level by 2030.

Hunger levels, economic hardship and the number of people fleeing conflicts are at record highs.

Inequalities are widening.

And with the cumulative impact of learning losses and underinvestment in education, by 2030, 300 million children and young people will leave school unable to write or read. This is difficult to digest.

Worryingly, none of the gender equality indicators have been met.

And we are at 1.1 degrees Celsius – just short of the point of no return.

But we must not give up. We can and must regain lost ground, and time is of the essence.

Now in its fifth year since the repositioning began, the UN development system continues to play a decisive role in supporting countries to deliver on their ambition to achieve sustainable development.

But the UN system needs your guidance and support.

I have no doubt that the findings and analyses contained in the two reports that are before this meeting, will serve as a sound analytical basis for your discussions. The wealth of data in these reports demonstrate that the ambitious reform of the UN development system is delivering results.

The system is providing tailored support in responding to the multiple and interlinked crises, while keeping the focus on long-term development goals.

The reports show that the UN development system continues to be the preferred partner for evidence-based and integrated policy advice.

Joint action helped an additional 147 million people in 39 countries and territories gain temporary and permanent coverage for social protection.

The resident coordinators are using their convening power to drive just transitions, such as in food, energy, education and digital transitions, through policy dialogue, partnerships and joint work.

The RCs connect global priorities to local actions; from supporting ‘development in emergency mode’ through the Global Crisis Response Group, to the implementation of the Food Systems and Transforming Education Summits outcomes. Their support to countries has led to the historic Loss and Damage Fund.

There are now stronger synergies across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions, helping to prevent, or accelerate the transition out of conflict and emergencies. All in this past year alone.

There is strong recognition by host countries of the resident coordinators' leadership in delivering more coherent and collective offers at the country level.

Country teams have worked together more collaboratively, around a new generation of Cooperation Frameworks.

And ninety-four percent of Governments agree that the UN development system's activities adequately reflect the content of the Cooperation Framework.

The repositioned UN development system is generating 405 million of efficiency gains, which surpasses the 310 million initial estimate.

Excellencies,

There is still work to do to fully deploy our comparative advantage and support SDG acceleration.

The Secretary-General's report highlights some areas in need of further consolidation.

It calls for the full implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework to motivate the necessary behavioural shifts.

While eighty-eight per cent of UN country teams derived their country programme document from the Cooperation Framework, full implementation of this practice remains a challenge.

Assured funding for the system is also badly needed. Eighty-five per cent of respondents in the survey of UN headquarters entities reported significant difficulties in ensuring appropriate financing.

Solutions must be found – the fate of many hinge on it.

In DESA's role as the custodian of the QCPR and Secretariat of the Operational Activities Segment, I wish you a fruitful discussion over the next three days.

We look forward to your guidance as we drive the UN development system onwards and upwards.

I thank you.

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