

Input Patrick Egli, Common Back Offices Panel, OAS, 01.03.2017

Mr. Vice-President, dear Panelists, distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for inviting me to this panel.

In 2015 we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which requires us to adapt the way we work to achieve better development results on the ground.

As the Secretary General has outlined and also Ms. Amina Mohammed in her deliberations yesterday, we need a UN system in which its three pillars work together in a much more integrated way. This is exactly at the heart of the QCPR 2016.

The race to have as many entity-specific representations around the world must end. More flexible and cost efficient field presence must be implemented. This requires a much better integration of back office services and advancement in the implementation of common business operations strategies. At the end of the day we need a shift away from agency specific systems which operate in silos towards a UN operational platform which is capable to provide quality services across the pillars of the UN's mandate.

To get there I see four important elements:

Element 1:

Changes on the “what” meaning on the programmatic side must go hand in hand with changes on the “how” meaning the way the UN agencies do their business. The **system wide strategy** of the UNDS as requested in the QCPR should therefore address both elements together. All in all we need to agree on the best possible business models forward and to develop a time-bound change management plan. Common business operations need to become the normal way of doing business and not the exception.

Element 2:

With this in mind, I believe that the overarching goal of operational reforms should be **harmonization and integration**, while mutual recognition can be a means to accelerate harmonization efforts. The recent QCPR reasserts these principles.

Again, Business Operations Strategies are an important element to advance harmonization towards a common back office. In particular, BOS have helped to establish more efficient ways of providing services jointly at the local level. Good examples from countries like Vietnam or Brazil where common service platforms have been established set good precedents to follow. We also have more and more agency specific regional service platforms which I think need to be transformed into service platforms for the entire system.

Element 3:

From the various reports of the High Level Committee on Management we know that harmonization of rules and procedures as well as putting the Management Accountability System in place are necessary but not enough. This is evidenced as many UNDG decisions have not been followed through. Demand is there from field operations but headquarters support needs to be scaled up. **Attitude, leadership of managers and sustained communication** at all levels is a key success factor for driving changes. This must be accompanied by the right incentives that reward staff working together. To say it in one sentence: implementation must start at the very top of each agency and consistently followed through at all levels.

Element 4:

Finally, **from our perspective as a member state**, we will use our partnership dialogue to help putting in place funding modalities which incentivize joint work and we will require that more UNDAFs integrate BOS. We will also use our Board memberships to influence system-wide integration efforts. A first step has been recently taken by issuing a decision in the UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women boards requesting Funds and Programmes to work together in the development of their new strategic plans.

Thank you very much for your attention.