

Operational segment of ECOSOC, 18-20 May 2021

General debate

Statement by Norway

- Norway remains a committed supporter of reform of the UN Development System. The aim is to have a UNDS with improved ability to assist countries in a more collaborative, coherent, integrated, efficient and effective manner in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- Norway fully supports the QCPR resolution adopted in 2020. We are pleased that the resolution consolidates previously adopted reforms, and has a strong focus on the normative role of the UNDS, including human rights and gender equality. We are content with the resolution's clear expectations to UNDS engagement against climate change.
- We thank the Secretary -General for his report on the implementation of the QCPR (GA resolution 75/233). We note with appreciation that this year's report is more evidence-based than in previous years, and gives a more systematic assessment of progress, as well as points to some challenges, in implementing the reforms.

UN at country level

- The reports presented to this meeting indicate that the reforms are moving forward. We do, however, note that implementation varies among countries as well as among entities. The Covid-19 pandemic is a litmus test for UN reform, and we commend the Resident Coordinators and the UN country teams for their coherent and efficient response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Member States have decided that the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDC) shall be *the* most important instrument for planning and implementation of UN's activities at country level. We welcome the rolling out the UNSDCFs and the underlying Common Country Analyses. Norway is concerned, however, that we are lacking a systematic assessment of how the CCAs and the UNSDCFs are being implemented so far, including how they are able to follow up the ambitious guidelines. We also note with concern that the financial frameworks which should accompany the Cooperation Frameworks are rarely in place.
- As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, 77 per cent of the world's extreme poor live in fragile countries. To achieve the 2030 Agenda in these countries, it is imperative that the UN enhances the collaboration across its humanitarian, development and peace building engagement. Norway would have liked to see more systematic evidence of progress and how the UN is working to achieve this. In particular, we would like to know which systemic steps are taken to ensure a whole of

system approach at country level. As a minimum, a crucial task is to ensure that the different planning instruments are “talking” to each other.

- The reform can only succeed if all the entities of the UNDS adjust their policies, rules and regulations to the reform decisions, as expected in the 2020 QCPR. We note from the reports that this implementation among agencies at country level is uneven, both when it comes to recognizing the new role of the Resident Coordinator as spelled out in detail in the Management and Accountability Framework and adjustments that are needed to enhance inter-agency cooperation and efficiency gains. Clearly, changes in human resources policies, financial regulations, and rules of the entities are crucial to move forward. We note that progress is particularly slow in the specialized agencies. Member states have a responsibility to follow up on these issues in the respective governing bodies.

The review of the Resident Coordinator system

- Norway looks forward to the upcoming review of the Resident Coordinator system. We hope that the Resident Coordinator review will provide us with more systematic and evidence-based information, as well as an analysis of progress and bottlenecks. The 2020 QCPR resolution states that the Resident Coordinator review will include an assessment of the structure, performance and funding arrangements. We expect that all these aspects and the linkages between them will be reviewed thoroughly. On financing, we hope that the review will present recommendations and concrete options for the way forward, in order to secure a more sustainable funding of the RC system. Regarding structure, we hope that the review will focus on the structure of DCO, including its capacities and competencies at the global and regional levels, as well as the capacities and competencies of the Resident Coordinator Offices. When assessing performance, we find it important that the review is based on evidence and facts, and not on perceptions. In order to have a systematic and evidence based review, we expect that the review team will assess all the operative paragraphs regarding the Resident Coordinator System in resolution 72/279. We would also like to underline that the RC system belongs to the whole UN system, and therefore it’s crucial to involve all relevant UN organizations in the review.

UN’s normative role

- Norway attaches great importance to the UN’s normative role at country level. Human rights, gender equality, addressing inequality and vulnerability must remain at the center of the UN’s work and be properly reflected in policy advice, capacity development, and service delivery. The use of human rights based approaches needs to be strengthened. We are concerned with the limited progress in mainstreaming gender equality in the UN’s work at country level, in particular in terms of disaggregation of results and tracking of financial allocations. Efforts to meet the expectations to gender mainstreaming must be strengthened.

Funding

- We get the UN that we fund. Flexible and predictable funding is a prerequisite for a successful reform, as stated in the Funding Compact and the QCPR. Inter-agency pooled funds are for the system what core resources are for individual agencies. We encourage member states to try to protect core contributions in times of scarcity of financial resources. When it comes to non-core funding, we are pleased to note that contributions to thematic funds and pooled funds are increasing. However, the contributions to broad pooled funds, in particular the Joint SDG Fund and the Peace Building Fund, are too limited to serve as instruments for transformational change.

Transparency and accountability

- Norway commends the UNDS for substantially improved transparency in financial reporting, made possible by standardization and harmonization of reporting methodologies as well as digitalization.
- More needs to be done to ensure the same level of transparency and accountability about results, in particular common results. Harmonized results-based planning and reporting, based on the SDGs and its targets and indicators, are prerequisites for making Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams accountable for progress on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The annual report of the UNSDCF must be made publicly available. Most agencies are in the process of developing new strategic plans. This is an opportunity to harmonize results-based management across the system.