

23 May 2023

Deputy Secretary-General's remarks at the ECOSOC Segment on Operational Activities for Development

Together, we have transformed the UN development system.

We are no longer in the start-up phase - our efforts are bearing fruit.

Our results are no longer measured in terms of reconfigured structures or mechanisms and frameworks to incentivize coordination and coherence, nor in revised tools or hiring of staff.

We are now working at full speed and our results are measured in impacts on the ground.

Our Resident Coordinator system has navigated cascading crises to rally UN country teams around effective responses to COVID19.

We have seen a shift in how we operate on the ground – this has been recognized by many of you earlier today in the session with the Secretary-General.

The new development coordination system we have established at the heart of the Secretariat, is critical to all of these results.

Resident Coordinators are fostering more coherent, accountable and effective UN support for countries.

They are leveraging their impartiality and new capacities to channel skillsets and expertise housed across the UN system.

They have access to goldmines of expertise – often hosted in smaller, highly specialized entities across the Atlantic – which are absolutely critical to the SDGs. This has allowed us to make inroads in our support in areas ranging from trade, to financing, to food system transformations, to disaster risk reduction.

Resident Coordinators are now our backbone to translate global commitments into effective action on the ground.

Before these reforms, this link simply did not exist and there was a gap between intergovernmental outcomes and action by UN Country Teams.

This is no longer the case.

Resident Coordinators are no longer simply 'coordinators'.

They are increasingly leveraging their convening power – and their legitimacy as representatives of the Secretary-General – to support governments to mobilize partnerships, financing and other means of implementation for the SDGs.

Resident Coordinators are key to ensuring that the UN support in country is fully aligned and tailored to national priorities and needs.

Finally, Resident Coordinators are effectively “first responders” in emergencies. They ensure a development focus from Day 1 when a crisis hits; and facilitating a smooth transition from crises into long-term sustainable development and resilience.

Excellencies,

My report on the Development Coordination Office (DCO) presents innumerable examples of how Resident Coordinators and RC Offices have made a positive difference in countries.

Independent evaluations; surveys of host governments and donors; independent assessments commissioned by agencies such as UNFPA - all demonstrate overwhelmingly positive feedback on the impact of the changes implemented.

These results reaffirm the value and effectiveness of our investments in strengthening development coordination through the RC system.

It is a testament to what we, together, have achieved.

Today, I would like to highlight five key achievements outlined in the report that are essential to our efforts.

First, strengthened Resident Coordination leadership.

With the effective support of DCO, we have carefully matched RC profiles with country needs and requirements and ensured the deployment of the right person in the right place at the right time.

This is giving us strong leadership in the field, as well as unprecedented levels of geographical diversity and gender parity.

85 per cent of host governments noted that Resident Coordinators provided strengthened leadership compared to before the reform. And 90 per cent acknowledge that Resident Coordinators have the necessary profiles and skillsets.

87 per cent agree that Resident Coordinators serve as a strengthened entry point to the UN offer. This represents a 35 per cent increase since the beginning of the reforms in 2019.

Second, strengthened RC office capacities – strategic planning, economic analysis, partnerships, data analytics, and results reporting – have provided critical support to UN country teams.

92 per cent of host Governments agreed that the UN adequately provides evidence-based policy advice, compared to 88 per cent in 2021.

92 per cent also say that Resident Coordinators are contributing to the creation of effective partnerships in support of national efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs. This is up from 85 per cent in 2020.

88 per cent confirmed Resident Coordinators effectively lead the delivery of strategic support for national plans and priorities

DCO regional support also enhanced the capacity of Resident Coordinators to fulfil their leadership and coordination roles – this is an important conclusion of a 2022 evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

Third, the RC system is playing a crucial role in leading the emergence of a new generation of UN country teams.

The RC system has increased the ability of host governments to easily access UN expertise across relevant UN entities, regardless of location – fostering a more flexible, coherent, responsive and effective UN offer.

Cooperation Frameworks – while a work in progress – are already helping improve our response to national priorities. This is what we heard from 94 per cent of host governments.

91 per cent of Member States say UN country teams have the right mix of capacities to support national development efforts.

This was a central promise of these reforms.

Fourth, the report finds that the RC system has been instrumental in enhancing transparency and accountability of the UN development system's activities.

All UN Country Teams now produce an annual UN country results report, a notable increase from 64 per cent in 2019.

The creation and improvement of new dashboards in UN INFO have enhanced transparency and saved approximately \$2.4 million in services previously rendered by external vendors.

The revised multi-annual RC system results framework – the first of its kind – will allow us to track coordination results by specific objectives, outcomes and outputs.

We are grateful for the constructive and active engagement by Member States as we developed the Framework.

We will continue to review the framework to ensure it remains relevant and in line with every QCPR cycle.

Fifth, data confirms that the RC system has help drive efficiencies across entities of the system and generated substantial savings.

Close to 80 per cent of governments reported that the RC system helped minimize duplication of efforts while advancing the efficient use of resources.

Investments in specialized capacities to advance system-wide efficiencies through Business Operations Strategies, Common Back Offices and Common Premises are also paying off.

Taking into account all efforts, estimated efficiencies of around \$405 million have been generated – an increase of 47 per cent from 2021.

We have come a long way to get to that point, as some of you will recall.

From establishing common methodologies to measure and track efficiencies; to achieving agreement across all entities of the UNSDG; to deploying innovative approaches at country level -- we have a strong foundation on which to build.

None of these results would have been possible without the leadership of my colleagues in the UNSDG and every single member of UN country teams around the world.

The UNSDG has paid its full share of the RC funding model – many in advance.

Entities have stepped up to adapt to the new working modalities of the repositioned UN development system.

I am grateful for their dedication.

Excellencies,

While celebrating these achievements, we must also address the pressing issue of funding.

The Secretary-General's message to ECOSOC earlier today was clear.

The RC system is chronically under-funded, despite all efforts by Member States, UN entities and the Secretary-General to implement the hybrid funding model mandated by the General Assembly.

At this point of the reforms, we urgently need to bridge the \$85 million funding gap to ensure the continued delivery of results on the ground.

This gap has delayed critical investments in surge capacity – essential at a time of uncertainty and shocks, and resulted in cuts in investments in training, leadership and support at the regional and global levels.

It has also led to a significant reduction in the RC coordination fund – vital for convening country teams and external partners around countries' priorities.

And every passing day brings further stress to our operations.

Existing posts – especially at country level – will have to be cut.

Our ability to follow up on expectations of Member States will diminish. And so will the impact of our reforms.

In the end, it comes down to this: without adequate and predictable funding, we will jeopardize hard-won gains in the reforms and our ability to support the countries to deliver on the SDGs.

This is why the Secretary-General is calling on Member States to reconsider his recommendation for a hybrid 2.0 funding model for the UN development system.

At present, we rely on complex and highly innovative funding components, and we remain vulnerable to fluctuations in voluntary funding. We need to stabilise the system.

The current situation requires a sense of urgency.

Following the ECOSOC Segment, we will take stock of your perspectives before we launch an inclusive and transparent consultative process on the next steps.

A dedicated report by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly will follow before the end of the year.

Excellencies,

This is not an ordinary year.

As we prepare for the SDG Summit in September 2023, we must build on the progress made and maintain our commitment and high ambitions.

And this is no ordinary ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment.

It is a milestone in our reform efforts and a critical bus-stop on our way to September.

I look forward to hearing your views and perspectives on my report and our work to deliver on the high expectations you place on the UN development system.

Thank you