EXPLAINING INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

United Nations System Coordination: The Challenge of Working Together[1]

by Joachim Müller, World Metereological Organization[2]

Does UN system coordination work? The UN system includes a multitude of independent agencies, programs, and funds. The system-wide coherence initiative and the system-wide action on climate change were both intended to result in efficient collaboration. Details are provided on efforts to improve coherence at the country level through "Delivering as One," harmonize business practices, consolidate the UN architecture on gender issues, and streamline international environment governance. The Chief Executive Board (CEB) in its role as the coordinating mechanism for system-wide action is described, in particular the "One UN" support for the negotiations process to agree on a post-Kyoto climate deal. It is argued that the systemic barriers to UN system coordination are considerable. Agreements, if any, are reached at the lowest common denominator and result in considerable transaction costs. Rather than coordination, it appears the consolidation and merging of the fragmented UN mandates and structures is a precondition for efficient action.

The UN system is called upon to provide a wide spectrum of services ranging from humanitarian and refugee operations to the struggle against poverty, the implementation of development assistance in developing countries, disaster relief, standard setting, and the fight against HIV/AIDS. The expansion of peacekeeping operations is particularly striking. By mid-2009, the number of peacekeepers had risen to more than 100,000 involved in fifteen missions. At a second glance, however, the situation is less clear.

The expansion of the UN system has resulted in a fragmented network of independent and semi-independent entities, plagued with duplication and overlap. New organizations have emerged that compete with the UN for resources and mandates. The Group of Twenty has assumed an important role in policy formulation. In humanitarian assistance, the Red Cross and Red Crescent have increased their activities, and new organizations such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund) have established innovative, low-cost

mechanisms for delivering health-care assistance. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has taken the lead on aid efficiency. Even in peacekeeping, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has developed activities that had previously been the prerogative of the UN. Moreover, a new universe of nongovernmental organizations has emerged. Today, the UN is often only one actor among many, although an important one.

Improving efficiency through enhanced coordination of the fragmented UN system has been a recurring theme of almost every reform initiative. Does UN system coordination work? Should duplication and overlap instead be addressed through consolidation and merging? Indeed, it has been argued that "big" is not always more cost-effective than more tightly managed "small." Even a certain amount of conscious overlap and competition may well be better than bureaucracy and monopolistic behavior (Emmerij and Jolly, 2006). These issues will be examined in a review of two recent cases of UN system coordination: first, the system-wide coherence initiative to improve coherence at the country level through "Delivering as One," harmonize business practices, consolidate the UN architecture on gender issues, and streamline international environment governance; second, the system-wide action on climate change, implemented by the Chief Executive Board (CEB) to support the negotiations process for a post-Kyoto climate agreement. First, though, a short introduction to the complexity of the UN system will be given.

The Complexity of the UN System

The UN was established after World War II in 1945 to maintain peace and security by preventing war between countries, foster economic and social development, and promote respect for human rights. From modest beginnings, the UN has developed into a complex organization with a global presence. Membership has grown from 51 to 192 states, represented in three main governing bodies, namely the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the Security Council. The budget amounts to approximately USD 20 billion annually with a secretariat staff of 70,000 in 2010.[3]

In the first years after the UN's founding, its secretariat was decentralized from New York to regional centers in Geneva, Bangkok, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Vienna, and Santiago de Chile. New types of activities were developed, such as peacekeeping, with the first experience in the Middle East as early as 1949. The UN structure was further elaborated through new entities[4] and UN research and training institutes in the coming decades. This included the establishment of a number of programs and funds such as the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), which was set up in 1946.[5] Although under the authority of the General Assembly, those organizations have their own governing bodies, budgets, and secretariat.

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3. Of this total, USD 10 billion represents assessed contributions (USD 2 billion for the UN secretariat and USD 8 billion for peacekeeping operations) and USD 10 billion is voluntary contributions, the major share related to UN programs and funds. Of the 70,000 UN staff, 20,000 are with the UN secretariat, 20,000 in peacekeeping operations (in addition to approximately 100,000 military personnel provided by governments), and 30,000 with programs and funds.

4. Other UN entities include the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

5. Others include the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and World Food Program (WFP).

The UN is at the centre of the UN system, which now includes a complex network of fourteen specialized agencies,[6] working in areas such as health, education, food, labor, energy, aviation, international trade, intellectual property or postal administration. The system brings together organizations that were newly created in the post-war period, such as the FAO and UNESCO; those whose foundation predates this period, such as the ITU, established in 1865, and the ILO, in 1919; and others that were created more recently, such as the UNWTO, founded in 2003. In addition, the Bretton Woods organizations[7] are linked to the UN and deal with issues of finance and economy. The UN system organizations are independent, each with its governing body of countries and its secretariat of international civil servants.[8]

Efforts in UN System Coordination

As states from Africa and Asia joined the UN, development issues became increasingly important in the 1960s. This led to the establishment of the UNDP under the UN umbrella in 1965 to deliver development assistance. In the early 1970s, the UNDP was given the role of coordinating specialized agencies, in particular as a central funding facility, and ECOSOC was to be developed into a central forum for global priority setting on economic questions. The specialized agencies, however, rejected the curtailment of their independence and member countries showed very little interest in centralization. By the mid-1990s, the reliance of many UN entities on UNDP financing was replaced by donor funding being channeled directly to the agencies. The UNDP adapted to this change by moving from funding to direct implementation.

In the 1970s, the function of Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation was established to provide for visibility and coordination of development assistance. This was one of the main demands by developing countries.[9] At the insistence of the developed countries, the function was established with limited responsibility; more recently, it was eliminated again by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1993. He also forcefully consolidated a series of units in the economic and social domains. As demanded by the group of developed countries, the UNDP and UNICEF governing councils were replaced by smaller executive councils.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan focused on a number of coordination and consolidation initiatives in the second half of the 1990s. Executive committees were set up around five core-areas to coordinate the work of thirty departments, programs, and funds: peace and security, economic and social affairs, humanitarian affairs, and development (UNSG, 14 July 1997, A/51/950). Three departments were merged into one UN Department of Economic Social

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6. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations World Tourist Organization (UNWTO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Trade Organization (WTO).

7. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), and International Finance Corporation (IFC).

8. The budget of the UN's specialized agencies, excluding the World Bank and IMF, amounted to approximately USD 6 billion with a staff of 20,000. The World Bank and IMF account for an administrative budget of approximately USD 3 billion and a staff of 15,000. Overall, the total UN system, including the World Bank and IMF, has an annual budget of USD 29 billion and a staff of 105,000.

9. "Developing country" is a term generally used to describe a nation with a low level of material well-being. According to the UN Statistics Division, there is no established convention for the designation of "developing" and "developed" countries. Developing regions include Africa, the Americas without northern North America (the Caribbean, Central America, and South America), Asia without Japan, and Oceania without Australia and New Zealand. Developed regions include northern North America, Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Israel is treated as a developed country, countries from the former Yugoslavia as developing countries, and countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States in Europe are not included under either developed or developing regions.

Affairs (UN-DESA); Vienna-based activities were consolidated into the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. In September 1999, while the Geneva-based human rights programs were merged into a single Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Moreover, the network of UN information centers was rationalized around regional hubs, starting with Western Europe, where nine individual centers were replaced by a regional office in Brussels. Major efforts were dedicated to enhancing coordination at the country level for the delivery of development assistance. Finally, an unprecedented level of coordination within the UN system, the donor community, and the developing countries was generated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were approved by the UN Summit in September 2000. The MDGs represented a major commitment to achieve development and eradicate poverty.

Interagency Coordination Machinery

With the creation of the complex UN system of agencies, programs, and funds, new mechanisms were established to facilitate coordination. There are now over 150 interagency bodies dealing with statistics, demographic estimates, nutrition, drug control or development assistance. Central to the system is the Chief Executive Board (CEB), which brings together thirty executive heads of the organizations of the UN system under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General.[10] The CEB holds two regular sessions each year to review contemporary political developments, issue joint statements on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions, and collaborate on the preparation of and follow-up on global conferences. The board is supported by a CEB secretariat located in New York and Geneva.

The CEB meetings are prepared by the three committees. The High-level Committee on Program (HLCP), composed of senior program managers, is concerned with the promotion of global policies and program coherence. HLCP is supported by a number of interagency groups.[11] The High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) composed of senior administrative managers, concerned with the harmonization of business practices across the UN system and maintaining dialogue with staff representatives. HLCM includes a number of interagency groups.[12] The Procurement Network, for example, brings together a total of ninety-two organizations.

Finally, the UN Development Group (UNDG) oversees the country operations and supports the 130 Resident Coordinators (RC) as representatives of the UN system and leaders of the UN Country Teams (UNCT). The UNCTs include representatives of all UN entities that are locally active. The group monitors the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCRP) of Operational Activities for Development of the UN Systems, which is governed by the General Assembly and ECOSOC and supports the achievement of the MDGs. The UNDG

10. Other interagency bodies include, for example, the Environment Management Group (EMG), Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA), Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS), Inter-agency Security Management Network (IASMN), International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), Joint UN Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), Policy Committee, UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), UN Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG), UN Global Compact, UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), and Representatives of Internal Audit Services of UN Entities and Multilateral Institutions (RIAS).

11. Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA), Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for Humanitarian Affairs, Standing Committee on Nutrition of the UN System (SCN), UN Communications Group (UNCG), UN-Energy, and UN-Oceans.

12. Finance and Budget Network, Human Resources Network, Information, Communication and Technology Network, Legal Network, and Procurement Network.

was integrated into the CEB structure as the third pillar in 2008. The membership[13] of the UNDG has expanded considerably, and it now conducts activities worth over USD 16 billion annually in development assistance. The UNDG is chaired by the Administrator of the UNDP and works through a number of standing interagency working groups.[14] It is supported by the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO), which is funded and administered by the UNDP. DOCO provides the link between UNDG discussions at headquarters and the work at the country level. The management of the RC system and the UNCTs is anchored in DOCO.

What does interagency coordination cost? It is difficult to calculate a total cost, but a number of expenditure categories can be identified. The cost of the RC system amounts to approximately USD 75 million annually. There is the jointly funded CEB secretariat located in New York and Geneva, which accounts for approximately USD 3 million per annum. Support services provided by organizations hosting interagency committees and task forces are more difficult to estimate. This also refers to staff and travel costs for participating in interagency meetings. Over the years, there have been a number of efforts to curtail the proliferation of the interagency mechanisms and cut costs. Such efforts include the elimination of working groups, replacing face-to-face meetings by video conferences, delegating authority for decision-making to sub-machinery, establishing a focused agenda of issues, and reducing the layers of meetings by replacing the standing committees by task forces of experts. Such efforts have not always been successful. In particular, proposals to reduce the number of meetings have encountered resistance. Indeed, some critics have commented on the proliferation of "coordinocrats" (Mezzalama et al., 1999, para. 14).

System-Wide Coherence Initiative

The World Summit in September 2005 set out to take stock of the implementation of the MDGs and to develop a new vision of collective security in the wake of the military action in Iraq, which left the UN profoundly shaken. Indeed, the summit had aimed to approve a grand bargain that would balance development, security, human rights, and management issues. Although this was not achieved, the summit (UNGA, 16 September 2005, A/RES/60/1) recognized, albeit mainly symbolically, an international "responsibility to protect" populations from genocide. In addition, a number of institutional changes were approved such as replacing the Commission on Human Rights by the Human Rights Council, establishing a new Peacebuilding Commission and enhancing the oversight function.

With regard to coordination, the summit agreed to strengthen ECOSOC with the introduction of annual ministerial meetings to monitor the implementation of development goals, including the MDGs. Every two years, the ministerial meeting was to serve as a high-ranking

13. FAO, IFAD, ILO, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UN Department of Economic Social Affairs (UN-DESA), UN Department of Public Information (UN-DPI), UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE), UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC), UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), UNEP, UNESCO, UNFIP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFEM, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), UN Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (UN-ODSG), UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), UNODC, UNOPS, Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (UN-OSAA), UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Children and Armed Conflicts (UN-SRSG/CAC), UNWTO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, and World Bank.

14. Fiduciary Management Oversight Group (FMOG), UNDG-ECHA Working Group on Transition (WG-T), Working Group on Country Office Business Operations (WG-COBO), Working Group on Joint Funding, Financial and Audit Issues (WG-JFFAI), Working Group on Programming Issues (WG-PI), and Working Group on Resident Coordinator System Issues (WG-RCSI).

"Forum for Development Cooperation," engage in a dialogue on new trends, and promote synergy among providers of development assistance. In addition, the summit pledged (UNGA, 16 September 2005, A/RES/60/1, paras. 168 and 169) to support "stronger system-wide coherence." In the lead-up to the preparations for the summit, the CEB had provided a report entitled "One United Nations: Catalyst for Progress and Change." (UN CEB, 2005) The report described how UN system organizations were working together to assist countries in achieving the MDGs and how this was contributing to greater coherence in the UN system's work. It was argued that much more needed to be done to build "One UN" by overcoming the fragmentation inherent in system structures.

The summit took up the issue of system-wide coherence largely at the request of the developed countries, especially the European countries, which were promoting rapid changes in the development field. Indeed, the UN's share of official development assistance (ODA) of USD 100 billion annually had fallen to about 15 percent. This happened at a time when substantial increases in donor commitments and debt relief were pledged at the Group of 8 (G8) meeting at Gleneagles in July 2005. Major donors were convinced the fragmented UN system was not properly structured to process development funds and tasked the Secretary-General to formulate new institutional proposals aimed at "a more effective, efficient, coherent, coordinated, and better-performing UN country presence." In addition, the Secretary-General was asked to prepare proposals for "more tightly managed entities" referring essentially to a number of loosely related initiatives on which no agreement could be reached during the summit. This included the French-supported proposal to create a new world environment organization by consolidating existing institutions and to mainstream policy themes such as sustainable development, gender, and human rights.

In response, the Secretary-General established the "High-Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and Environment" in February 2006 to prepare new reform proposals for a fundamental restructuring by September 2006—a very ambitious deadline. The panel comprised fifteen members; the co-chairs were Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of Pakistan, Prime Minister Luísa Dias Diogo of Mozambique, and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway.[15]

In February 2006, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Agnes van Ardenne, argued that it did not make sense to carve up development problems among thirty-eight UN organizations. The result was too much overlap and too little efficiency, too little action and too much talk. As part of a massive overhaul, she suggested at least a third of the UN organizations should be shut down with the remainder merged into large entities. The Netherlands is the main contributor to the UNDP budget. Van Ardenne argued "the UN's last best hope these days for realizing its full potential is nothing short of radical and rapid reform" (Washington Times, 2006).

Soon after its inception, the panel was approached by a group of European countries and Canada (G13).[16] The group considered the panel should assess the comparative advantages of

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15. The other panel members were Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, Mohamed T. El-Ashry of Egypt, Robert Greenhill of Canada, Ruth Jacoby of Sweden, Ricardo Lagos of Chile, Louis Michel of Belgium, Benjamin W. Mkapa of Tanzania, Jean-Michel Severino of France, Josette S. Shiner of the United States, Keizo Takemi of Japan, and ex officio members Kemal Dervis of Turkey as Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and Lennart Båge of Sweden as Chair of the High-level Committee on Program (HLCP).
16. Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The United States did not focus on the coherence process.

the UN, the global funds, bilateral donors, and multilateral development banks, with a view to identifying the areas in which the UN played a value-added role and those that could be better performed by non-UN actors. On that basis, the panel could consider streamlining the fragmented organizational structure at the country level and the governance functions, among other things by eliminating duplication between the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the executive boards of programs and funds, the governing bodies of specialized agencies, and the interagency mechanisms. The G13 stressed the key aim of the exercise should be to deepen and accelerate ongoing country-level reform. The need to improve the fragmented gender architecture of the UN was specifically mentioned. The G13 countries had well anticipated the creation of the panel, and their position could be summarized with the following demands: 1) Merge the UN entities into three main organizations for development, humanitarian affairs, and the environment; 2) Integrate UNCTAD into either the WTO or the UNDP; 3) Establish a World Environment Organization by merging UNEP, the multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), UN-HABITAT, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF); 4) Group the UN agencies together at the country level according to "three ones" principle: one UN team, under one single RC coordinator, with one UN program. 5) Limit UN development work to poorer countries, "niche" areas such as conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, and gender, and specialized areas such as health and food, while leaving issues such as development strategies, trade, finance, and macroeconomic policy to the WTO, World Bank, and IMF. 6) Finally, it was suggested that the panel could assess the implementation of the OECD Paris Declaration on "aid effectiveness" for the UN system, stating all UN organizations should implement the related action plan.

Paris Declaration on "Aid Effectiveness"
The concept of "aid effectiveness" originated in the Monterrey Consensus of 2002, which described a new partnership model among donor and recipient countries for the implementation of ODA. The issue was taken up by the OECD, a group of thirty developed countries that also tracks and assesses the effectiveness of ODA. In March 2005, the Paris Declaration was adopted by the OECD, and sixty developing countries and transition economies laid down the following five principles:

1) Ownership: Recipients exercise leadership over their development strategies and coordinate development actions.
2) Alignment: Donors base their support on recipients' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures.
3) Harmonization: Donors coordinate their development work among themselves to avoid duplication and high transaction costs for poor countries.
4) Managing for results: Donors and recipients focus more on the end result of aid, the tangible difference it makes in poor people's lives.
5) Mutual accountability: Donors and recipients account more transparently to each other for their use of aid funds and to their citizens and parliaments for the impact of their aid.
     A new aid paradigm was evolving in contrast to the UN model of agency execution, associated with donor control and limited leadership and accountability by recipients. The

Paris Declaration on "aid effectiveness" also attracted criticism by a number of developing countries and nongovernmental organizations. The alignment was seen as an unequal and donor-directed policy dialogue, focusing on the policy conditions and benchmarks of World Bank and IMF policies such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Sector-wide Programs (SWAPs). This included the condition of liberalizing the recipients' procurement systems regardless of national preferences, which was seen as contradicting the goal of ownership. Critics also censured the fact that compliance tests were externally imposed and recipients were subject to penalties in case of noncompliance. Nevertheless, 115 countries had endorsed the Paris Declaration by December 2007. In addition, the aid landscape was changing. New donor countries, such as China and India, and private funding sources, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, were becoming increasingly important.

While the UN system was struggling to take on board the principles of "aid effectiveness," new organizations were emerging outside the UN system that embedded the new principles. They included the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund), established in 2002, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI Alliance), created in 2000, both set up with an emphasis on a streamlined, less bureaucratic structure and processes with wide stakeholder involvement. The Global Fund quickly became the main source for international health financing, with funding of USD 21 billion by 2008, while GAVI has received a total of USD 3 billion in funding from government and private sources for immunizing children in developing countries. Those organizations became increasingly important and were rightly perceived by the UN system as a competitive threat.

Report of the High-Level Panel

The High-Level Panel submitted its report "Delivering as One" (UNGA, 20 November 2006, A/61/583) in November 2006 and proposed a set of recommendations aimed at making the UN "greater than the sum of its parts." The rationale for UN reform was seen as stemming from two basic flaws: the systemic fragmentation of the UN system, and the lack of recipient country ownership. A reformed UN, in turn, could become a driver in advancing the MDGs and could capture the increases in development resources that were committed in 2005. Aware of the strong opposition, the panel did not propose outright mergers of UN entities, but instead focused on enhancing system-wide coherence and coordination. Specifically, the panel recommended forty-eight reform initiatives, which encompassed a unified and coherent UN structure at the country level under the concept of "Delivering as One." These were to be matched by more coherent governance, funding, and management arrangements at the centeer, including simplifying and harmonizing business practices. Other proposals covered the streamlining of international environment governance (IEG) and gender architecture.

It took until April 2007 for the panel's report to be taken up by the General Assembly. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his new team had taken over in early 2007 and needed some time to work out positions and follow up on proposals. The assembly established a Working Group on Coherence and decided to group the recommendations of the panel into eight thematic categories for further consideration. Each cluster would be discussed separately, but the final decisions would be taken jointly.

Most of the European countries and Canada had given a ringing endorsement to the panel's recommendations. In contrast, the developing countries[17] were taken aback by the speed of the panel's initiative and initially struggled to put together their position. Although they appreciated the fact that the panel avoided concrete proposals to merge existing institutions, they again voiced a number of critical positions previously put forward in reform discussions. This included their concern that the coherence initiative would essentially constitute a cost-cutting exercise and lead to an erosion of the influence of developing countries. Subsequently, there was limited follow-up on a number of proposals that were seen as introducing unacceptable conditions on development assistance, such as the proposed mainstreaming of human rights or sustainable development concerns. This also had possible implications for national prerogatives, such as the extension of the UNHCR's mandate to deal with internally displaced persons (IDPs), the extension of the UNDP's mandate to coordinate early recovery efforts following a humanitarian crisis, and the establishment of lead organizations for the coordination between humanitarian agencies. Lack of support from the developed countries limited progress on funding issues, such as compliance with international funding commitments, the establishment of an MDG funding mechanism, or support for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). In the following sections, the main clusters under the system-wide coherence initiative are examined.

Delivering as One

Ongoing reforms at the country level, such as the 1997 initiative or the TCRP process, which had gradually been implemented in recent years, were not considered sufficient. Specifically, the UN representative at the country level, the Resident Coordinator (RC), had essentially no authority over most UN entities represented on the UN Country Team (UNCT). The UNCT worked through the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which is essentially a collective planning tool. While the UNDAF had brought a degree of coherence to the system, it could not address the high transaction costs for recipient organizations, especially where several agencies are supporting the same partner to achieve a shared result. This was emphasized by the lack of harmonized funding and planning cycles, different financial procedures, the variations in cost recovery regimes, different approaches to delegation of authority at the headquarters and country levels, and differing reporting requirements. Closer coordination during implementation was to be achieved through the mechanism of Joint Programs (JPs). JPs were essentially restricted to coordination between three UN funds and programs (UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA), which had short program periods and small budgets, with high transaction costs associated with integrated work plans, joint monitoring frameworks and missions, and coordination meetings.

The panel proposed to consolidate all UN program activities at the country level under the slogan of "One UN," with "One Leader," "One Program," "One Budget," and, where

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17. The developing countries were acting in the UN coherence negotiations through the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), which includes the Group of 77 (G77) and China as well as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The G77 is a loose coalition of 130 developing states in the UN, approximately two-thirds of the UN membership, which enhances their joint negotiating capacity on international economic issues. The NAM is a group of 118 states, most of which are also members of the G77, not formally aligned with any major power bloc. The NAM's main focus is opposing foreign occupation, interference in internal affairs, and aggressive unilateral measures. The NAM recently also addressed the challenges of inequality, economic underdevelopment, poverty, and social injustice as growing threats to peace and security.

appropriate, "One Office." At the outset, the panel's recommendations were toned down somewhat. Initially, the panel had recommended the slogan "One UN," which could project an intention to merge organizations and mandates. Since this was considered misleading, the slogan was replaced by "Delivering as One" to emphasize the intent of delivering together, while maintaining distinct identities and structures.

Under the concept of "One Leader," the RC's role was to be strengthened to include leading the UNCT and managing the "One Program." The "One Program" was to be accommodated within the UNDAF process but would be more ambitious. The panel had initially proposed a unified "One Budget," which would merge the resources of all UN entities operating in a given country. Since UN entities were not prepared to commit their resources to a common country-specific budget, the concept was transformed into a softer goal by establishing "One Budgetary Framework." This was to be agreed on by the UNCT and describe the resources available to and required by each organization to support the "One Program." A possible funding gap to support "One Program" was to be bridged by a local coherence fund, the "One Fund," supported from additional unearmarked contributions. With the flexibility introduced by unearmarked resources, program development would be driven by strategic objectives and not by the availability of earmarked contributions. Ownership of the RC system was to change from the UN/UNDP to the UN system through the UNDG. Moreover, the UNDP would withdraw from sector-focused work being done by other UN organizations and instead focus its operational work on strengthening coherence at the country level. Finally, under the 1997 country-level reform, the UN programs and funds had been co-located in UN houses in over sixty countries. This was to be further developed under the "One Office" concept into Joint Offices for the UN system as a whole, which would share common support services and present a unified UN system image at the country level.

Discussion in the General Assembly revealed deep-seated differences. Donor countries, in particular the European Union, emphasized that their support was based on the Paris Declaration on "aid effectiveness." Whereas developing countries had accepted the new partnership arrangement in the OECD context, they were reluctant to apply similar principles to the UN. The consolidation of UN programs into a single voice at the national level was seen as impinging upon their freedom to work with the partner of their choice and as a pretext to reduce development funding. Concern was expressed about possible restrictions in determining national development priorities and the introduction of unacceptable conditions on development assistance. It was argued that there was no "one-size-fits-all" solution, and the real key issue was the quantity, quality, and predictability of resources for development assistance. However, there were differences within the group of developing countries. While some larger countries had the capacity to make the best of the fragmented UN system, some of the smaller recipient countries frequently complained about the burdensome procedures necessary to deal with the decentralized UN system—with as many as thirty or forty entities.

In accordance with the recommendations of the panel, the Secretary-General had established eight pilot projects in early 2007 involving the volunteer countries Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay, and Vietnam. The UNDG was mandated to support the pilot projects and a Program and Management Coordination Group of

participating agencies was set up to maintain central oversight and guidance. The UN-DOCO supported the UNDG and the pilot countries. At the country level, Joint Steering Committees were established to ensure interaction among the government, RC, and UNCT and to develop the implementation modalities. Implementation had got off to a rocky start, and the pilot projects had largely been a "journey without maps." The support provided by the UNDG and UN-DOCO was not guided by a comprehensive conceptual framework but was very much a case of learning by doing. Some of the challenges, such as the establishment of the "One Budgetary Framework," the "One Fund," or new operating principles for RCs and UNCTs, were addressed ad hoc by means of numerous support missions, meetings, and workshops.

Despite the critical comments by developing countries in the General Assembly, the "Developing as One" projects were growing in popularity, with some thirty small- and medium-sized countries interested in joining as pilot countries. This created a vocal group among the developing countries in support of the initiative. Several government and UN system representatives now considered the process irreversible. Final conclusions were to be reached after the pilot projects were evaluated in 2010. In addition, some warnings were expressed. The Deputy Secretary-General suggested that if the UN failed to endorse the pilot project, the cost would need to be borne by the entire UN system. There were reported concerns that developing countries felt pressured into endorsing the pilot projects prematurely. By mid-2010, the pilot stage would be completed. Toward the end of 2009, the General Assembly requested that an independent evaluation of pilot projects be undertaken, based on which a framework for the future could be articulated (United Nations, 2009b). An initial assessment had been received from the 2007 and 2008 stocktaking exercise (UNDG, 2009) in which the pilot governments provided their interim feedback, complemented by the UNCTs and UN agencies. In addition, the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), an interagency mechanism, prepared a process evaluation known as the 2008 synthesis report (UN CEB, 15 September 2008, CEB/2008/HLCP-XVI/CRP.2).

Initial Assessment of "Delivering as One"

The initial assessments of the pilot projects painted a sobering picture. Progress was reported in terms of increasing national ownership and better aligning external assistance with national priorities. It was noted that the pilot projects had enhanced the countries' access to the UN system, including those of nonresident agencies, and participation by civil society groups was increasing. However, it was also emphasized that these trends had already manifested themselves under the UNDAF process before the start of the pilot projects and might merely have been reinforced.

The "One Leader" concept encountered considerable difficulties. The RCs had no authority over agency resources and staff, who remained primarily accountable to their own organizations. The lack of empowerment of the RCs made managing extremely difficult. The challenge grew exponentially because of the centralized decision-making in several UN organizations, and it was argued that headquarters would need to give their representatives on the UNCTs more flexibility. The RCs needed proper incentives to work for the whole UN system. The functions of RC and UNDP Country Director were initially performed by the

same person. The potential conflict of interest was then addressed by establishing a "firewall" between the two functions, including the appointment of separate UNDP Country Directors. The UNDP failed to more visibly demonstrate its commitment to withdraw from areas that fell within the mandates of the specialized agencies and to focus on the coordination of the system. Other problematic issues concerned the strengthening of the RC's accountability to the country's government.

The "One Program" tools had been introduced without necessarily replacing the existing UNDAF processes, and there was a need to integrate key components of both. Contrary to the initial intentions, UN organizations were now submitting multiple annual reports, and the wide variety of formats required by agency headquarters did not facilitate an easy transfer of information into common reporting and was time-consuming for government counterparts and UN system staff. A key conclusion of the initial assessments was that the programming cycle should be simplified and the number of required documents reduced. With regard to RC/UNCT-government interactions, pilot projects were not synchronized with the government budget cycle. Many line ministries were not meaningfully involved, and the demand for greater centralization ran counter to the trend toward decentralization of public administration in some developing countries. Implementation largely relied on UN executing authority, which in most cases included components of direct execution. The diverse business practices among UN organizations and the rigidity of rules and regulations made this business model slow and potentially costly. Indeed, the pilot projects struggled to increase the use of national systems in the areas of procurement, accounting, monitoring, and evaluation, as anticipated under the principles of "aid effectiveness." This would require a revision of the regulations of the individual agencies, subject to approval by the respective governing bodies, to allow for the use of national systems. Finally, the pilot projects had put an additional strain on the host governments, and the initial assessments indicated the maintenance of their continuing commitment to be a key challenge.

The "One Budgetary Framework" usually exceeded the financial resources indicated in the UNDAF and, therefore, carried the promise of a substantial increase. This partly explained the attraction of "Delivering as One" for the pilot countries. In most cases, the resources provided by the UN system did not exceed 50 percent of total funding requirements. Donors showed a lack of interest in closing the funding gap by providing unearmarked contributions to the "One Fund," and it was not clear that the new mechanism had made a significant impact. Due to the limited funding, the UNCTs later allowed for earmarking contributions, compromising the initial intention to emphasize guidance by strategic objectives. Some line ministries expressed a concern that centralization would sever their traditional links to the specialized agencies that provided budget support. There was increasing awareness that operational activities should also continue outside "One Program" in order to allow access to funding, as in the case of the WHO, which is not principally a development agency.

On "One Office," most pilot countries had not made much progress in co-locating all resident agencies in common premises. This was achieved only in Cape Verde in 2006—well before the pilot project started. Combined physical locations sometimes increased the administrative costs of programs. Where the host government had previously provided

office space for a specific program, the combining of office spaces pushed the UN into the commercial real estate market.

No estimates of additional costs or potential savings were provided in the initial assessments. The enhanced centralization at the country level may well have reduced the burden of working with government counterparts and UN donors. Higher transaction costs were most likely generated by the countless coordination meetings at the country and headquarters levels, as well as the increase in travel. This related in particular to the work of the local Joint Steering Committees, which required increased staff time beyond that of typical UNDAF groups. Staff surveys indicated that the additional workload related to the pilot projects was unsustainable.

Business Practices

Closely linked to the "Delivering as One" approach was the panel's recommendation that business practices be upgraded and harmonized across the UN system; these business processes included procurement, information and communication technology, budgeting, finance, and staff management. The issue was seen as a major obstacle to the cohesiveness of the UNCTs. For example, with regard to staff management, agencies had different grading policies (similar functions with different ranking), promotion guidelines, retrenchment policies, contract types, entitlements, recruitment processes, reporting lines, grievance resolution processes, approaches to working hours, and work-life balance issues.

The simplification and harmonization of business practices was entrusted to the HLCM, which would work on business operations at the headquarters level, and to the UNDG at the pilot project level. Each of the pilot projects was to take a lead in specific areas of business operations. The donor countries supported the approach, but the developing countries took a critical view. They emphasized the HLCM was not a policy-making body, and the reform of business practices should only be discussed by countries represented on the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

In 2007, the HLCM developed a plan of action through an interagency steering group. The focus was on the needs at the country level that required harmonization at the central level. Its scope was limited to issues within the purview of Executive Heads. In the area of staff management, it proposed carrying out a comparative review of UN system organizations' staff regulations and rules. This was expected to lead to a progressive harmonization of performance evaluation systems, employment arrangements, and management practices. The focus was on improving staff mobility, reward systems, investment in training, and career development, including the establishment of a senior management leadership program. On financial and budget issues, a training project was proposed to support and ensure consistency in the implementation of the new International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) across the UN system. A further study would analyze the impact of IPSAS on budgeting practices and develop a capital budgeting solution for the UN system. Other initiatives included the establishment of common cost recovery policies and the enhancement of the HLCM system-wide financial statistics database. Finally, a feasibility study was proposed regarding the putting in place of a common treasury service. On information technology, most proposals addressed knowledge sharing within three Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platforms (Oracle, Peoplesoft, and SAP). This included

projects to harmonize ERP operational processes, the development of regional interagency shared service centers, the development of a UN system portal, the development of common costing approaches for ICT services, the consolidation of UN data centers, the harmonization of ICT business practices through the use of international standards, and a feasibility study for a UN system directory. On procurement, projects included the development of a common framework for dealing with suspect vendors and supporting field office procurement and increased access for suppliers from developing countries.

The plan largely represented "old wine in new glasses" (UN CEB, 23 September 2008, CEB/2008/HLCM/10). Some of the proposed projects had previously been part of the HLCM's program of work or part of UN reform initiatives and did not necessarily constitute new initiatives. The overall resource requirements for the HLCM plan were estimated at USD 21.7 million, expected to be financed through voluntary contributions from donor countries. The funding covered feasibility studies and pilot work. The goal was to have some of the projects completed in as little as nine months, with the most complex ones taking two to three years. Follow-up would subsequently be mainstreamed into the work of the UN system organizations. For each project, there was to be a lead agency supported by a working group of interested organizations. Central oversight for the overall plan would be with the CEB secretariat.

The plan of action was approved by the HLCM in September 2007 and endorsed by the CEB in April 2008. In June 2008, the General Assembly was briefed. The plan was circulated for funding to potential donors for funding in October 2008 and, given the support that potential donor countries had expressed for the initiative, a positive reaction was expected. The response was disappointing. Only one small contribution of USD 270,000 was received from New Zealand in late December 2008 to fund a project on suspect vendors. Due to the lack of funding, very little progress was achieved in harmonizing business practices. Implementation of some measures began in early 2009 on the basis of internal resources earmarked by UN organizations.

Governance and Institutional Reform

The panel had proposed the establishment of three new institutions. The UN Sustainable Development Board was to report to ECOSOC and would be established by merging the boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP. The board would oversee the "Delivering as One" country program and drive coordination between specialized agencies, funds, and programs. The board would be serviced by the UN Development Policy and Operations Group, a new interagency mechanism, established within the CEB and subsumes the existing UNDG and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA). The group was to coordinate the work of UN system entities and manage a new system-wide funding device for the allocation of voluntary contributions to country programs. Finally, a new Global Leaders' Forum (L27) was to be established, comprising the heads of state of half of the ECOSOC members. Convened annually, it would have a broader thematic mandate and would provide international leadership in the development area. The L27 was seen as a counter-model to the exclusive club of the G8 and the G20.

The developing countries forcefully rejected the recommendations. The new board and the new forum were considered as further weakening ECOSOC, UNCTAD, and the General

Assembly. As gatekeeper, the board would reduce the scope for UN system entities to provide independent economic policy advice to country authorities. The UN system would be left with security, humanitarian, and environmental issues, while the World Bank and the IMF would have a monopoly over economic matters. Rather than limiting the UN system to a secondary role and "niche issues," the developing countries suggested the UN system should assert its leadership over the World Bank and IMF, which were considered to be dominated by the developed countries.

In response to the adamant position of the developing countries, all key governance proposals were dropped. Instead, the secretariat developed a new set of modest proposals, such as the creation of a central repository of information on UN operational activities for development, the merging of ECOSOC's Operational Activities Segment with its Coordination Segment, the creation of an Advisory Group composed of ECOSOC members, consultations between ECOSOC and interagency mechanisms, the strengthening of relationships between the World Bank/IMF and the UN system, and the creation of a system-wide standing capacity on evaluation to be funded by the agencies of the UN system. With regard to the latter, no progress was forthcoming as the agencies were not prepared to fund a new interagency body and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) argued that system-wide evaluation was already part of its mandate.

Discussion at the General Assembly revealed that developing countries were reluctant to pursue even these modest reforms. Concern was expressed about the proposal to merge the operational activities and coordination segments, due to their different natures. It was argued that the proposed ECOSOC advisory group might restrict the participation of the majority of ECOSOC members in the legislative process. With regard to interagency mechanisms such as the CEB and UNDG, it was considered imperative that they be more accountable to intergovernmental bodies. The creation of a central repository of information on UN operational activities should not result in monitoring recipient countries and politicizing development assistance. Many states also expressed a desire to avoid duplication, referring primarily to the proposed new system-wide evaluation unit. Little was achieved by the end of 2009. The General Assembly cautioned about the establishment of new mechanisms and emphasized the need to focus on enhancing existing intergovernmental bodies. In addition, the Secretary-General was requested to propose modalities for the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism.

Gender

The panel had proposed to establish a single, strong UN organization to deal with gender issues by consolidating the four existing UN entities with a total of 278 staff members and an annual budget of USD 45 million, including the UN Development Fund for Women (UNI-FEM), the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI), the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), and the International Institute for Research and Training for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The new organization should be ambitiously funded and headed by a new Executive Director with the rank of Under-Secretary-General. The gender issue was largely promoted by the Scandinavian countries, the European Union, and the CANZ group (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Soon after the panel report was

issued, the Secretary-General requested the General Assembly to establish the new top posi-tion and charge the incumbent with the tasks of consolidating and strengthening the UN gender architecture. This was rejected by the developing countries, which insisted on not proceeding in-dependently of the overall process of reforming UN coherence. Indeed, the developing countries, in particular Pakistan, Colombia, India, and China, took a cautious view, expressing concern that the issue would be another way of imposing more conditions on development funding. Critical positions were also voiced by Russia and Japan, which questioned the costs involved.

The debate lasted until March 2009, when, after almost three years of intensive consultations, the Secretary-General presented four options. Option One involved no structural changes but increased funding for the four existing entities. Under Option Two, those entities would be consolidated into a single department but without a country-level presence. Option Three envisaged the creation of a fund or program with a limited country-level presence and limited autonomy. Option Four was the composite model. This maximum option would have an extensive country-level presence; six UN regional hub locations were proposed as part of the composite model, including Bangkok, Beirut, Bratislava, Dakar, Johannesburg, and Panama City. This would provide for synergy between the policy and normative functions at headquarters and the operational activities at the country level. The new entity would have maximum autonomy for financing, procurement, and recruitment. Staffing would amount to 1,049 persons, and the annual budget would be USD 125 million. With regard to governance, it was suggested that either a new Executive Board should be established or an existing one should be used, such as the UNDP/UNFPA or the UNICEF Executive Board.

The maximum composite model received strong support from the Secretary-General and the NGO community. The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR), an international coalition of over three hundred women's organizations and human rights groups in more than fifty countries, launched an effective campaign in support of a strong gender organization with resources of USD 1 billion annually and a mandate to promote and hold the UN system accountable for gender mainstreaming.

By the end of 2009, there was close to universal agreement in the General Assembly that a composite model should be pursued and a call for immediate action was expressed. Developing countries appreciated the anticipated budget increase, which would go primarily to establishing regional offices. The anticipated budget growth also helped to overcome resistance in the four separate secretariats subject to structural consolidation. Political concern still needed to be addressed by providing for tied policy control through the governing arrangement. This was to ensure that the new organization would not be in a position to pursue controversial policies, in particular in developing countries. With this in mind, the Secretary-General was asked to submit a proposal for the executive board of the new organization, a mission statement, and further details on the organizational arrangements, including an organizational chart and the funding arrangement.

Environment

UN system activities in the environmental field account for approximately USD 2 billion in annual expenditure and are characterized by institutional fragmentation. This includes the

UN Environment Program (UNEP), established in 1972 as a relatively weak coordinating body, reporting to the General Assembly through ECOSOC. Also reporting to ECOSOC is the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), mandated with the integration of environment and development issues. Interagency coordination is organized in the Environmental Management Group (EMG), which is chaired by UNEP and reports to the UNEP Executive Council. Among the forty-four organizations[18] in the EMG, thirty-one are active in the area of water, twenty-nine in chemicals, and twenty-six in climate change. The fragmentation sometimes delineates organizations with a different focus. With regard to chemicals, for example, the WHO is concerned with how chemicals affect human health, the ILO protects the rights of workers who interact with chemicals, while the IMO is engaged in preventing chemical waste from entering the ocean. The implementation of operational environmental activities at the national level is coordinated through the UNDG and the UNCTs. Major international financial mechanisms include the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The GEF is managed by the World Bank, UNEP, and UNDP and accounts for approximately USD 600 million annually. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is another instrument supporting low-carbon investment in developing countries. Finally, there are approximately four hundred Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) (JIU, 2008) (Inomata, 2008), each focusing on selected aspects such as stratospheric ozone pollution, oil spills in the oceans, or acid rain in Europe. MEAs have often been established with a high degree of independence and a small secretariat for implementing policies, a work program, and a budget.[19] This institutional fragmentation is partly the result of integrating mainstream environmental issues into the mandates of organizations. Nevertheless, this created institutional duplication and turf battles among organizations for mandates and resources and requires considerable coordination efforts.

For considerable time, the French government, supported by Germany, has called for the consolidation of a number of small UN entities into a new and stronger UN Environment Organization (UNEO). Earlier initiatives had failed due to the opposition of countries concerned that a strong organization could infringe upon their prerogatives in the national context, in particular the United States, as well as a number of developing countries. Moreover, there was a lack of enthusiasm among the secretariats of a number of UN system entities that had been targeted for consolidation. Nevertheless, the 2005 World Summit recommended that informal consultations continue at the General Assembly.

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18. The EMG has the following members: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), FAO, GEF, IAEA, ICAO, IFAD, ILO, IMO, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), ITC, ITU, OHCHR, Ramsar, Secretariat of the Basel Convention (SBC), UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (UNCCD), UNCTAD, UN-DESA, UNDP, UN-ECA, UN-ECE, UN-ECLAC, UNEP, UN-ESCAP, UNESCO, UN-ESCWA, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNITAR, UN-OCHA, UN University (UNU), UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WMO, World Bank, and WTO.

19. The UNEP is the host organization of MEA secretariats for seventeen global and regional conventions. The IMO services fifty conventions on the marine environment, the ILO eleven environment-related conventions in the field of occupational health and safety, and the IAEA five conventions related to nuclear safety. The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) provides seventeen regional environmental conventions with secretariat facilities, and the FAO does the same for several conventions in the field of food and agriculture. The secretariat of the World Heritage Convention is an integral part of UNESCO, and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea has secretarial facilities housed in the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in New York. Other MEA secretariats are institutionally linked to the UN, such as the UNFCCC, CBD, and UNCCD. The secretariat of CITES is under the aegis of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a non-UN body.

Aware of this opposition, the High-Level Panel refrained from calling for the establishment of a UNEO, but proposed the strengthening of international environmental governance (IEG). This focused on establishing a clearer division of labor between the entities involved. The UNEP should be upgraded as the environmental policy pillar of the UN system. The GEF should be strengthened as the major financial mechanism for the global environment. The issue of sustainable development should be mainstreamed into the work of ECOSOC and upgraded within the UN institutional architecture. Finally, the panel recommended that the Secretary-General should commission an independent assessment to improve IEG.

Discussion in the General Assembly revealed substantial disagreement. The developing countries advocated giving more weight to sustainable development, in particular to the eradication of poverty, rather than environmental protection. Other countries preferred to focus on environmental protection and adaptation as part of sustainable development. The proposal to strengthen the UNEP by giving it improved funding and more authority for scientific assessment, monitoring, and early warning received support from France, Switzerland, Mexico, and the countries of the European Union. This was seen as enhancing the UNEP's ability to cooperate with the UNDP and the World Bank. Other countries, especially Russia and a number of developing countries, disagreed. The controversy extended to the proposal that better coordination should be established between the UNEP and the MEAs and among the MEAs, for example by rationalizing the various secretariats, enhancing the Secretary-General's leadership over the EMG, or integrating the EMG into the CEB framework in order to ensure better coordination by the UN system. In February 2009, after three years of consultations, the coherence initiative in the environment field was abandoned (United Nations, 2009a). The Secretary-General also refrained from commissioning an independent assessment of IEG, as initially proposed by the High-Level Panel. Instead, the informal consultations of the General Assembly, initiated by the 2005 World Summit, continued.

System-Wide Action on Climate Change

As part of the system-wide coherence initiative, the CEB had contributed to the discussion of the 2005 World Summit and consideration of the High-Level Panel's recommendations and had taken up the "Delivering as One" pilot projects and the harmonization of business. It was realized that the CEB could potentially be used as a coordinating mechanism for system-wide action to address major global challenges. This would be a change from the CEB's more limited role in the past, which was essentially concerned with the exchange of views among UN executive heads, the issuance of joint statements, and the preparation of major international conferences. The first system-wide action, and a "thematic pilot" for responding as "One UN," was in support of the negotiations concerning a new climate change agreement.[20]

The Kyoto Protocol, which establishes limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries with the aim of addressing global warming, was due to expire. In early 2007, efforts focused on preparing negotiations for a post-Kyoto Protocol, with the aim of reaching agreement by 2009. The negotiation process was prepared by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with a series of meetings, included the main conferences

20. Other priority themes include food security and the global financial and economic crisis.

in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007 and Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. The final conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009 was expected to determine the new climate change regime.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as chairman of the CEB, had placed climate change at the top of the interagency agenda in his first CEB meeting at April 2007. Each UN system body was seen as having a role in building momentum for agreement on a future post-Kyoto framework. By developing a coordinated response to the UNFCCC process, fragmentation and duplication were to be reduced. It was also suggested that climate change be mainstreamed into the work of the UN system and that areas of comparative advantage should be focused on, such as brokering negotiations and facilitating collective action, early warning, assessment and monitoring, and capacity building. Finally, the future climate programs of individual agencies were to be developed in collaboration with others and in support of the UNFCCC.

UN system organizations had supported countries in several sectors related to climate change, such as agriculture and fisheries, disaster risk reduction, education, energy, forestry, health, industry, information technology, oceans, human settlements, transport, and water. As a first step, the HLCP was requested to develop an overview document on UN system activities in climate change and a strategy document for submission to the Bali conference in September 2007. For the next two years, the key issue that the HLCP focused on was climate change, with the secretariat of the UNFCCC serving as the link to the negotiation process. UN system work at the country level was expected to continue through the UN Development Group (UNDG).

On process, the UNEP offered to lead a group of UN system organizations with significant climate-change-related capacity in developing the documents for the Bali Conference. Rather than identifying such a lead agency, there was a clear preference in the HLCP for an arrangement with convening agencies. An open-ended Working Group on Climate Change was established and convened by the HLCP vice-chair. The Working Group included representatives from the UNFCCC secretariat, UNEP, and the UN Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team (CCST) in a central role. In September 2007, the HLCP reviewed the draft Bali documents (UN CEB, 11 September 2007, CEB/2007/HLCP-XIV/CRP.4; UN CEB, 12 September 2007, CEB/2007/HLCP-XIV/CRP.5) compiled by the Working Group, including a strategy paper and an inventory of UN system activities on climate change. The documents had been prepared on the basis of submissions from CEB members and were organized in accordance with the four key themes of the UNFCCC negotiation process:

1) Adaptation: This was seen as the centre of UN system activities and described actions to adapt to the negative consequences of climate change, such as droughts and floods or the impact on food production, population movements, human settlements, and deforestation. Many efforts were already ongoing and needed to be refocused as part of the climate change agenda.

2) Mitigation: This covered ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The primary focus was the development of a legally binding post-2012 climate framework. The UN system was seen as playing a role in this area by assisting countries in integrating climate mitigation priorities into national policies and programs.

3) Technology: The UN system was seen as having a role in promoting cooperation

between developed and developing countries in the dissemination of low-carbon technologies, including renewable energy technologies.

4) Financing: It was estimated that global investments on the order of USD 15 to 20 trillion were required over the next 20 to 25 years to address climate change. The UN system was to support developing countries by facilitating the transfer of resources. Reinforcing the GEF and the CDM was considered paramount.

Adaptation and mitigation were defined as the goals, and technology and financing were the tools for achieving those goals. In addition, the UN was seen as engaging in a range of cross-cutting activities. These included the brokering of negotiations and facilitating collaborative action; early warning, assessment, and monitoring; and capacity building.

A number of differences emerged during the HLCP discussion. For some members, the key concerns were the importance of addressing climate change in a sustainable development context and the need to develop stronger links between climate objectives and internationally agreed-upon development goals. Mainstreaming climate throughout the UN system was seen as critical to achieving this. Some members emphasized the human dimensions of climate change, including disaster preparedness, involvement of local authorities, education, and the participation of children in decision-making and advocacy. Others argued that more emphasis should be given to the UN's core normative activities in providing scientific and technical information to enable evidence-based decision-making. This included the contribution of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as various UN entities that also undertake essential monitoring and early warning activities in areas as diverse as health, agriculture, and weather forecasting. In addition to the CEB and its substructure (HLCP, HLCM, UNDG), mechanisms already existed within the UN system that would need to be involved to promote a more comprehensive UN approach to climate change. These included in particular the interagency networks UN-Energy, UN-Water, and UN-Oceans.

The HLCP also addressed a report on a climate-neutral UN system during its September meeting, prepared by the UNEP and the Environment Management Group (EMG) (UN CEB, 14 September 2007, CEB/2007/HLCP-XIV/CRP.18). This initiative was in response to the UN Secretary-General's call to "green the UN" by making facilities, operations, and travel climate-neutral. In addition to the HLCP, the financial implications of the report were also examined by the HLCM, which raised concerns over the eventual costs.

A CEB retreat in October 2007 approved the Bali documents prepared by the HLCP and appealed to the agencies to avoid turf battles during the forthcoming conference. The report provided an overview of the UN system's climate change activities and defined key areas of action and a coordination structure for the UN system. The presentation was organized by outlining science, assessment, monitoring, and early warning as the basis for informed action; it then described the UN system's contributions in supporting global, regional, and national action on climate change, such as brokering negotiations and capacity building. The main part was the description of UN sector activities in accordance with the four key themes (adaptation, mitigation, technology, and finance). Finally, the document addressed two cross-cutting sectors (education, and advocacy and awareness-raising) and outlined the UN system's efforts to establish climate-neutrality in its own work.

Prior to the CEB retreat, the UN Secretary-General had brought together world leaders in a one-day event in New York on September 24 in preparation for the Bali Conference. The high-level meeting was attended by eighty heads of state or government and was entitled "The Future in our Hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge of Climate Change."

Bali Climate Conference (COP 13), December 2007
The Bali conference brought together more than ten thousand participants, including representatives of over 180 countries. With the adoption of the Bali Road Map and Action Plan, the conference formally launched a two-year negotiation process to reach a global agreement by the end of 2009. The conference also confirmed adaptation, mitigation, technology, and financing as the four key themes for strengthening the global response to climate change.

The UN Secretary-General presented the CEB report to the conference as the UN system's contribution and vision. The heads of agencies then elaborated on how they were going to deliver their contributions. Specifically, the UN system could provide inputs to the negotiations and support national efforts, especially in the area of adaptation. Several agencies were already working on adaptation plans to be put before their governing bodies. Following the Bali meeting, the UN system faced great expectations on the part of countries that it would turn the initial CEB planning work into something concrete.

After Bali, the UN General Assembly met for a two-day thematic debate on climate change in February 2008. The UN Secretary-General presented a consolidated CEB report that was entitled *Overview of United Nations activities in relation to climate change* (UNSG, 10 January 2008, A/62/644), which basically conveyed the findings of the Bali documents. The report was supplemented by an inventory of UN system activities on climate change in matrix format according to the four themes (adaptation, mitigation, technology, and financing) and in accordance with the following sectors:

Energy: UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, UN-DESA, FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD, IBRD, GEF, IAEA, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, interagency coordination body UN-Energy

Agriculture and fisheries: FAO, IFAD, WFP, IBRD, WMO, UNEP, UNIDO, Convention on Biological Diversity, IAEA

Water: UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, WMO, UN-DESA, OCHA, FAO, IBRD, IFAD, UNIDO, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, IAEA, Convention on Biological Diversity, interagency coordination body UN-Water

Oceans: UNESCO, IMO, WMO, UNEP, IAEA, UN-DESA, FAO, GEF, Convention on Biological Diversity, interagency coordination body UN-Oceans

Forestry: UN-DESA, FAO, UNEP, UNDP, UNFCCC, IBRD, IFAD, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Convention on Biological Diversity, UN regional commissions, WFP

Health: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, IBRD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, IAEA, Convention on Biological Diversity

Transport: ICAO, IMO, World Bank Group, UNDP, UNEP, GEF, UNCTAD, UN-HABITAT, WTO, UN regional commissions, UN-DESA

Disaster risk reduction: ISDR, OCHA, WMO, FAO, UNDP, UNEP, WFP, UNESCO,

IBRD, UN-HABITAT, IMO, UNFPA, ITU, IFAD, UNICEF, UN Convention to Combat Desertification

Population and human settlements: UN-HABITAT, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNDP, UN-DESA, ISDR

Education: UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF, UNDP, WMO, WHO, FAO, UNU

Public awareness-raising: All UN system organizations in their respective fields of activity

The CEB report was received positively by many countries, in particular by the members of the European Union. Some concern was expressed by developing countries, which had emphasized the prerogative of countries to establish mandates through the ongoing negotiations and stressed the predominance of the UNFCCC process. Nevertheless, the thematic debate concluded in the expectation the CEB would engage in further coordinated action on climate change.

In April 2008, the CEB (UN CEB, 28 April 2008, CEB/2008/1) approved the Climate Change Action Framework, which provided the basic concepts for elaborating the CEB's contribution to the Poznan conference. In response to the Bali conference and the thematic debate at the UN General Assembly, the CEB decided to concentrate on five focus and four cross-cutting areas. UN system entities with a large volume of activities were put in charge of coordination in their respective areas (United Nations, 7 May 2009, E/2009/67: pp. 8–9).

FOCUS AREAS

Adaptation: HLCP Working Group on Climate Change

Technology transfer: UNIDO, UN-DESA

Reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD): UNDP, FAO, UNEP

Financing mitigation and adaptation actions: UNDP, World Bank

Capacity-building: UNDP, UNEP

CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

Science, assessment, monitoring, and early warning: WMO, UNESCO

Supporting global, regional, and national action: UNDP, UN-DESA, UN regional commissions

Climate-neutral UN: UNEP

Public awareness-raising: UN Communications Group, UNEP

The decision had been prepared by the HLCP meeting in March 2008 (UN CEB, 11 April 2008, CEB/2008/4) and there were considerable differences on how to proceed (UN CEB, 29 February 2008, CEB/2008/HLCP-XV/CRP.7). A sectoral approach had been promoted in the CEB paper presented at the Bali conference. It was argued that adaptation was sector-based, that carbon emissions were calculated by sector, that the counterparts of UN agencies were mainly sectoral ministries, and that the UN system already had several sectoral coordination mechanisms, such as UN-Energy, UN-Water, and UN-Oceans. Building on those existing mechanisms would also demonstrate that climate change and sustainable development were fully interlinked. Other UN agencies argued for an issue-oriented approach and proposed to establish four networks related to adaptation, mitigation, technology, and financing, respec-

tively. Having some sixteen sectoral coordination processes would not be coherent; such a structure would make it time-consuming for agencies to engage with numerous groups, and would undermine the cross-sectoral issues. Governments in developing countries were seen as increasingly bringing together various sectors to deal with adaptation issues.

The agreed Climate Change Action Framework finally presented a combination of both approaches. It was also understood that the UN Secretary-General would continue to lead the overall coordination approach for the UN system. In this regard, it was considered important to dispel the perception that the World Bank was operating on its own. The need for a strategic oversight body at a high level was initially considered, which could provide broad policy direction, decide on the handling of cross-sectoral issues, and advise the UN Secretary-General and the executive heads of UN entities. One option included the establishment of a CEB climate-change-specific cluster of executive heads reporting to the UN Secretary-General. Another option was the establishment of a formal standing body of the CEB under the leadership of an executive head. In order to keep the arrangements minimal, it was agreed that the CEB would continue to act as the coordination framework for the UN system and oversee the work carried out by the HLCP in the lead-up to the Copenhagen Conference in 2009. The HLCP and its working group on climate change would modify their practices and work closely with the UNFCCC. To support country-level work, the UNDG was also brought into tandem with the HLCP. On financing and technology transfer, the World Bank indicated that it had been entrusted with a major mandate in that area and would be ready to participate in joint work. Sectoral work was expected to continue and to be coordinated through existing mechanisms.

This provided the basis for the HLCP Working Group on Climate Change to prepare the CEB's contribution to Poznan. The initial idea had been to prepare a short document outlining the UN system's overall commitment to working together as "One UN" and what the system was doing in general terms with regard to climate change. But the interest shown by UN entities had resulted in more extensive preparation. The groups corresponding to the five focus and four cross-cutting areas had started to meet and had evolved into "communities of practice." The CEB publication for Poznan was approved in October 2008 (UN CEB, 19 November 2008, CEB/2008/2). In addition, the work resulted in the preparation of an extensive inventory of UN system activities to support knowledge sharing and public information. The inventory was expected to be available as a web-based tool by November 2008, prior to the meeting in Poznan, but it was delayed and finally launched in March 2009.

Poznan Climate Conference (COP 14), December 2008
The CEB document *Acting on Climate Change: The UN System Delivering as One* was presented to the conference at a side event attended by 350 people. The event was opened by the UN Secretary-General, followed by a panel discussion of heads of WMO, UNIDO, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, and UN-DESA as well as representatives from the World Bank, UNDP, and FAO. The UN system increasingly spoke with one voice, in contrast to the previous agency-owned side events.

With the UNFCCC conference in Copenhagen getting closer, the HLCP in February 2009 (UN CEB, 23 March 2009, CEB/2009/4) and the CEB in April 2009 (UN CEB, 5 May 2009,

CEB/2009/1) approved a two-track approach for final preparation (UN CEB, 13 February 2009, CEB/2009/HLCP-XVII/CRP.3). First, the convening agencies of the five focus and four cross-cutting areas concentrated on the substantive work in their respective areas. Second, the HLCP prepared another overview publication to address the role of the UN system in the post-Copenhagen architecture, including the management of financing and the promotion of the MDGs. This was done in coordination between the HLCP and the UNDG, facilitated by a bridging mechanism between the two.

There was an urgent need to show the Copenhagen Conference the CEB coordination had delivered concrete results. To do so, a small number of collaborative projects were being explored and the UNFCCC secretariat was identifying mandate gaps and priority issues that would warrant collaborative UN system action. The UNDG was involved through its Task Team on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability. The results of that exercise were shared with the convening agencies, and the collaborative projects were identified in the following areas:

Capacity building: The UNDP and UNEP would explore with the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the UNFCCC secretariat the possibility of developing training programs for Least Developed Countries to facilitate their participation in the UNFCCC negotiations, the development of a UN training service platform for climate change, and the holding of an interagency meeting to consider cooperative action on capacity building.

Reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (UN-REDD): The FAO, UNDP, and UNEP, in coordination with the World Bank, were to undertake projects in nine pilot countries and their experiences would feed into the UNFCCC process.

Science, assessment, monitoring, and early warning: The Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) in the area of adaptation was being pursued as a possible outcome of World Climate Conference-3 (WCC-3) and a web portal for climate knowledge was being developed.

Public awareness rising: The UNEP and the UN Communication Group Climate Change Task Force were to develop a unifying theme to be used by UN system organizations in their outreach, starting on World Environment Day, 5 June 2009.

Climate-neutral UN: A major effort was to be launched by UN system entities to meet their commitment to prepare proper greenhouse gas emissions inventories and to have credible emission reductions measures in place by the fall of 2009.

Coordinated fund-raising efforts were initiated to support the collaborative projects with the assistance of the CEB secretariat and in coordination with the UN Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team. In addition, the UNDG Task Team on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability was developing a guidance note for country teams on mainstreaming environmental sustainability, for incorporation into UNDAF guidelines.

Copenhagen Climate Conference (COP15), December 2009

The Copenhagen Conference did not manage to reach a binding agreement on emissions ceilings or on the financial support systems for developing countries for both mitigation and

adaptation. Agreement was reached on the less ambitious Copenhagen Accord and substantial short- and long-term funding pledges were made.

The CEB had presented a Statement of Purpose and a Policy Brief on UN system efforts to adapt to climate change. In addition to supporting countries in addressing the impacts of climate change, the CEB conveyed the system's commitment and capacity to assist countries in implementing an agreement. A number of side events were held at the conference, projecting a unified approach by the UN system. This joint approach of the UN system was well received.

The conference also decided to take up the issue of a climate change agreement again in Mexico by the end of 2010, and negotiations were expected to continue in the UNFCCC framework. At its meeting in April 2010, the HLCP agreed to continue the mandate of the HLCP Climate Change Working Group. Some streamlining of the five focus and four cross-cutting areas were planned. While efforts had focused on presenting ongoing work as "One UN," more attention should be devoted to identifying whether the UN system supported the emerging implementation agenda. It was suggested there should be lead and cooperating agencies in the various thematic areas, with an exchange of progress through a knowledge-sharing, Internet-based platform. A separate focus area on the Social Dimensions of Climate Change was established to ensure consideration of the most vulnerable groups. In moving ahead, it was considered important to ensure a clear division of labor among the various coordination mechanisms that already existed. This also required the UN system to feed into the work of two ad hoc bodies newly established by the UN Secretary-General. First, the High-Level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing was launched in February 2010; it focused on scaling up long-term financing for mitigation and adaptation strategies in developing countries. Second, a High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability was to feed into the area of implementation through a broader sustainable development framework, such as developing a road map for a green economy.

Some Observations

Does UN system coordination work? The two cases examined provide valuable insights. First, the system-wide coherence initiative is a government-driven effort to address the fragmentation of the system in a number of loosely related cases. At the core of the coherence initiative were the efforts to improve coordination at the country level through the "Delivering as One" pilot projects. Some progress was reported in the areas of national ownership and alignment with national priorities. However, the lack of central empowerment, synchronized implementation, and diverse business practices made this initiative slow and costly. The reform of international environmental governance stalled. Advances were made neither on funding nor on governance and institutional reform. The goal of implementing a more coherent gender architecture moved ahead slowly with considerable cost implications for the anticipated outcome. Second, the experience from the system-wide action on climate change emphasizes the limits of secretariat-driven efforts in coordination. The UN system increasingly spoke with one voice as a result of CEB coordination. These efforts led to a conceptualization of the system's work, although the Climate Change Action Framework was limited to representing pre-existing programs without necessarily correcting incoherencies.

Finally, the sharing of knowledge resulted in a "community of practice" on climate change. This was achieved through coordinated efforts involving considerable staff time and travel expenses. Despite expectations, no commensurate system-wide actions were established, such as joint programming and implementation. Coordination was driven by joint presentation of outputs rather than by the development of concrete initiatives and substantive work. The two cases reviewed allow for some general observations on UN system coordination.

At the level of agency governance, the challenge is to reach agreement among the 192 sovereign countries, and this often proves elusive. Better coordination is seen as promising efficiency gains, and proposals are often advanced in the context of institutional reform; however, other stakeholders see this as an attempt to downsize or de-emphasize activities. The positions taken depend on the interests involved, which may include additional development assistance, trade concessions, and debt relief, whereas other countries wish to emphasize human rights or gender issues. Often, the parties' positions also relate to preventing certain developments, such as preventing interference in national affairs or preventing over-regulation of the global economy. Countries act jointly through groupings such as the European Union or CANZ in the north or the Group of 77 (G77) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the south; this may facilitate interaction but also introduces a certain degree of rigidity, which is manifested in the north-south divide. Within the major groupings, there are differences of interest.

At the agency secretariat level, the interests in the institutional reform process are quite different from those of member countries. Expansion of mandates and resources is a prime motivator. From outside the organization, external interest groups become involved, such as nongovernmental and civil society organizations, sometimes with considerable success. The campaign of the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) for a stronger gender organization is a case in point.

At the level of interagency governance, the General Assembly and ECOSOC are mandated to coordinate UN system organizations. UN system entities are independent or semi-independent with their own governing bodies and budgets. In reality, the coordinating bodies have little authority over the governance or secretariats of individual organizations.

At the level of interagency secretariats, not unlike the agency governance level, the UN system is managed by a collective of equals with different mandates and interests; consensus between agencies is the basis for decision-making. Deliberations are often characterized by turf battles between agencies for mandates and resources. The CEB would not find it easy to take a position detrimental to the interests of a member agency. When problems exist, the interagency reports tend to conceal differences among organizations. This creates management and accountability issues. It also makes the decision-making process lengthy and cumbersome.

Interfaces between interagency governance and interagency secretariats are limited. ECOSOC provides an opportunity for dialogue with the CEB. In June 2009, the CEB's annual overview report was presented to ECOSOC and panel discussions were held that highlighted the CEB initiatives for the first time. However, this interface was viewed critically by some and was claimed to infringe on countries' prerogatives and the accountability of interagency mechanisms.

The UN system poses systemic barriers to introducing better coordination and making it work. The process of reaching agreement may be a tortuous one, involving the reconciliation

of different priorities and interests. The condition for reaching agreement is consensus, and the price to be paid is the adjustment of proposals to the lowest common denominator. Then, actual implementation often falls short of initial expectations. Maintaining coordination is not only a lengthy and cumbersome process associated with a proliferation of meetings and reports but also involves a considerable investment in time and resources as well as high transaction costs. Coordination may well be a dead end when it comes to enhancing UN system efficiency.

Is the streamlining and consolidation of mandates and structures a precondition for coherent and efficient action? The hurdles to be overcome in that case will certainly be considerable. The case studies reviewed here may point the way. Incremental consolidations, restricted to a limited number of entities, and focusing on a narrow subject area, appear to be a difficult but workable option: difficult, as demonstrated by the failure so far to reform international environmental governance; workable, as proven in the progress toward a unified UN gender architecture. To engage in fundamental restructuring may require a catalytic development, such as the emergence of alternatives to the UN system. It might also require a group of visionary leaders at the governance and secretariat levels who are prepared to make the necessary compromises. In the absence of those factors, for all the logic and promise of enhanced efficiency, the barriers inherent in the UN system will be difficult to overcome.

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