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UNITED NATIONS ECOSOC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES SEGMENT: CANZ - GENERAL DEBATE STATEMENT 18-20 May 2021

Thank you, Secretary-General, for the informative briefing on the state of UN reform and implementation of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. I am pleased to outline comments and questions on behalf of Canada, New Zealand, and my own country, Australia.

Secretary-General, it is clear that your comprehensive reform package has yielded very positive impacts three years since implementation began. We commend the UN development system and member states for their strong commitment to this important agenda. Our efforts have resulted in a number of major achievements, such as:

- independent Resident Coordinators with strengthened leadership roles;
- improved coherence amongst UN country teams;
- enhanced system-wide transparency, and,
- notable efficiency gains.

Crucially, these advancements also enabled the UN development system to deliver a comprehensive COVID-19 response and recovery package; a profound test of the repositioned UN development system.

Yet efforts must continue to fully embed reform across all parts of the UN development system, and to push ahead with the 'unfinished business' of reform. For our delegations, this includes the following priority areas:

First, reform must deliver for SIDS and LDCs. The 2021 QCPR report indicates that accessing UN services continues to be a challenge for these groups of countries, and in addition, that the specific needs of SIDS are not always being met by UN partners.

On this basis, we urge the funds and programs, and specialised agencies, to strengthen their offer to SIDS in line with specific country needs, including COVID-19 impacts. We are pleased to see that the establishment of the new North Pacific office is progressing, and hope that once fully operational, that this office truly puts into practice the full promise of reform: a joined-up UN offer that provides tailored support to countries, under the leadership of an empowered RC.

Second, we are keen to better understand how the rollout of reform will be fully executed to encompass the entire UNSDG family, including the specialised agencies. We are in full agreement that the full range of assets of the UN development system need to be optimised to support countries. The consolidation of reforms - across the funds and programs and specialised agencies - is critical for sustained progress. In addition, behavioural and cultural change cannot be downplayed as part of this effort.

From our side, we continue to encourage our field missions to support RCs as the lead UN authority in-country. We will continue to work with governing bodies to support consistent approaches, standards, and expectations across the system.

Third, we would appreciate more clarity on the progress of reform across the regional commissions. We note that knowledge management has been a strong focus so far. How will you make sure that the level of ambition remains high for the regional commissions so that countries ultimately benefit from the extensive UN regional presence?

Fourth, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (or UNSDCFs) are a key strategic roadmap for Resident Coordinators, UN agencies, member states and other

development partners. For our delegations, it is important that the UN ensures a robust consultation process on the design and implementation of these important documents - with all relevant stakeholders.

Fifth, in line with the guidance handed down by QCPR, the UN must do more to ensure that gender equality, diversity and disability inclusion is at the centre of UN efforts at all levels. The UN must be a leader on these issues in its policy advice, advocacy and programming at the country level. Real opportunities exist for the UN to better integrate gender equality and disability cross all areas of work through targeted actions. Your efforts are critical in improving the lives of women and girls in all of their diversity, everywhere.

Sixth, we welcome the UN Development System's commitments to accelerate socially inclusive and sustainable transitions for countries towards low-carbon, climate-resilient and nature-positive economies. The UNDS must move forward treating climate, biodiversity and the COVID recovery as a single agenda for people and the planet, and to rebuild better and greener by mainstreaming these considerations system-wide.

Seven, on financing for development. Effectively addressing key financing challenges such as debt sustainability, and the pressure placed on all sources of development finance, is critical to developing a credible global pandemic response and supporting ambitious "build back better" agendas. Continued action by the UN and its member states is needed to promote innovative, gender-responsive financing, to crowd in new investors, and to accelerate action and advance the SDGs.

Eight, more can be done to bring together development, humanitarian and peace-related actors to jointly plan tailored UN responses for fragile and conflict-affected situations. In addition, we underscore the UN's crucial role in identifying and addressing emerging risks at the country level, in order to prevent conflict and mitigate crises to ultimately save lives.

Finally, the RC review comes at critical juncture, and must grapple with a number of complex issues. However, it is also our view that the review must deliver recommendations that are evidence-based, clear, and manageable for member states and the UN development system. This includes recommendations for ongoing financing of the RC system. Our delegations will be constructive and engaged partners in the RC review, and the intergovernmental deliberation that will follow.

We look forward to this week's ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment as an opportunity to discuss these issues in further detail.

Thank you.