

**Deputy Secretary-General**  
**Remarks on the occasion of the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment**  
**Presentation of the Report of the Chair of the UNSDG on the**  
**Development Coordination Office**  
**Virtual meeting, 20 May 2020**

*[as prepared for delivery]*

Mr. Vice-President,  
Excellencies,

I thank the Vice-President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Juan Sandoval-Mendiola, for his leadership in ensuring an excellent operational activities segment despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today, on behalf of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, to introduce my report on the operations of the UN Development Coordination Office (“DCO”).

The report provides an overview of all activities and key results of the wider Resident Coordinator system, to which DCO serves as the backbone.

I want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Robert Piper for his tireless leadership of DCO, as well as the dedication of our DCO colleagues. It has been a privilege to see our colleagues from diverse backgrounds and profiles coming into the new DCO, hitting the ground running and stepping up to deliver on the high expectations you place on us.

I also want to acknowledge the leadership of each of our 129 Resident Coordinators across the globe, who have risen to the challenge and are championing the reforms on the ground.

The report I am introducing today is the first of its kind.

Last year - still in early days in the transition to a new Resident Coordination system - we provided to the ECOSOC a transitional update on the initial steps taken to establish an independent development coordination function.

Today, nearly a year and half since the transition, you have before you a comprehensive account of our journey and the results that have been achieved so far.

This report provides critical input to inform oversight by Member States.

It complements the Secretary-General’s report on the QCPR implementation and institutionalizes our development coordination function.

Ultimately, this report matters because coordination is critical to our success in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The new Resident Coordinator System is the backbone around which the UN development entities are taking steps to strengthen support to the 2030 Agenda.

It is the driving force enabling action by UN country teams on the ground.

Coordination is not, after all, an end in itself.

But it is an absolute requirement to upgrade the impact of the UN development system; to reduce duplication and inefficiencies in our work; to take partnerships to scale; to lift the quality and depth of our policy advice; and to reduce the burden on national partners and donors.

The human crisis ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced this realization and our sense of urgency and emergency.

Time has come to leverage our reforms and maximize the impact of our coordination function.

2019 was a take-off year for the new Resident Coordination system. Today, I can confidently say we are on the right track and the new system is maturing.

I am grateful to all Principals of the UNSDG, my UNSDG Vice-Chair Achim Steiner, and many colleagues in the Secretariat who have worked day and night to ensure a successful transition.

The pace of transformation is impressive.

Since the transition to a reinvigorated system, twenty-five new Resident Coordinators have been deployed as a result of two recruitment rounds. Another 15 have been appointed last week, pending accreditation by host governments.

Resident Coordinators skillsets are being steadily upgraded, including through a leadership development strategy that includes certification on the SDGs.

Resident Coordinator offices have been strengthened with core capacities across the globe – 80 percent of the planned capacities are already established and we will ensure full capacities this year.

A new set of accountabilities is in place, to reflect the direct line between RCs and the Secretary-General, and dual reporting lines in UN country teams.

We have full gender parity across Resident Coordinators – for the second consecutive year; and we made an enormous leap forward in improving geographic diversity.

With the last round of RC appointments last week, 50 per cent of our Resident Coordinators now come from the Global South – a 20% increase in 2 short years.

The investments made to strengthen DCO are proving to be sound.

DCO is already at the core of the UN development system, ‘leading from behind’ to add value to the activities of the UNSDG and all country teams.

Working hand in hand with all members of the UNCT, DCO has kept up the pace.

Communicating regularly with RCs and UN country teams, DCO has stepped up to provide guidance, support and new tools to help drive transformation on the ground.

It was encouraging to see that three quarters of RCs reported in a survey that DCO has provided “adequate support” during this very complex initial phase of operations.

This effort is paying off, and the data in my report will speak for itself.

Let me flag three trends.

First, there is evidence that the new RC system has helped increase collaboration in UNCTs and foster alignment to national priorities and needs.

Two-thirds of our partner governments reported that Resident Coordinators have shown increased capacity to support national development priorities.

Nearly eighty percent indicated the UN development system is more relevant to their country’s development.

Almost 90 percent agree that the UN Cooperation Frameworks have helped ensure that UN activities are closely aligned with national needs and priorities.

Second, the stronger authority and impartiality of Resident Coordinators is driving behavioral changes in UN country teams and a more collaborative culture.

Three-quarters of RCs reported having greater access to the expertise available across entities of the UN development system.

One-third of UN country team members today are non-resident agencies, which are leveraging the new RC system to provide policy support to countries.

The implementation of the management and accountability framework (the ‘MAF’) is proceeding smoothly.

Over 90 percent of RCs states that the MAF has changed the way UNCTs work.

Seventy-two percent reported increased influence in decision-making and feel that they are now better positioned to avoid duplication in the work of UN entities.

Third, the value of coordination is becoming more tangible for our partners and members of UN country teams, including non-resident agencies.

Ninety-five percent of UN country teams have reported that a better coordinated approach has helped strengthen their relationships with governments.

Nearly two in three country teams reported improved joint planning as a key achievement in 2019.

Pooled funds are flourishing in countries, with 15 new pooled funds established since the UNDS reform in 2018, underpinning joint analysis and programming.

These are just some highlights. The positive trajectory is also reflected in the independent data collected by DESA and through internal surveys conducted by UN entities such as UNFPA.

Data is the bloodline of evidence-based decision making.

But I also want to highlight the human faces behind these numbers - the thousands of individuals from across the UN system and at all levels in government, who have embodied the spirit of these reforms and have made the new RC system a reality.

And ultimately, the millions of people around the world who count on UN support to help their countries effectively tackle COVID-19 and achieve the SDGs by 2030.

In the end, the reinvigorated RC system is not about words - it is about action. And that action is yielding results.

Yet, we must not take this progress for granted.

We must continue to charge ahead until the new RC system is rooted in unbreakable foundations to respond to the ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

My report highlights areas where we must redouble attention. Let me highlight key challenges:

1. There is an important need to consolidate behavioral changes in UN country teams. The RCs, of course, must demonstrate and earn their role of team leaders; and we must ensure that all aspects of the MAF are on track. Coordination and reporting to RCs on resource mobilization is an aspect that is clearly lagging behind and we will need to address this collectively.

2. We are aware that guidance from UNSDG Principals to their country representatives is uneven across entities and regions. We are working with Principals to adjust this and ensure that all country team members are receiving consistent messaging and support as the reforms unfold.

3. Nascent regional offices of DCO must fully find their space in the new regional architecture. The collaboration between the DCO regional offices and other regional directors is also uneven across regions and we will take steps to ensure consistency. We have many good examples on which to build, including the excellent collaboration between the DCO regional team with ECLAC and other regional directors in Latin America and the Caribbean.

4. We must ensure the RC system is at full capacities as a matter of priority at this moment of global crisis. DCO is fast-tracking hiring at global, regional and country levels to deliver on this.

5. There is a need to strengthen the pipeline of Resident Coordinators to ensure that moving forward we can always deploy the right profile, in the right place, at the right time.

6. We must complete this year the redesign of the RC selection system to enhance transparency and strengthen our ability to select the best candidates from within and outside the system.

You can count on our absolute resolve to tackle heads on what remains a 'work in progress'.

These reforms remain our joint endeavor and a shared responsibility.

At the ECOSOC now or in the General Assembly later this year; in governing bodies in New York, Geneva, Rome, Nairobi or Vienna; in your bilateral engagement with agencies - Member States will remain in the driving seat as we transform our coordination function.

We cannot succeed without your leadership and commitment.

Excellencies,

The new RC system is bearing fruit. You set a timeline and we stuck to it. And the repositioning could not have been more opportune given today's unprecedented crisis.

Still, the RC system is carried by less than forty contributing countries.

I am deeply grateful to these countries for their generosity – some beyond the equivalent of their assessed contribution, and some advancing the payment of their 2021 tranches.

We must, however, do more and better.

We trust that current contributors will sustain their funding over the time.

And we count on other countries to also step up, assume full ownership over the RC system and help strengthen its funding base to ensure it consistently functions at its peak. The RC system belongs to all of you. And all contributions count.

Excellencies,

Working together, we have made history in creating a fully dedicated coordination function for development at the heart of the United Nations.

As COVID-19 reminded us, this was both necessary and urgent to ensure the UN remains relevant and responsive to the challenges of the 21st century.

We fully realize that this is just the beginning.

And we are eager to take our next steps with you in this transformative journey!

We look forward to your guidance and feedback.

Thank you.