

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

**In support of the field: a reinvigorated, impartial and independent
Resident Coordinator system**

New York, 27 February 2018

Your Excellency, Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Vice-President of ECOSOC
Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This session focuses on the critical role of Resident Coordinators around the world.

If you permit me, I would like to begin by expressing my deepest condolences on the loss over the weekend of Ms. Una McCauley, UN Resident Coordinator in Sri Lanka.

I know you join me in offering your thoughts and prayers to her family – and to the United Nations family she served with such dedication and compassion for many years, first as UNICEF Representative and then as Resident Coordinator.

I would also like to appreciate the excellent interactive session held this morning on the “new generation of UNCTs”.

The opening statements by the Vice Presidents of ECOSOC and the General Assembly – and the words of the Secretary-General - have helped to set the scene for the entire segment. We were reminded of the complex global context facing the world, the opportunities offered by the 2030 Agenda and the need to seize the momentum to ensure the UN is fit to support your efforts in each country.

It has also been extremely useful to listen to perspectives from Member States and our Resident Coordinators - a real reality-check from our leaders on the ground.

I saw convergence of views on critical foundations of the new generation of UNCTs, including support for new skillsets, greater coherence and alignment to national priorities and a UNDAFs that increase our accountability for results and to host governments.

The evidence shows that the strongest UNDAFs are in countries where we have strong country leadership and ownership of the process and the resulting UN development assistance framework.

I also heard your strong calls – both from the floor and from the Resident Coordinators – for flexibility to adapt to national specificities and predictability of resources to do so. This is at the

core of the demand-driven model we proposed.

And I was encouraged to hear the current efforts by Resident Coordinators, that show that we have strong foundations on which to build. Successful experiences such as the now 10 year-old Joint Office in Cabo Verde – which show that an ambitious repositioning is possible.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Turning to this afternoon's session, I want to thank you for spotlighting how best to strengthen the UN Resident Coordinator system.

A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system is at the core of all our proposals to reposition the United Nations development system. And it is at the centre of the mandate of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

We know that if we want to strengthen our ability to support the 2030 Agenda in a cohesive, effective, accountable and efficient manner – then we must strengthen the Resident Coordinator system.

I am extremely proud of the 129 Resident Coordinators working hard around the world in 165 countries – in some cases against all odds.

Being an RC is one of the most challenging jobs in the United Nations.

RCs pull together the collective efforts of United Nations country teams today with limited authorities, resources and capacities.

They are also trusted advisers to governments, often invited to contribute to national policy-making on development issues, but with currently insufficient mechanisms to draw policy expertise from across the UN system.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the RC must also ensure that the sum-total of the work of the UN development system is larger than its individual parts.

And that the team can shift seamlessly between the specific competencies and expertise of individual entities and their coming together in support of national priorities in the delivery of operational activities.

Resident Coordinators serve policy, programme, coordination and operational functions, all of which carry reputational risks for the organization, and often with less than adequate resources needed to perform any single one of these functions.

Excellencies,

The Secretary-General has placed a reinvigorated UN Resident Coordinator system at the heart of a repositioned UN development system supporting 2030 Agenda implementation.

In doing so, he has been ambitious – because, as he told this council, “ambition is our only option”.

Let me recall four key characteristics of his proposals.

First, the RCs will be empowered to be effective and collaborative leaders of UN Country Teams. They will be equipped with the necessary authority, staffing capacities and access to seed funding to provide direction and improve accountability for collective results in the work of UN country teams.

The RCs will be expected to steer the substantive contribution of UN country teams for 2030 Agenda implementation. They will also have a role in informing decision-making on the presence and leadership of entities at the country level, and sign-off on entity-specific country programme documents;

Second, we have proposed the separation of the functions of RC and Representative of UNDP. This will increase the accountability and transparency of the RC function, mitigate any perceptions of conflict of interest – real or perceived - and allow UNDP’s leadership to fully focus on its key mandate for sustainable development.

As I have stated before, being a Resident Coordinator is not a part-time job. Nor is leading a major development entity such as UNDP.

Third, a dual reporting system will be put in place, to ensure mutual accountability of the RCs to the UNCTs and vice versa, in their efforts to support countries to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. UNCT members will also continue to report – and remain accountable - to their respective entities.

Fourth, the profile and functions of RCs and their teams will be made clear across all countries. In any context, RCs will need to be strong development professionals, with the skillsets required to lead by substance. The appointment process will be strengthened to ensure that skillsets are in place as required by the country contexts, including in multi-hatted contexts.

The RCs of Tajikistan and Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States provided compelling arguments this morning on why RC Offices will require enhanced capacities and skillsets to deliver on the heightened demands of the 2030 Agenda. “To move coordination from process to substance”, as one RC has stated.

Let me be clear.

More authority to RCs does not equal less accountability to Member States.

On the contrary, this means ensuring a more accountable UN development system on the ground – more responsive to national needs and more capable to deliver meaningful results. A system that can draw on the expertise across all entities – including non-resident entities, DESA and the

regional economic commissions – to respond to country priorities.

More authority to RCs also does not mean less prerogative for national governments to set their priorities, or choose and access UNDS entities capacities.

National governments choose the system they need, and will interact with individual entities as they wish.

They also retain the right to give final clearance before a Resident Coordinator assumes his or her position in a country.

In fact, a Resident Coordinator that is empowered is one that has greater ability to ensure that all entities align and remain accountable to national priorities in performing sustainable development mandates.

But the system we have today is excessively reliant on personalities and goodwill across UNCT members. We need to institutionalize what works, across the board.

The Secretary-General has also proposed predictable funding for this strengthened RC System.

We remain convinced that a more robust coordination function — at only about 1% of the annual contributions for operational activities for development — would bring value for money. We will have the opportunity to discuss this dimension further during the session on funding.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted that we have on the panel this afternoon another group of UN Resident Coordinators that are real champions of our work, wearing single, double and triple hats.

We also have the Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States, himself a former RC – triple hatted also as DSRSG and Humanitarian Coordinator - as well as the Director of Operations and Advocacy of OCHA.

Let me now turn it over to them,

We look forward to hearing first-hand their views on what is needed to enable their leadership and support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on the ground.

Thank you.