ECOSOC Dialogues on the Long term Positioning of the UN System

Final Australian statement

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Thank you Mr. President.

Firstly, let me express my thanks to you Mr President, and your leadership in guiding us through these dialogues, it is very strongly appreciated. Also to extend our thanks once again to the Independent Team of Advisors (ITA) for their work on the findings and conclusions paper and the papers that preceded it.

We note with appreciation your dedication and in-depth consideration of the issues as well your willingness to think outside the box on how to strengthen the UN Development System.

In addition to this statement we will also provide some written comments on this process for the consideration of the Secretariat.

Australia's intervention today will be provided in two parts – first reflecting on what these dialogues have provided to us and what this means for the upcoming Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Dialogues (QCPR) at the end of the year.

Purpose the long term dialogues and what key take-outs for the QCPR

Australia believes these dialogues have been very useful in helping to identify common ground across the membership and also within ITA.

We are in firm agreement with the ITA that the 2030 Agenda demands a new way of working of the UN Development System.

With a clear and ambitious agenda agreed by member states, it is absolutely right that the UN system reflects on its performance and the things that need to change to support implementation of this agenda.

As the ITA rightly notes, this is not just about the issues to be covered; it is also about the ways of working and how we do business together.

The 2030 Agenda is transformative in its universality, its integrated approach to development and its commitment to innovative financing and partnership models.

These are fundamental changes that demand more than just business as usual. They require a clear vision of the strategic priorities for the system.

In promoting this strategic vision, in our view there are some fundamental principles that should guide this process, as derived out of these long term positioning dialogues.

Firstly, the 2030 Agenda is fundamentally a nationally-led agenda which demands context-specific and flexible approaches that respond to national priorities.

Any reforms at headquarters must be designed to best support effectiveness and coherence at the country level and the objective to leave no one behind.

Full centralisation of strategy development and budgets may not be the best way to facilitate responsive and flexible national support.

Secondly, efficiency must be front and foremost in any reform considerations. The UN does not have unlimited resources.

This means building on existing processes, including the delivering-as-one agenda, and reducing bureaucracy.

Putting key operational decisions in the hands of member-states risks undermining the efficiency of the system and overreaching via micromanagement and failing to empower the UN system to respond to our shared agenda.

Way forward

In terms of taking this work forward, as a part of a universal and new strategic agenda, Australia would like to see an open, transparent and structured process to develop a zero draft of the QCPR.

We would like to see an informal process where all member states have the opportunity to input into the draft and chose a method of work to accommodate this.

We also acknowledge that the QCPR resolution itself is not the end of the process.

The QCPR should set out a roadmap to develop, embed and review reforms. There should be clear milestones which can be reported against over the 2030 Agenda timeframes, as noted in the intervention by our colleague from Indonesia.

Priority features of the QCPR

Australia would like to see the QCPR address some key weaknesses in the current UN system.

We note the ITA report was silent on many of these and would like to see them reflected as outcomes of this dialogue process.

Firstly, implementation of the 2030 Agenda demands a system which can recognise and respond to the interconnections not just between the sustainable development goals themselves, but between the development, peace and security and humanitarian pillars of the UN.

Development, humanitarian and peace are not separate agendas. They are part of the same continuum and challenge. As such, we must identify better mechanisms for coordination and collaboration.

Like our colleague from the Republic of Korea we welcome the discussions between ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission tomorrow and believe that considering how to reflect and invest in 'sustaining peace' will be key to our shared agenda.

The system should also be able to conduct and use joint analysis and risk assessments to inform country-level planning, including accounting for global trends that impact development. We also believe that supporting better data and data collection will be critical.

Secondly, with a universal mandate, the system must be able to deliver in all contexts, and particularly for Small Island Developing States. The delivering-as-one model has not yet progressed sufficiently to address the unique challenges of regions like the Pacific. Issues facing SIDS was very eloquently addressed by my colleague from the Maldives who noted the ongoing challenges of providing tailored national solutions, well calibrated support and the interconnectivity of services across diverse regions of small island nations.

Thirdly, we want to see practical solutions that make the UN work better.

This includes sustainable and innovative funding models that recognise the realities of earmarked funding, provide incentives for joint-programming, and facilitate partnerships with non-UN actors.

The Resident Coordinator role is fundamental to a coherence agenda and needs strengthening to ensure it can provide the leadership that we all expect it to deliver. It is clear from our discussions that the 'firewall' is an issue that must be considered and address – we know this issue is a complex one and we need to progress this issue in an inclusive and consider way.

Finally, gender equality and women's empowerment should be front and centre in work programs and institutional practices.

In closing, Australia, like many other countries here, recognises that the QCPR must be a process which must draw strength from respect for diversity but capable of looking to the future and implementing an new ambitious shared agenda together.

Thank you