

Operational Activities Segment

Session Four: Responding to needs and priorities of countries serviced by multi-country Offices

Statement by Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ)

Delivered by Craig J. Hawke,
Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates.

In the interests of time, all protocols observed.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Australia, Canada and my own country New Zealand. Otherwise known as CANZ.

Let me thank our panellists for their insights.

[Permanent Representative will respond briefly to issues raised by the panellists]

Excellencies,

CANZ has been vocal in our support for the Secretary-General's recommendations to improve the capacity of and support to Multi-Country Offices or MCOs. We agree that the COVID-19 crisis is the first real test of the UN Development System reforms. The pandemic underscores the importance of an effective and well-coordinated UN in order to scale up support for countries in their time of need. This need is even more acute in those countries and territories serviced remotely by MCOs.

SIDS already faced challenges in achieving the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway before the pandemic. We are now witnessing the effects of SIDS' economic exposure and reliance on the heavily impacted tourism industry. This is compounded by sometimes heavy debt burdens, and vulnerability to natural disasters. In the Pacific, we have seen countries impacted by the double burden of COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold. As we have heard from the panellists today, SIDS need increased, targeted support to achieve their development priorities.

We recognise the need for development plans to be context and country specific. One size does not fit all. Each country is being affected differently by COVID-19 and requires a tailored socio-economic response. Under the MCO review recommendations, each Member State will get an in-country United Nations presence providing much-needed, country-specific expertise and coordination.

Excellencies,

Now is the time for action. We have heard the message, including from the UN Secretary-General, that the UN is ready to move to improve MCOs. It is now up to Member States to endorse these recommendations and provide certainty to Resident Coordinators and programme countries. We expect implementation, including establishment of an office in the North Pacific, to begin as soon as possible after ECOSOC endorsement.

We would like to put three questions to the panellists:

Firstly, improvements to MCOs will have practical impact. Could the panellists share their thoughts on how the extra coordination capacity will impact the UN's ability to deliver on the ground, including in response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19?

Secondly, we note the Secretary-General recommends MCOs facilitate better integration and participation of MCO-serviced States in intergovernmental fora and processes. We would welcome the views of panellists on how SIDS engagement in these fora might be better supported.

Thirdly, the UN Secretary-General has called for UN entities, including Funds and Programmes and agencies, in consultation with governing bodies, to explore how to better support SIDS' priorities. How can we concretely adjust UN development system programming and resource allocation for SIDS to better reflect vulnerability considerations?

Thank you for your time.