



Remarks by Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiola
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Vice-President of ECOSOC, Chair of the Operational Activities for Development Segment
Opening and Dialogue with Secretary-General
Operational Activities Segment
Tuesday 19 May 2020, 10:00-12:00

Thank you, Ambassador Juul, and also thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres for joining us in the opening of the 2020 Operational Activities Segment.

I would also like to commend the flexibility of all delegations to accommodate to the modalities of our meetings. This will require long and intense hours of engaged participation, but the relevance of this segment of ECOSOC requires such great effort.

Dear colleagues, the meetings we are starting today entail a particular responsibility for three main reasons: first and foremost, they are about people and results on the ground about the United Nations efforts with our Governments for sustainable development; second, the magnitude of this endeavor and even more in the particular circumstances we are living, and third, because it has been set as an example of transparency for the Organization.

Mr. Secretary General, we are building together a bold platform for follow-up and accountability of the way the UN Development System works in implementing -with Member States- Agenda 2030 and the SDGs; so this segment of ECOSOC intends to be consolidated as such platform, ensuring an in depth analysis of the work we are all developing.

As it has been mentioned over and over again, the real challenges, but also the rewards of this organization, are in the field. And this is the basis of our discussion. Beyond the UN jargon and technicalities, the issues we will discuss are about making a reality our 2015 pledge of leaving no one behind, but thru effective multilateralism that delivers results to the people; that improves people living conditions in the field.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us of the fragile reality of the human condition as well as the vulnerabilities and inequalities our societies face. Even in places where sustainable development was taken for granted at the end of last year, we have witnessed tragic losses. The situation is far worse in places where daily survival was not easily predictable even before the pandemic. Thus, I invite you to keep this in mind during our discussions.

This endeavor requires a machinery that is up to the task. The Secretary-General understood this, and he guided us through a process that has led us to the place where we are today.

When we talk about the UN Development System, we are referring to more than 130 Resident Coordinators and Country Teams working 24/7 in more than 160 countries and territories to improve the well-being of people. It is about more than two-thirds of the resources the organization receives every year that also represent more than 20% of Official Development Assistance.

And because of these numbers, I take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General and his team for keeping us posted every step of the way. Oversight and accountability have accompanied us through

this journey, and the operational activities segment is yet another opportunity to continue this engagement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the documentation we received to prepare for the operational activities segment. I know it was not an easy task because you needed to encapsulate in limited space all the work of the UN Development System, and the result is well focused and clear.

I am sure that all of us would have wanted further information on specific aspects, but I think you have stroked the right balance in a report that is meant to be comprehensive, evidence-based, and analytical. But specially the reports respond clear and sound to the reform process and have relevant information to be considered to continue our work.

The Operational Activities Segment as I said, is precisely the platform to get further clarification in the different aspects of the report. Therefore, I invite Member States to use it as such and to asses and analyze the information we have received and to transform our sessions in the interactive dialogue we all need.

While in the last months we have advanced in several issues of the QCPR and the UNDS reform, there are chapters that we are yet to close: the revamping of UN regional assets and the review of Multi-country Offices.

How the system articulates in the regions is key. We very much hope we can conclude the segment with clarity on how Regional Commissions, Agencies, Funds and Programmes, as well as DCO, will come together to continue serving programme countries in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

MCOs are a vital tool to address the historic deficit in the UN development offer to SIDS, which comprise the vast majority of countries supported by these offices. If we succeed in closing this chapter and strengthening our support to MCOs, we will be able to cope with this gap.

The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) has identified that, while the impact of achieving a specific SDG will have beneficial outcomes on other Goals, this will also entitle certain trade-offs.

In this decade of action, and in order to build back better, we should avoid falling into the mistake of addressing these issues by silos. Progress on the social, economic or environmental dimensions of sustainable development should not be at the expense of each other. The leadership of the Secretary-General must be bold and timely, implying the alignment of the UN system, as is recognized in resolution 74/274, recently adopted by the General Assembly and presented by my country, Mexico.

Thus, now more than ever, we need strong synopsis between the normative and policy branches of the system with the operational one. I hope this Segment helps to pave the way for the integrated support on which many programme countries will heavily rely during the hardships of the pandemic. It goes without saying that this will also require the participation of everyone, including governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and people around the world.

In this sense, I encourage all participants, both from the System and the Member States, to have a forward-looking vision. Let us keep in mind that the next QCPR will have a central role in the recovery process from COVID-19. Our decisions in the upcoming months will impact millions of lives around the world and will shape the future of the 2030 Agenda for years to come.

Dear colleagues, we have gone through a long and demanding reform process. I look forward to hearing concrete examples during the upcoming days of how these improvements are helping us in response to the pandemic.

As the Secretary-General has said, we need to recover and build better. To build better passes by working better and have the best possible coordination the UN System has seen, and the real commitment of all to this endeavor.

Let me conclude by giving a word of thanks to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, DESA, DGACM and DCO for all the substantive, technical and logistical support for giving structure to this operational activities segment. This has been a team effort that talks about the new times of working together.

Thank you