

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO THE ECOSOC DIALOGUE RETREAT ON THE
LONGER-TERM POSITIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FRAMING THE PRIORITIES OF THE
UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM TO DELIVER ON THE 2030
AGENDA**

Greentree, 26 February 2016

**Your Excellency Ambassador Oh Joon, President of the
United Nations Economic and Social Council,**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Héctor Alejandro Palma Cerna,
ECOSOC Vice President,**

**Ms. Bettina Luise Rürup, Executive Director of the Friedrich-
Ebert-Stiftung foundation,**

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

**I am honoured to be here with this diverse group of
leaders. Thank you very much, Ms. Rürup, to the Friedrich-
Ebert-Stiftung foundation for hosting.**

**It is truly exciting to be here with old and new friends to
discuss the massive opportunities of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development – and how the United Nations
system can rise to this moment in history.**

**This Independent Team of Advisors reads like a Who's
Who of the international community. I am especially grateful
to see my old friends Juan Somavia and Klaus Töpfer
chairing. Both of them have left an indelible mark on the
United Nations. I am confident they will challenge all of us to
grapple with the toughest questions so we can have the most
meaningful outcome.**

I begin by thanking all of you for helping to bring us to this stage. We have an ambitious and universal set of Sustainable Development Goals. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda makes it financially viable. And the Paris Agreement on climate change showed our common resolve.

We all have great faith in this Organization's mission. Now we have to prove its ability to adapt. We just celebrated the 50th anniversary of UNDP. We have seen it change over the years, along with all other branches on the UN development tree. But we have to ask: Is this enough?

I would say no.

Reform attempts over the past decades could have gone further. Even the most ambitious and far-sighted pushes for change only had a limited impact. What we have seen could be called a “centrifugal disarticulation” – in other words entities often go their own way. The system still struggles to speak with one voice. Resources – both people and funds – are not marshalled as coherently and effectively as possible.

And let me be frank: Member States continue to call for reform but sometimes do not back their calls with the right decisions. We have seen how Member States can fail to adopt decisions that run counter to perceived interests.

Valuable efforts to address these challenges include Delivering as One. But ‘DaO’, as it is also known, is yesterday’s achievement. We must now treat it as today’s baseline and push on.

Our job is to answer the tough and central question of how to break free of constraints and create a United Nations development system that supports all peoples for the common good.

I see five key areas of focus: integration, systematization, financing, interconnection and optimization of the UN’s vast potential.

First, how to truly work together for the larger purpose.

Agenda 2030 calls for an integrated approach. That means we need an integrated United Nations system.

You all understand the integrated nature of threats in today's world.

That is why we have to think across sectors and work horizontally. We need better coordination and coherence – and, more fundamentally, we need an integrated approach backed by a system of governance that can provide a strategic vision.

The system must foster innovation, risk-taking and the ability to stay ahead of fast-moving events.

Second, how to create a UN development system that can support national partners at scale.

The reality is the United Nations system was not designed as a system. If you think of a quilt, there are geometric quilts where each piece is planned, or what are called crazy quilts where you put together the pieces you already have. The UN is more of a crazy quilt.

Many people have worked hard for coherence, with results, but we still have institutional challenges. These are deepened by the nature of funding, separate governance structures and different organizational and procedural arrangements.

To realize the promise of the 2030 Agenda, we have to break the financial and operational silos that block a system-wide and systematic approach. It is easier said than done – but it can be done. We need to think about incentives to make it happen across all of the areas that the Dialogue has identified.

And when incentives are not perfect, we need leadership at all levels to set the tone. The leadership I am speaking of is one that creates the space for system-wide perspectives and systematic approaches. It recognizes and rewards others who do the same.

Third, development financing is shifting and cooperation is moving from grants to other forms of mobilized capital.

The way development is funded is at the root of much of the fragmentation in the UN system. Donor funding is falling short. And there is an increase in voluntary and tightly earmarked resources. This hardens the walls of silos, encourages competition and ultimately leads to duplication and waste of resources.

We know there are a number of ways to improve the quality and predictability of funding and foster integration and shared results. I think here of multi-donor trust funds, thematic funds and other pooled funding mechanisms.

Fourth, Agenda 2030 calls for an integration of the peace, humanitarian and development pillars. The UN system has to correspond to this reality.

For years, I have been insisting that there can be no peace without development, no development without peace, and neither without human rights.

Now we have to break down the silos and make room for the many SDG targets that use peace, stability, human rights and effective governance as drivers of sustainable development.

This is urgent to address the world's many protracted crises. We have to end the era of short-term thinking and strengthen interconnections running across different parts of the United Nations.

There are inspiring examples of success. During the Ebola crisis, we saw how governance structures, funding practices and organizational arrangements aligned to respond to an emergency and help countries regain their footing – and realize sustainable progress.

Fifth, Agenda 2030 recognizes the need to shape markets, and to develop and enforce norms and standards in selected areas. We have to create a UN system that can operate in this manner.

That will require drawing out the UN's untapped absolute and comparative advantages. This Organization holds unique legitimacy, paired by neutrality, universal membership, global reach and convening authority that has vast potential to improve the very nature of the world we live in.

To realize this potential, we have to continue our lifesaving work to respond to crisis, provide food and shelter, build peace and resilience – and we need to also pair all that with an equal investment in prevention and pre-empting challenges that require UN deployment.

Excellencies and Friends,

We have a generational responsibility that we must seize with both hands.

I look forward to your ideas on how to make the UN system a true system that delivers a life of dignity for all people.

Thank you.