

1997/59. Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 47/199 of 22 December 1992 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, as well as Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields and Council resolution 1996/42 of 26 July 1996,

Recalling also that, in order to fulfil its coordination role and in accordance with the policies formulated by the General Assembly, the Council should consider, on an annual basis in the operational activities segment, the overall financial picture of the United Nations funds and programmes, including the availability of resources, the priorities and programmes agreed upon in the funds and programmes, the adopted targets and further guidance on priorities, and should make recommendations thereon to the Assembly and the funds and programmes,

Reaffirming that operational activities for development within the United Nations system have a critical and unique role to play in enabling developing countries to continue to take a lead role in the management of their own development process and that the funds and programmes constitute important vehicles for advancing international development cooperation,

Noting with regret that, although significant progress has already been made in the restructuring and rationalization of the governance and functioning of the United Nations funds and programmes, there has not been, as part of the overall reform process, any substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis and that the consultations on prospective new modalities for financing have not reached a conclusion,

Expressing serious concern at the persistent insufficiency of resources for the operational development activities of the United Nations, in particular the decline in contributions to core resources,

Recognizing the importance of non-core resources as a supplement to core resources aimed at enhancing the capacity of the United Nations development system to deliver operational activities,

Stressing that the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities of the United Nations system should be, *inter alia*, their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism, as well as their ability to respond to the needs of developing countries in a flexible manner, and that the operational activities of the United Nations system are carried out for the benefit of the developing countries at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development,

Recognizing the need for priority allocation of scarce grant resources to programmes and projects in low-income countries, in particular the least developed among them,

Recognizing also that the United Nations development system should take into account the specific needs and requirements of the countries with economies in transition,

Noting with appreciation the sustained contributions of many donors and recipient countries to the operational activities for development in a spirit of partnership and the recently expressed willingness of some donors to increase their contribution to the funds and programmes,

Recognizing that capacity-building and its sustainability are an essential element for the operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level, which should be country-led and country-driven, bearing in mind the individual mandates and complementarities of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations development system,

Noting that General Assembly resolution 50/120, Council resolution 1996/42 and the present resolution provide an opportunity to review all aspects of operational activities,

Noting also that much remains to be done to achieve the goals set by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/120,

1. Takes note of the reports and notes by the Secretary-General²²⁸ and the reports of the United Nations funds and programmes;²²⁹

2. Strongly reaffirms that the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the operational activities of the United Nations system must be enhanced by, *inter alia*, a substantial increase in their funding on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries, as well as through the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 47/199, 48/162 of 20 December 1993, 50/120 and 50/227;

3. Urges the developed countries, in particular those countries whose overall performance is not commensurate with their capacity, taking into account established official development assistance targets, including targets established at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,²³⁰ and their current level of contribution, to increase substantially their official development assistance, including contributions to the operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

4. Stresses that other countries that are in a position to do so should strive to augment their assistance within the framework of development cooperation;

5. Recommends that the Executive Boards of the United Nations funds and programmes review and monitor their funding arrangements, as a matter of priority and within the context of their regular meetings, with a view to making funding more secure and predictable with respect to core resources and to meeting their funding targets, their programme objectives and the priorities and needs of programme countries, and calls upon the Executive Boards to take decisions on their own funding arrangements in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/227, in particular annex I, paragraph 12, and to report thereon to the Council at its substantive session of 1998;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to update proposals for funding modalities within the context of the efforts to provide United Nations operational activities with resources, in particular core resources, on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, taking into account that voluntary contributions from official sources should remain the main source for funding those activities;

7. Reaffirms that the objective of capacity-building and its sustainability should continue to be an essential part of the operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level, should be country-driven and situation-specific and should be based on the programme approach, to the extent possible, consistent with national development plans and priorities;

8. Notes the preparations for the impact evaluation of operational activities on capacity-building requested in paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 50/120, and invites the bodies of the United Nations system to participate actively and to support the ongoing study of the Secretariat;

9. Emphasizes that capacity-building should aim at strengthening national execution, in particular with regard to the institutional and human resource development of all relevant participants in the development process, with a view to enhancing local ownership and management of the development process, utilizing available local capacities and expertise;

10. Reaffirms that the United Nations development system should continue to work on developing a common understanding of the concept of capacity-building as it applies to the respective mandates of each organization, taking into account the experience acquired to date and the new and emerging requirements of programme countries;

11. Requests the Secretary-General, in the context of the preparations for the next triennial policy review, to report to the General Assembly, through the Council, on the implementation of Assembly resolution 50/120, Council resolution 1996/42 and the present resolution and on the progress made and the problems encountered and to make appropriate recommendations, including recommendations on delegating authority and decision-making to the field-level staff, establishing a more coordinated system-wide approach to monitoring and evaluation and strengthening the coordination of regional, subregional and field-level activities of the United Nations system.

*41st plenary meeting
24 July 1997*

²²⁸ A/52/155-E/1997/68 and Add.1, E/1997/65 and Add.1-4 and Corr.1, E/1997/78 and E/1997/89.

²²⁹ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 12 (E/1997/32/Rev.1), E/1997/34 and Add.1, E/1997/49, E/1997/59, E/1997/72, E/1997/79, E/1997/L.20, DP/1997/6, DP/1997/12 and DP/1997/22.

²³⁰ See Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 3-14 September 1990 (A/CONF.147/18), part one.