

ECOSOC

Responding to the Needs of countries serviced by multi-country offices

Mr. Chair,

Belize is presently a multi-country office (MCO) served country with the MCO based in El Salvador. This was a switch from Jamaica from which Belize was previously served.

The 2019 MCO Review informed that the Belize/El Salvador MCO alignment was a result of geographic and logistical convenience, not after an analysis or a feasibility study. But this alignment or rather mismatch has had consequences for the efficiency and cohesion of UN activities in Belize. While physically in Central America, Belize is integrated with the Caribbean in most aspects. Differences in governmental, economic and legal systems, language, culture, and development needs position Belize and El Salvador in separate UN cooperation frameworks and planning cycles. El Salvador maintains a standalone UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) while Belize is guided by the UN Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF) for the Caribbean.

Opportunities for inter-institutional or inter-organizational collaboration to boost efficiency of RCO services are thus limited. National priorities for humanitarian relief, human rights and disaster risk dimensions require different approaches for each country.

This is not to diminish the efforts of the incumbent Resident Coordinator. She and her team are diligent and consummate professionals. However, these difficult times call for recalibrated coordination and action for post-pandemic recovery and resilience and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Chair,

General Assembly Resolution 72/279 called for MCO reform toward achieving Agenda 2030 and this was reiterated by the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) in 2016 which called to “consider, where possible and appropriate, limiting the number of countries under the coverage of each MCO”. These calls are now amplified by the pandemic-imposed risk that threatens to last at least for the next decade. We need to outline a new social contract that guarantees fair and equitable MCO infrastructure. The current model is not sustainable for Belize’s development.

The UN has a clear mandate from Member States to enhance coordination to maximize the impact of the UN toward recovery. Over the past year development in SIDS in particular has regressed.

We applaud the Secretary-General’s advocacy for a change perspective for post-pandemic recovery having due regard for the overlooked needs of SIDS and “a reset for the 21st Century”. This type of change advocacy is vital and is directly aligned with Belize’s request for MCO reform via an in-country presence of a Resident Coordinator.

Belize stands ready to answer the call for recalibrated efforts through the ownership of agreed international goals and commitments including the SDGs and supports the strengthened role, engagement and strategic partnership with the UN system.

I thank you.