

Panel Discussion, ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment - Wednesday 1 March

“Moving the QCPR forward at the field level: Creating a common back office to function as a system”

Jan Beagle’s presentation

Excerpts

- The operational infrastructure and the business models of our organizations are key enablers in the pursuit of the integrated approach that Agenda 2030 calls for. The Deputy Secretary-General said yesterday the UN system needs a higher degree of integration, coordination, accountability, and transparency. And this is as true on the operational side as on the programmatic side.
- At the inter-agency level, HLCM and UNDG are strategically aligned to lead this effort, together. Important achievements have brought measurable results, but acceleration and mainstreaming is needed.
- To scale up and meet the expectations of the QCPR, broader partnerships and support by all stakeholders are needed.
- A key outcome of the work by HLCM and UNDG is the development of a shared vision, the sharing of best practices, and a much less fragmented approach.
- Our vision is set out in the HLCM strategy for the next four years, which covers six inter-related areas, all aimed at modernizing, streamlining, and speeding up business practices, reducing transaction costs, and increasing quality. These areas are:

1. Mainstream global service delivery approaches and policy platforms for joint and more efficient service provision
2. Increase the capacity of the UN System to work with different stakeholders through effective partnerships.
3. Develop a global UN system workforce and a new leadership model
4. Foster the safety and security of staff
5. Support the requirement for quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data
6. Drive forward the agenda on risk management and resilience-building

Achievements and Acceleration

- In all these areas, we are building on the achievements already made, and we are aiming to broaden the scope of our work and increase its impact.
- In HR, we are working towards developing a more flexible and cross-disciplinary workforce that enables the system to have the right skills in the right place.
- We have created a policy framework for common recruitment of GS and National staff at the country level, removing all obstacles to inter-agency mobility.
- We are developing and will implement a new system-wide CEB Leadership Framework, which also aims to enhance leadership accountability for collective results at country level.
- We aim to make clear progress towards achieving diversity, including gender parity, in particular in senior leadership positions.

- We are working towards strengthened performance management systems. Pilot reward and recognition schemes have been implemented with the support of the ICSC. The end objective is to recognize good performance, strengthen linkages to career development, and recognize contribution toward common endeavours.
- We have developed and adopted a common Reference Risk Management, Oversight & Accountability Model for the UN system, which applies the ‘Three Lines of Defense Model’ developed by the Institute of Internal Auditors. As it is the case for IPSAS (a major success of HLCM), the adoption of internationally recognized standards adds to the credibility and legitimacy of the work of the UN.
- In this area, we are now working towards a more effective approach to prevent fraud by implementing partners, in responding to a mandate by the General Assembly to develop common definitions of fraud.
- On data and measurement of results, the CEB website (www.unsceb.org) is one the most comprehensive sources of information on the UN system including but not limited to financial, human resources, and procurement statistics.
- And, just last year, we launched the UN system-wide Data Catalogue (undatacatalog.org), which introduced a living inventory of UN system organization open data resources, facilitating awareness and data accessibility.

- In the area of Procurement, progress has been impressive. According to the 2015 BOS Mid-term evaluation¹, procurement accounts for over 80% of the savings that can be generated from the BOS.
- In the past four years, we have transformed the way the UN system collaborates in Procurement. We have adopted a “collaboration clause” which allows most UN organizations to accept (mutually recognize) the outcome of another agency’s procurement process, to avoid duplication of internal controls across agencies.
- Joint Long Term Agreements are now the normal way of doing business, both at Headquarters and at the field level.
- Thanks to the new vendor registration system that we have put in place, the number of UN vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition has increased significantly: since 2013, an increase of 98% in the number of vendors from these countries, which now represent 55% of all registered vendors.
- Furthermore, successful collaboration in treasury services generated savings through common Banking Contracts (over \$3 M/year) and Foreign Exchange (\$39M in the last period assessed, 2015).
- All these successes from inter-agency collaboration in operations improve purchasing power and free up resources for programming in host countries.
- A central theme of our strategy for the next period is to accelerate work towards joint procurement, as called for by the new QCPR, and to aggressively move ahead with the assessment of the feasibility and cost-benefit analysis

¹ Mid-term Evaluation Business Operations Strategy Pilot Programme Report July 2015

for global service provision, through existing centers, or through alternative and innovative modalities.

- And, we are looking at BOS and SOP mainstreaming across all countries, carried out through 40 UNDAFs
- In moving forward in all these endeavors, we must foster the organizations' commitment to the safety, security, health and well-being of their staff.

Challenges and Support from all Stakeholders

- We need more professional change management expertise, also through more partnerships with the private sector and other actors.
- Headquarters' engagement and buy-in is critical for implementation and success of integrated operational tools.
- Success in streamlining and integrating business operations is still contingent on strong leadership at all levels, including the RC and the UNCT.
- Such buy-in should also translate into a revised incentive schemes at the Headquarters and local levels, recognizing and rewarding collective work. We must encourage integrated approaches in work plans and performance appraisals, recognizing that integrated approaches cannot be an add-on.
- In this regard, it is enlightening to read the 2016 UNDG Constraints Analysis for the BOS² where it reports that the strongest incentives identified for common business operations are: 'More Services at the Same or Less Costs' (84%); 'Good working relationships with UN colleagues' (75%); while the weakest incentives are that common business operations "do not help in

² Constraints Analysis for Common UN Business Operations at the Country Level, 24 May 2016

career advancement” (12%) and “are not included in staff performance reviews” (17%).

- Better mechanisms to measure and recognize contribution to joint work must be put in place
- New funding solutions need to be devised, that promote integrated approaches, in both programmes and operations.
- We must ensure that the Operations component is integrated from the outset in the UNDAF process.
- Member States can be very helpful in assisting in the removal of roadblocks in common business operations, by reminding organizations in each of their governing bodies that participation in inter-agency activities in business operations is a priority.
- A communication strategy by inter-agency mechanisms to create awareness of the solutions that are available to UNCTs is highly needed, as many UNCTs and RCs are not aware of all the joint operational tools that have been created.
- UNDG and HLCM are working together on a communication strategy, which we expect will address this shortcoming.