

Draft Statement by H.E. Mr. Michel Biang
Permanent Representative of Gabon to the UN on behalf of the African Group
at the briefing by the Secretary-General on the Repositioning of the UNDS
Friday 10 November 2017 (ECOSOC Chamber)

Thank you Madame President,

I have the honor to deliver these remarks on behalf of the African Group, and allow me to align our statement to that delivered by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing on how the efforts of the Secretariat, and particularly of Deputy Secretary-General Mrs. Amina Mohamed, whom he has entrusted with the task of addressing the mandate of the QCPR resolution adopted last December are proceeding.

Madame President,

We are all anticipating the upcoming Report of the Secretary-General to complement and to elaborate on the Report that was issued last June. We believe both these reports will be very useful as the Member States engage in the consideration of the issues arising under the mandate of the QCPR. This is an important process that the African Group considers of particular significance in our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

The African Group has continuously communicated its views on this issue in numerous occasions, most recently on October 6th, July 5th, and May 5th of this year. We have always maintained that the guiding principle of the reform process should be respect for national ownership and leadership, fully demonstrated in supporting national development priorities, and that there is no one size that fits all. Allow me today to relate the main themes of the African Group position,

while expanding briefly on some critical issues that we anticipate the December Report of the Secretary-General should tackle:

1) On the Functions and Capacities Needed to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda:

Mr. Secretary-General,

The African Group expects that the system-wide strategic document we will be receiving in a few weeks will have as its core, and in a practical manner, the efforts of the UNDS in eradicating poverty. This is the ultimate priority that we expect of the UNDS, and it should not waver from it. We are concerned that attempts to analyze the UNDS budget as being too concentrated on the first 6 SDGs might imply that we should be re-prioritizing away from the eradication of poverty. We do not expect cuts away from this priority, but rather a strengthening of the work, including allocated budget.

This is closely followed, and indeed paralleled by the need to ensure support to structural transformation, including issues of industrialization, job creation, infrastructure, agriculture development and food security, capacity building, climate change, and sustainable energy, among others. We therefore expect that more emphasis on SDG 9, on industry, innovation and infrastructure be present in the December Report.

Similarly, we are particularly aware of the role of the UNDS as a knowledge hub, one that can bring value addition through linking, adapting, and presenting directly and without intermediaries, its vast repositories of knowledge and experience in a smart and accessible portal to the service of its member states and other stakeholders.

2) On the Proposed Funding Compact:

Excellency,

The litmus test of how the UNDS will deliver on host country priorities is how it will be able to fund itself, as well as leverage its resources, to address program country priorities – and no one else's. We note with concern the imbalance between core and non-core resources that militate against coherence in the system's delivery. This also encompasses the issue of partnerships, including transparency and accountability thereon through multi-layered monitoring, reporting and review mechanisms. We are also concerned at the shifting emphasis from development finance to other forms of finance. Ultimately, we will need further details on the proposed funding compact, especially how it will progress core resources.

3) Delivering at the Country Level:

On the UN Country Team configurations, the African Group would like to emphasize that with respect to rationalizing the physical presence of individual entities, we need to ensure that it is undertaken in a full conversation with host countries, and that it does not negatively affect host country needs, nor affect ongoing programs. The African Group would also require further clarity, in order to react to the proposal to review the double-hatting or triple hatting of senior UN leadership, as well as with the notion of flexible financing modalities on joint humanitarian-development objectives.

4) Delivering at the Regional Level:

The UNDS needs strengthening at the regional level. More specifically, on the idea of co-location or pooling of system-wide policy capacities at the regional level, it is important to take into account the cost of transition, including incentives, or host country coverage that might be lost due to relocation. We must also note that co-location does not necessarily mean better coordination. In addition, an important element is to ensure that the UNDS, at the regional level, engages in proper coordination with, and support to regional organizations, including regional development priorities such as Agenda 2063 for the African Region.

5) Strengthening Accountability:

The UNDS represents an important aspect of the practical links between the 2030 Agenda and the implementation efforts of Member States. Therefore, accountability and overall coordination of UNDS entities and their oversight by Member States, including transparency and accountability is at the heart of this exercise. Nonetheless, the African Group would like to seek more clarity on the proposal to convene “sharply focused” meetings of the Operational Activities Segment of ECOSOC. We are also concerned that the merging of the executive boards of the funds and programs might disadvantage smaller delegations.

6) Improvements to the Resident Coordinator System:

The African Group believes that a good starting point to seek guidance on this matter is the QCPR resolution itself, which identifies in its OP 57, steps the Member States believe would produce a better RC system. We believe that the RC should be a development professional, well established in issues of sustainable development, and without a politicized perspective. She needs to understand the priorities of the host country as communicated through its government. In the African context, she should also be aware of the development needs in terms of support to productive capacities and infrastructure development needs. We must also ensure balanced geographic representation in the cadre of RCs, and proper consultations with host countries on their appointment. Emphasis should also be placed on the reporting line between RCs and host countries. Host countries must be the key voice on performance reviews. Likewise, host countries must be part of the RC hiring process with the UN.

Thank you once again Mr. Secretary-General.

Thank you Madame President.