

UNDESA

CERFE

**Consultation for the Triennial Comprehensive  
Policy Review of the operational activities for  
development of the United Nations System of 2004**

FINAL REPORT

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BWIs	Bretton Wood Institutions
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DESA	Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN Secretariat)
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance
ECPS	Executive Committee on Peace and Security
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of United Nations
HQ	Headquarter
IADGs	Internationally Agreed Development Goals
IDEAS	International Development Evaluation Assistance Society
IF	Integrated Framework for trade-related technical assistance to Least Developed Countries
IFIs	International Finance Institutions (World Bank, IMF, Regional Development Banks, etc.)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOCE	International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation
ITC	International Trade Center
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MERS	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (ILO)
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM	Results Based Management
RBP	Results-Based Performance (UNESCO)
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCS	Resident Coordinator System
SISTER	System of Information on Strategies and Tasks and on the Evaluation of Results (UNESCO)
SPFS	Special Program for Food Security (FAO)
SWAP	System-Wide Approach
TCRP	Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review on Operational Activities
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations joint program on HIV
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group

UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNESCO	United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissariat for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSIS	World Summit on Information Society
WTO	World Trade Organization

## 1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

September 2003 saw the stipulation of an agreement between the DESA (Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat) and CERFE, regarding the latter's cooperation in the preparatory process of the TCPR 2004.

The TCPR – Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review on Operational Activities – is carried out every 3 years by the UN General Assembly. It involves an analysis of the international cooperation activities carried out at any level by the UN system (in the broadest sense, including the Special Agencies besides the Secretariat, Programs and Funds) and the devising of recommendations for improving the effectiveness and impact of these activities, with particular reference – as of 2000 – to the Millennium Development Goals (and, more generally, to the International Agreed Development Goals, established during the various international conferences organized by the UN between 1992 and 2002).

The preparatory process of the TCRP is rather complex and involves many actors, above all, within the UN system. The focal point of this process is the Development Cooperation Policy Branch of the DESA.

Within this process, CERFE has been charged with assisting the DESA in carrying out the following activities:

- Consultation of the UN system's main organizations based outside the American continent.
- Consultation, via an e-mail questionnaire, of certain NGOs with a general and special Consultative Statute with ECOSOC;
- Participation in 2 of the 6 country-missions envisaged for January-February 2004.
- Cooperation in drafting the final report in March-April 2004 (this activity may include a "summative" seminar at the ILO of Turin in early March 2004).

At the beginning of 2004, a joint agreement between DESA and CERFE was made which indicated that the last-mentioned would no longer participate in the country-missions. Vice versa, it would deal with the consultation, through a questionnaire which would also be given to the UN Member States.

The preparatory process of the TCPR also involves many other activities, among which an ad hoc evaluation of the CCA and UNDAF, an analysis of the financial aspects, etc.

The entire process will have two concluding events: the Substantive Session of ECOSOC in July 2004, when an analysis report will be presented, and the General Assembly in autumn 2004, when the actual TCPR will take place and specific recommendations will be made.

This Report, drafted by Gabriele Quinti, with the cooperation and supervision of Alfonso Alfonsi and Giancarlo Quaranta, is a working document containing the main results of the first component of CERFE's cooperation in the preparatory process of the TCPR 2004. It is composed of five sections (besides this one):

- Description of the activities carried out (§ 2)
- Planning the consultation (§ 3);
- Analytical results of the consultation (§ 4 to §11);
- Brief evaluation and prospects (§ 12).

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT**

As regards the part of the DESA/CERFE agreement concerning the consultation of the UN system's main organizations based outside the American continent, in the period September 2003 – April 2004, CERFE carried out the following activities:

- a) Preparation of the Consultation. Specifically:
  - i. Preparatory studies and defining the conceptual framework and contents through a mission by Alfonso Alfonsi, from 8 to 19 October 2004, at the DESA in New York and also desk work in Rome.
  - ii. Collaboration with the DESA in the methodological, operational and logistical framework of the Consultation (also via a mission by Gabriele Quinti to New York and Geneva from 3 to 8 November 2003).
  - iii. Preparation of the Background Document of the Consultation (CERFE's draft was later revised by the DESA).

- iv. Collaboration with the DESA in the preparation of all the other documents for the Consultation (seminar notification letters, seminar timetables, etc.).
- b) Conduction of the Consultation. Specifically:
- i. Active participation in the Consultation Seminar held in Rome at the FAO on 15-16 December 2003 (with representatives from the FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN-Habitat).
  - ii. Active participation in the Consultation Seminar held in Geneva at the Palais des Nations on 17-18 December 2003 (with representatives from the WHO, ILO, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNV, UNESCO, UNIDO, WTO and ITC).
  - iii. Organization and participation in bilateral meetings held in Rome on 12 December 2003, with FAO representatives, and in Geneva on 19 December 2003, with ITU, UNCTAD and UNV representatives.
  - iv. Collection and analysis of documentation regarding the various Agencies concerned<sup>1</sup>.
- c) Follow-up of the Consultation. Specifically: cooperation in preparing the reports on the two Consultation Seminars of Rome and Geneva.
- d) Draft on a specific report on “UN Headquarters Agencies Consultation” (January 2004)
- e) Analysis of the supplementary information sources on the Agencies involved in the Consultation. Specifically:
- i. Collection and analysis of further documentation regarding the various Agencies concerned.
  - ii. Examination of the results of a survey conducted by DESA on the main available documentation concerning 16 UN entities<sup>2</sup>;
  - iii. Examination of DESA mission reports implemented in the context of the 2004 TCRP preparatory process in 9 countries (Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Zambia, Bolivia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Indonesia, Laos);
  - iv. Examination of the proceedings (or summary proceedings<sup>3</sup>) concerning TCRP 2004 preparatory process meetings in New York;

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<sup>1</sup> In the Rome and Geneva Seminars, two Agencies – IFAD and UNAIDS – also gave their own *ad hoc* written contributions.

<sup>2</sup> UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, UNEP, UNCTAD/ITC/WTO, UN-Habitat, UNIFEM, UNAIDS, ILO, WHO, IFAD, FAO, OCHA-UNOCHA, UNCDF, ITU.

<sup>3</sup> When proceedings were unavailable.

- v. Survey of the “CERFE experience” (from 1988 to 2003) with various organizations of the UN system.
- f) Participation in the Global Consultation Workshop in Support of TCRP 2004 held in Turin in March 2004;
- g) Drafting of the present Working Document.

As regards the section of the DESA/CERFE agreement concerning the consultation of the NGOs in Ecosoc Consultative Status and of the UN Member States in the period October 2003-March 2004, CERFE carried out the following activities:

- h) Preparation of the Consultation. More specifically:
  - i. Preparatory studies and definition of a conceptual framework and contents through a mission by Alfonso Alfonsi, from 8 to 19 October 2004, at the DESA in New York and also desk work in Rome;
  - ii. Preparation of the Background document of the Consultation (CERFE’s draft was later revised by the DESA);
  - iii. Collaboration with the DESA in the methodological and operative preparations of the Consultation and organization of technical means;
- i) Conduction of the NGOs Consultation. More specifically:
  - i. Distribution of an e-mail questionnaire to 69 NGOs in Ecosoc Consultative Status (specifically, 34 NGOs in General Consultative Status and 35 NGOs in Special Consultative Status, balancing out the representation per territorial areas)<sup>4</sup>;
  - ii. Tutoring, providing explanations and reminders; Analysis of the questionnaires received<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that there are 105 NGOs in General Consultative Status, while those in Special Consultative Status are 660. Hence, the questionnaire was sent to 33% of the first, and to 5.5% of the second.

<sup>5</sup> As regards the NGOs in Consultative Status with UN-Ecosoc, 10 of the 69 replied, that is to say: AVSI and Mani Tese (with headquarters in Italy), the International Council of Women (ICW – France), the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW - UK), Association François-Xavier Bagnoud e Fédération Terre des Hommes (FX e TDH - Switzerland), the World Confederation of Labor (WCL - Belgium), the Salvation Army (SA – United States), Association des Femmes Educatrices du Mali (AFEM), Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS). The ratio of replies (14,5%) is almost the same as that of questionnaires administered indirectly (that is, sent either by post or e-mail). It should be noted that 5 of the NGOs that replied are medium (such as AVSI) to very large-size networks (ICW, IFBPW, TDH e WCL) which have

- h) Collaboration in conducting Member States Consultation<sup>6</sup>. Specifically, analysis of questionnaires received by the DESA<sup>7</sup>.
- i) Drafting of the present Working Document.

### 3. ARTICULATION OF THE RESULTS

As mentioned in the previous section, the preparatory phase of the Consultation saw the drafting of a Background Document summarizing the main issues of the TCPR 2004.

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federate associations throughout the world. Two are NGOs of the southern hemisphere (one is African, the other is Asian) and three NGOs are of the northern hemisphere (one is American and two are European). Of the 10 NGOs that replied, 4 are in General Consultative Status (AVSI, ICW, IFBPW, WCL) and 6 are in Special Consultative Status (Mani Tese, FX, TDH, SA, AFEM, BNPS). This provides an indicative panel of the NGOs in Special or General Consultative Status with Ecosoc, above all, thanks to the presence of the 5 networks which, as mentioned previously, have their own observation points throughout the world.

<sup>6</sup> Twenty-two Countries replied in the Consultation of the Member States (Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Uruguay, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Iran, Thailand, Turkey, Senegal, and Tanzania). In addition to the 22 Countries that replied to the questionnaire, there are also those whose representatives participated at a general consultation seminar held in Turin in March 2004, which was also in the context of the preparatory process of the TCRP 2004. These Countries are: Benin, Bolivia, Laos, Zambia, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Norway, United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland. Therefore, an overall list of 30 Countries can be drawn up: 13 European/North American Countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom; 6 Latin American Countries: Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Uruguay (four from central America and two from Latin America); 4 African Countries: Benin, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia (two French-speaking and two English-speaking African countries); 3 in the area of the Community of Independent States: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, 4 Asiatic countries: Iran, Laos, Thailand, Turkey (one in the Arab region, one in the Mediterranean, one in Central Asia and one in East Asia). In any case, though this list is not statistically representative of the countries in the world, the 30 Countries which replied to the questionnaire and/or participated at the Turin workshop, make up an indicative panel (above all, in the case of strong convergence of opinions expressed and information supplied), which takes the importance of some Countries into consideration as well as the limited geographic distribution. Furthermore, consideration is given to the fact that, among the 30 Countries, there are those that are exclusively “donors” (the 13 European/North American Countries), those that are exclusively “beneficiaries”, as well as those that are “dual” (that is, both beneficiaries and donors), such as Mexico, Thailand and Turkey.

<sup>7</sup> The dispatch of questionnaires and the tutoring was directly carried out by the DESA.

The Background Document essentially identified certain issues:

- Three “starting points”, called such since they are undisputed acquisitions used as benchmarks, and namely:
  - The Internationally Agreed Development Goals/IADGs (which include the Millennium Development Goals/Mugs), that represent a first essential benchmark for the 2004 TCPR<sup>8</sup>.
  - The typology of operational activities for development that the UN system undertakes to support the efforts of recipient countries to pursue, at the national level, those internationally agreed goals<sup>9</sup>.
  - The distinctive characteristics of the operational activities, as they have been reaffirmed in several resolutions of the General Assembly, including resolution A/56/201: i.e. universality, voluntary and grant nature, neutrality and multilateralism.
- Four Core issues for the effectiveness of UN operational activities for development, i.e.:
  - added value, mission and identity of the UN development cooperation;
  - development results and impact of UN operational activities;
  - capacity of the UN system and its human resources and skills to support national development efforts and the promotion of national capacities;
  - management upgrading: coordination, harmonization and convergence in the UN system – progress and challenges.

The analytical results of the Consultation carried out will be presented in this section, in the same arrangement as the Background Document (or according to the aforesaid 7 issues). In the next section, also bearing in mind the strong interrelation between the aforesaid issues and the many “cross-cutting” elements, a more general and summative analysis will be made.

A further issue has been added here to the aforesaid issues: the relationship between the UN and Civil Society Organisations.

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<sup>8</sup> Among these goals, General Assembly Resolution 56/201 (para.6 of the preamble) and ECOSOC Resolution 2003/3 (para.37) singled out three strategic areas – poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development – and requested the Secretary-General to focus its analysis for the TCPR on the assessment of development impact of the UN system’s operational activities in those areas

<sup>9</sup> See this typology later.

The text that follows is divided into 8 sections, each one related to one of the eight issues mentioned above. i.e.:

- UN operational activities and IADGs/MDGs
- Typology of UN operational activities for development
- The distinctive characteristics of the UN operational activities
- Added value, mission and identity of UN development cooperation
- Development results and impact of UN operational activities
- Capacity of the UN system and its human resources and skills to support national development efforts and the promotion of national capacities
- Management upgrading: coordination, harmonization and convergence in UN system – progress and challenges
- Participation of civil society and other relevant actors.

#### **4. UN OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND IADGs/MDGs**

“The UN system demonstrated superb intellectual leadership in arriving at the universal consensus surrounding the MDGs”<sup>10</sup>

This statement is representative of the majority of those (UN officials at the HQ or country level, representatives of Member States and NGOs) that were consulted during the TCRP preparatory process. The people consulted, in fact, stressed how the IADGs/MDGs and the whole negotiation process which led to their proclamation during the series of international conferences from 1992 to 2002 represent an important asset for the UN family.

All the UN officials involved in this broad Consultation stressed how the operational activities of their respective organizations endeavor to achieve the MDGs (and, as a general rule, all the MDGs). For example:

- The WHO stressed that all its “areas of work are in turn related to the MDGs because about 40% of the MDGs are about health ... and (the WHO) is therefore interested in the work of other actors in these areas”.
- The UNAIDS highlighted how “HIV is at the core of the issues in meeting all the goals, including gender; it is a cross-cutting issue”.

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<sup>10</sup> Dougalas Lindores, *A view from the outside*, Introductory comments for UNDG ExCom retreat, 6.1.2004

- The UNV firmly believes that mobilizing and harnessing people and their contribution is the only way to meet the MDGs; this is its job.
- UN-Habitat works on creating capacities to meet MDGs;
- The IFAD is fully committed to helping achieve the objectives of the MDGs and has mainstreamed the IADGs on development goals in its work.

Generally, in one way or another, all the UN entities, without exception, make explicit reference to the MDGs and attempt to link these goals, to a substantial part of their own development operational activities.

According to some UN officials at the country level, MDGs can provide the organizing framework also in the context of humanitarian affairs. For example, the UNCT in Angola used seven of the eight MDGs as an organizing framework for its elaboration of the final CAP. Sudan has undertaken similar work.

Instead, the issue of aligning the UN to the IADGs/MDGs does not seem to be of great importance for the NGO representatives. Rather, much more importance is given to this question by exponents of the Member States. According to the majority of those consulted, the MDGs are becoming increasingly central to the work of the Funds and Program, supported by the UN's role as campaign manager and scorekeeper for the MDGs. The focus on the MDGs is beginning to have an impact on priority setting within the UN which, if continued, should help to increase effectiveness... The UN's role in championing and monitoring the MDGs is bringing clear benefits in helping to shape and focus poverty reduction strategies.

It must be underlined that most of the UN organizations currently publish and distribute (more frequently and regularly than 10 years ago, or "before" the consolidation of the IADG definition process, through the international conferences in the period 1992-2002 and obviously before the proclamation of the MDGs in 2000) annual reports of an international bearing, which give an account of the existing situation with reference to the MDGs and some IADGs (each for its own area of competence) on the world situation.

Therefore, there is widespread attention to monitoring whether and how MDGs – and IADGs – are actually pursued and achieved.

However, as regards the actual contribution made by every single UN Agency – and the UN overall – in achieving goals, there is no precise information. Indeed,

probably out of necessity<sup>11</sup>, a “proxy” (or, if we prefer, indirect) approach is adopted, highlighting the absolute and/or relative progress (or possible regression) made in reaching a given goal in a given time period (both in general and in each specific country) and secondly, examining the activities carried out by the UN or each Agency in its own territorial context. If there has been any significant progress in reaching a given goal and if a certain Agency (and the UN as a whole) has worked in that sector, then the Agency in question (and the UN) is considered to have contributed to reaching the goal<sup>12</sup>. It must be recalled here that the UN acts essentially through its own contribution (together with other actors) in the determination and implementation of national policies.

However, documenting the absolute and/or relative progress (or possible regression) made in reaching a given goal, in a given time-period in many of the Countries where the UN operates should not be taken lightly. At times, there are great difficulties connected to the validity and the reliability of data available. Many Specialized Agencies -WHO<sup>13</sup>, FAO, etc.- and the DESA itself, through the Statistical Division, offer a valid contribution in resolving these difficulties, though with some problems at times, such as in the case of Laos.<sup>14</sup>

However, the operationalizing of adopting MDGs entails several problems, above all, in the case of certain special Agencies. In the Geneva Seminar, the UNCTAD representative stressed how, “the Millennium Declaration/MDGs would not be adequate as an overall framework since they do not capture all concerns; they can provide goals or benchmarks, but not as an operational framework; that would be too restrictive”. On the other hand, since the mid-1970s

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<sup>11</sup> Also in view of the type of UN operational activities, which will be dealt with in the next section, and the impossibility of (or, at least, the great difficulties in) adopting an experimental design enabling the tracing back of, for example, the decrease in malnutrition to the activities of any one specific actor.

<sup>12</sup> A great problem is raised when retrogression (as in the case of Zambia) is found. In these cases, the contrary should be done.

<sup>13</sup> F.i. WHO works with partners to develop Health Metrics Network, which will help strengthen health information systems and support monitoring

<sup>14</sup> “Through its support to the MDGs, the UN has an opportunity and is also well-positioned to support improvement in the collection and organizing of socio-economic statistics for planning, programming, and monitoring. However, there is no comprehensive approach; but rather, each agency provides support separately through its respective sector counterpart agency. The UN is currently considering the possibility of collaborating on a comprehensive assistance for statistical improvements that will strengthen development monitoring mechanisms in general including not only MDG reporting, but also the localized PRSP, NHDR, CCA, and UNDAF”. Jana Gracia Ricaso, Monica Nogara, Mission Report – Review of country experiences for the 2004 TCRP – Laos – 23-26 February 2004

UNCTAD has highlighted the strong link between trade development and the alleviation/eradication of poverty<sup>15</sup> (which is a MDG). Moreover, a 2003<sup>16</sup> document highlighted how, “the MDGs provide an overarching goal to UNCTAD’s actions regarding capacity development – namely, the reduction of poverty, especially for the LDCs”.

The ITU representative stressed how the development of telecommunications and its accessibility contribute to reducing poverty, to improving health and education services, and to building international governance, and thus achieving most (if not all) of the MDGs. In the Declaration of Principles “Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium”, adopted at the end of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), there is significant reference made to MDGs and IADGs<sup>17</sup>. It must be said, however, that before starting the preparatory process of the WSIS, attention to MDGs and IADGs was rather limited.

Even for other UN entities, the operationalization of the connection with MDGs, although effective, is neither easy nor to be taken for granted. For the FAO, according to what came to light in the Rome Seminar, “MDGs could serve to realign<sup>18</sup> and refocus priorities (more coherence than before); however, national development strategies are not always aligned to the MDGs (and there are some delays)”. Moreover, MDGs have so far not been used as a framework for

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<sup>15</sup> And, on its part, the FAO – in its Report entitled: “The state of food insecurity in the world – 2003” – devotes an entire section to the theme “international trade and food security”, highlighting the positive effects of international trade on the reduction of malnutrition.

<sup>16</sup> UNCTAD - Capacity development – Note by the UNCTAD Secretariat, 27 August 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Point 2 of the Declaration reads, “Our challenge is to harness the potential of information and communication technology to promote the development goals of the Millennium Declaration, namely the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; achievement of universal primary education; promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women; reduction of child mortality; improvement of maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and development of global partnerships for development for the attainment of a more peaceful, just and prosperous world. We also reiterate our commitment to the achievement of sustainable development and agreed development goals, as contained in the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus, and other outcomes of relevant United Nations Summits.”

<sup>18</sup> In relation to the realignment notion, one can refer to the evaluation made in 2003 of the Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) of the FAO. The concluding section of this evaluation (ss: FAO, 2003, Program Evaluation Report, Rome, 2003) reads, “the proclamation of the MDGs ... and the thinking of new modes of development financing emerging from the International conference on financing for development, all pose challenges and offer new opportunities for the SPFS which the Organization will address.”

assessment<sup>19</sup>. For the WFP, “the MDGs provide an opportunity, and the WFP’s work is being aligned to the MDGs”, but the process is not fully complete yet. WFP underlined the importance of including a set of measures to fight hunger, and reminded the relevant players of the connections between hunger and other MDGs. The ILO has now a smaller and more focused agenda, mainly on decent work and related matters, with respect to the set of MDGs/IADGs. Finally, UNDP evaluation office underlines that, despite considerable enthusiasm for the MDGs and the preparation of the MDGR, there is lack of clarity on their real value. There is also wide variations in authorship and ownership although the success of the MDG Reports rests on their being nationally owned.<sup>20</sup>

At times, the operationalization of the MDGs is considered problematic, even at a local, as for example, in Laos: “There is a common view among the government, the donors and the NGOs that the MDGs are too broad to serve as an operational framework and that the goals need to be specified within the country context”<sup>21</sup>.

In short, it would appear that MDGs (and IADGs) are by now undoubtedly a frame of reference for the UN operational activities of the various UN entities (and for Member States). But this frame of reference, which has overlapped (although adopting many elements in the construction phase) aspects of mission, identity and history of the various Agencies, needs to be further operationalized, probably through greater determination of less general “intermediate objectives” of the MDGs, but also less specific than the various objectives of programs and projects. The process has not therefore been an automatic one and has, in some cases (as we have seen above), also met with some resistance.

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<sup>19</sup> Keeping in mind the Basic Texts of FAO, it is possible to define three inter-related global goals which the Organization is specifically dedicated to helping Members achieve: *Access of all people at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate and safe food, ensuring that the number of chronically undernourished people is reduced by half by no later than 2015. The continued contribution of sustainable agriculture and rural development, including fisheries and forestry, to economic and social progress and the well being of all. The conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of natural resources, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture.*

<sup>20</sup> UNDP evaluation office – Development effectiveness report, New York, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Ricasio-Nogara, cit.

## **5. TYPOLOGY OF UN OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

The Background Document of the Consultation proposes the following typology of operational activities for development that the UN system undertakes in order to support the efforts of recipient countries to pursue IADGs and MDGs<sup>22</sup> at the national level:

- (1) policy advice and support to national governments in formulating strategies and national policies that pursue the internationally agreed goals;
- (2) support to national governments to monitor the pursuit of those goals at the national level;
- (3) advocacy initiatives related to these goals;
- (4) support to national governments to develop coordination activities;
- (5) other catalytic efforts of the UN system's organizations, including initiatives geared to convene other donors and harmonize their interventions at the country level;
- (6) direct support to development initiatives launched by national governments or other entities, which benefit from the assistance of the UN system;
- (7) alignment of the UN system's strategic tools adopted at a national level (such as the CCA and UNDAF) along the directions outlined in the internationally agreed development goals; and
- (8) support to emergency/reconstruction activities and peace-keeping/building efforts as well as conflict prevention and its links to the overall support of recipient countries in pursuing internationally agreed goals.

The typology proposed in the Background Document should be broadened, on the basis of indications that came to light during the Consultation, and should include another four types of activity.

- (9) Normative activity (the determination of procedures, standards etc.) assiduously carried out by special Agencies of the UN, such as the WHO (health, hygiene, etc.), FAO (agriculture, etc.), ILO (working conditions,

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<sup>22</sup> There are obviously several other ways to classify UN activities. For example, the FAO (the following could also be applicable to other UN Agencies) uses the following classification. FAO has 3 categories of work – a) geographic-based capacity development through field/country-level programs; b) knowledge-based capacity development through technical cooperation (normative in nature, e.g. codex for fishing); and c) a global policy (e.g., Food Summit).

child labor, etc.), ITU (communication), WIPO (copyright), etc., as well as the DESA itself<sup>23</sup>.

- (10) Research (also basic research), which carries considerable weight in Agencies such as the WHO, FAO or UN-Habitat<sup>24</sup>, but also in other UN bodies like UNFPA<sup>25</sup> and WFP<sup>26</sup>.
- (11) Pilot projects, which are different from direct support because they are strongly geared to innovation that, in a more or less marked way, every Agency carries out in its own particular field.
- (12) International networking in various sectors (WHO in the area of health<sup>27</sup>, UN-Habitat in relation to best practices regarding the improvement of informal settlements, etc.)

In examining this typology, it is worth clarifying that it was conceived by referring to UN operational activities financed by regular UN funding (from the

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<sup>23</sup> This type of activity may be considered outside the operational activities (as the FAO suggests, stressing "the need to maintain a balance between normative and operational activities"). It has been mentioned here because there are increasing links between normative activities and policy advice and between normative activities and pilot projects.

<sup>24</sup> F.i. UN-Habitat's progress towards achieving effective institutional memory serving the needs of operational units and stakeholders was uneven. Centers of excellence concerning institutional memory do exist in Habitat, localized around specific areas and serving mostly narrowly defined user groups. To make this specialist institutional memory comprehensive and user-friendly, cross-linkages between the databases and universal access through multiple points of entry are required. Only with those facilities in place would the interests of stakeholders be served effectively. UNEP manages its accumulated and growing knowledge base for greater impact in environmental management. IFAD promotes initiatives such as the "Second Seminar on Innovation and Knowledge to Reduce Rural Poverty" (September 2000, Peru).

<sup>25</sup> UNFPA has supported socio-cultural research in many countries, often to inform advocacy campaigns with culturally appropriate messages. UNFPA support to discourage female genital cutting, for example, has contributed to the development of policies and enactment of laws in 14 countries. In 2002, socio-cultural research by the University of Zambia focused on local initiation ceremonies for boys that instill ideas of what it means to be masculine, among other topics of behavior and tradition.

<sup>26</sup> WFP increasingly builds nutritional assessments into its needs assessments and monitoring, special technical advice partnerships will need to be established with local universities and research institutions and NGOs.

<sup>27</sup> WHO developed since September 2000, the Health InterNetwork that brings together international agencies, the private sector, foundations, non-governmental organizations and country partners under the principle of ensuring equitable access to health information. It aims to improve public health by facilitating the flow of health information, using the Internet. The core elements of the project are content, Internet connectivity and capacity building. The Research Network pilot operates in 9 WHO Collaborating Centers in 8 countries in Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Sponsored by the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation network and major scientific publishers.

Agencies' regular budgets, from funds such as the UNDP or UNFPA, etc.) and not to operational activities financed directly (or in a binding manner) by a donor outside the UN system, albeit carried out by an Agency of the UN system.

However, it must be noted that all the Agencies, almost without exception<sup>28</sup>, by now have a significant volume of operational activities financed by “extra budgetary” (earmarked, non core...) sources than the regular ones of the UN (almost always – if not always – much greater than the volume of operational activities financed with UN funds). Moreover, in most cases the Agencies are much more than mere executors in relation to these activities, and at times they are the financers that tend to be eclipsed<sup>29</sup>, as regards bilateral cooperation. Therefore, it is worth considering those UN operational activities financed with regular UN funding and those financed by extra-budgetary funds.

Adopting this extended conception (i.e. considering all UN operational activities, however financed), the most frequent type of activity (or, at least, the most important in terms of financial resources) is no. 6 (direct support to development initiatives launched by national governments or other entities), that is, cooperation projects in the strictest sense. It is true that, due to a general lack of financial resources, despite their considerable weight, it is a kind of activity in decline but, especially in Agencies like the FAO or ILO, where most extra-budgetary funding is found. One must also note the particular case of IFAD, where most regular funding is also devoted to direct support. These operational activities are the most visible ones, but not for this (see paragraph 7) the ones in which the UN tends to excel or to have a significant comparative added value (comparative advantage) with respect to the other actors of cooperation.

On the other hand, narrowing the field of interest to UN operational activities in the strictest sense, that is, the ones eminently the object of the TCPR 2004, the relative “weight” of the direct support to development initiatives launched by national governments or other entities (6) falls considerably (without, however, disappearing; on the contrary), while other kinds of activity, many of which of lower visibility, appear far more significant.

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<sup>28</sup> Of the Special Agencies, the only exception is IFAD which, although considered as such in the United Nations family, is in actual fact, a (UN) fund for project financing. Another exception is the WFP, though this is not an Agency but a program (like the UNDP).

<sup>29</sup> Sometimes, formal distinctions also tend to be relaxed: e.g. “extra-budgetary operational activities are inserted in the ILO program”.

Firstly, mention should be made of policy advice, which we shall call type (1), that is constantly and permanently offered both through own experts and through other forms of knowledge management, directly within national institutions, by Agencies such as the FAO (in ministries of agriculture, of rural development, of animal husbanding, etc.) or such as the WHO (in health ministries)<sup>30</sup> and, albeit more rarely, by UNESCO, also through its national commissions (in education ministries). Even if with other procedures, policy advice is also part of other Agencies such as UN-Habitat (often with short *ad hoc* missions from HQ and from other regional offices), UNEP<sup>31</sup> or UNCTAD (with short *ad hoc* missions from HQ and, above all, through “distance” assistance from HQ to units of national cadres of foreign trade ministries).

With type (1), it should be noted that policy advice and support is not exclusively addressed to national governments (even if they are the main beneficiaries), but also to other interlocutors such as local authorities, in the case of UN-Habitat; telecommunications companies, in the case of the ITU; trade unions and entrepreneur associations, in the case of the ILO.

Often, policy advice in its various forms is not an immediately visible activity, though according to all the persons consulted, it is crucially important for the support of UN Member States, with particular regard to LDCs.

Type (2) activity (monitoring) may effectively be considered an integral part of type (1), even though it has a particular importance – given the commitment taken on by the various countries of the world during the international conferences in the decade 1992-2002 to pursue IADGs – and the almost unanimous recognition of the UN family as “guardians” of these goals. It is thus fairly obvious (for a national government or local authority) to turn to a UN Agency when in need of

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<sup>30</sup> WHO is perhaps the Agency in the UN System that gives policy advice par excellence. In fact, according to the WHO’s mandate, it does not run projects or programs but works closely with the health authorities in the respective countries. WHO’s main role is to stimulate, inform, facilitate and monitor health policies and services. It offers policy guidance based on best practices and supports disease and epidemic surveillance.

<sup>31</sup> UNEP’s longstanding support to governments and national legal institutions in the development and implementation of national environmental laws. An example is the Partnership for the Development of Environmental Law and Institutions in Africa (PADELIA) project, which is working with seven countries to develop laws and fill gaps in existing legal structures for sustainable development.

external support, not only for drafting strategies and national policies that pursue the IADGs, but also for monitoring this process<sup>32</sup>.

Advocacy (3) has gained increasing importance over the last few years, also in relation to the decade of international conferences, and now represents a core element of the system (even well beyond the operational activities; for example, human rights). The UN entities appear involved in advocacy activities, both at the country level (advocacy work to support the MDGs, to promote and conduct policy dialogue<sup>33</sup>, which also favors the interaction between actors who would otherwise be unable to voice their views) and at the international level (e.g. UNAIDS advocacy with governments to increase the budget for HIV and for effective use of resources; UN-Habitat campaigns<sup>34</sup>; UNICEF activities for reflecting the spirit of the Convention on the Child Rights and takes measures adapted to local realities and means<sup>35</sup>, UNFPA on gender and culture, reproductive health, etc. ).

Support to national governments to develop coordination activities (4) often occurs implicitly, thanks to the enhancement (see § 10) of coordination, at a country level, of the various entities of the UN family.

Since each of the UN entities is strictly related to one or more entities of national governments, the coordination of the former is reflected in greater coordination of the latter (broader circulation of information, more possibilities of establishing linkages, greater facility in promoting “Service Conferences”, etc.). There is also direct action of the UN to support the constitution of more or less permanent thematic groups<sup>36</sup> to deal with issues that go beyond individual ministries (such as the fight against HIV). In this regard, the UN (especially the ResReps) benefit from a convocation capacity that other third parties do not have.

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<sup>32</sup> For instance, WHO works with partners to develop Health Metrics Network, which will help strengthen health information systems and support the monitoring

<sup>33</sup> For instance, in Laos, the UN has effectively facilitated establishment of mechanisms for development dialogue among the Government, the donors and the NGOs through the NPEP and RTM processes. The UN has also fostered increased coordination and information sharing among the donors and development partners

<sup>34</sup> Global Campaign on Urban Governance, Global Campaign for Secure Tenure, etc..

<sup>35</sup> In support to the design of National Plans of Action (NPAS)

<sup>36</sup> For instance, in Paraguay, the UN Thematic Groups which implement part of the working-level coordination of the UNCT are as follows: (1) UNAIDS (UNFPA, WHO/PAHO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, RCO, National Program for Combating AIDS, GTZ, the NGO Network on HIV/AIDS), (2) Environment (all UN entities, JICA, GTZ, AECI, Helvetas and USAID), (3) Health (WHO/PAHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, USAID, GTZ).

The aforesaid can, in general, also apply to type (5) “other catalytic efforts of the UN system’s organizations, including initiatives geared to convene other donors and harmonize their interventions at the country level”. These efforts have, above all, led to establishing – under UN – a dialogue and coordination between the various international cooperation entities present in certain countries, and almost always involving – if present – the World Bank, the European Union, other BWIs, often bilateral cooperation and, sometimes, even the (large) international NGOs. Dialogue and cooperation may be of a general kind (and is thus mostly coordinated by the UN ResRep) or sector-based (in this case it is usually the UN Agency specialized in the sector itself that is responsible, such as the WHO for health matters). Some countries have witnessed a real harmonization of the actions of the various actors present.

Type (7) (alignment of the UN system’s strategic tools adopted at the national level along the directions outlined in the IADGs), also broadly speaking linked to policy advice, will be dealt with in more detail in section 3.7. It concerns the necessary activities that are laboriously carried on more or less assiduously in the various countries.

The “support to emergency/reconstruction activities and peace-keeping/building efforts as well as conflict prevention and its links to the overall support to recipient countries in pursuing internationally agreed goals” (8) constitute an increasingly important kind of activity within the UN family. For the WFP, the emergency concerns almost 90% of the operational activities (while it was below 70% some years ago). For the FAO, “preparedness for, and effective and sustainable response to, food and agricultural emergencies” is an integral part of its strategic framework 2000-2015. IFAD works – amongst other things – in post conflict/reconstruction activities focused on increasing social justice and inclusiveness. UN-Habitat is increasingly being called upon in humanitarian and post-conflict situations which it considers a “high profile” arena. The ILO has developed IFP/CRISIS, portfolio based on continued emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of crisis response<sup>37</sup>. Even the ITU assists countries “with special needs” and these nations are none other than the ones characterized by

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<sup>37</sup> But we have considered that ILO needs to prioritize the choice and limit the number and scale of crisis interventions to those highly relevant and manageable by the Office. IFP/CRISIS has identified and established an ILO niche that corresponds more to inter-agency processes and its own financial and technical resources. IFP/CRISIS has facilitated stronger links between ILO country-level networks, through participation in national-level consolidated appeals processes (CAPs) and UN Disaster Management Teams (MNDMT), and global initiatives. Collaboration with agencies such as OCHA, UNOPS, UNDP, and UNHCR, is evolving more appropriately around ILO’s comparative advantage in crisis work

conflict or post-conflict situations. There are, obviously, Agencies that are less (or not at all) involved in this kind of activity, such as the UNCTAD or ITC.

Even the support to emergency/reconstruction activities and peace-keeping/building efforts as well as conflict prevention are often closely connected operational activities, such as direct support and the availability of extra-budgetary funding. In most of these cases, fiduciary funds or other multi-donor financial instruments are set up that, effectively at an operational level, tend to release these activities from actors outside the UN.

Many of the people consulted insisted on the need to overcome the division between emergency/reconstruction peace-keeping/building and conflict prevention activities on the one hand, and development activities on the other, and to produce an institutional and operational framework that facilitates the linkage between these types of operational activities. This need is linked to the fact that there are situations where both are carried out and where coordination is thus required, and also situations where the latter are (or should be) subsequent to the former, but with a gradual transition. As IFAD stated “there is a need to ensure the continuum from emergency to development and to strengthen the nexus between development and peace keeping/building or relief”. We shall return to this issue in § 7.

For types from (9) to (12), see above (see too notes from 23 to 27).

Of these 12 types of activities, the Member-States and NGOs consider the following as the most successful<sup>38</sup>:

(according to the NGOs)

- advocacy initiatives;
- direct support;
- research/operational research

(according to the member states<sup>39</sup>)

- policy advice

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<sup>38</sup> See the specific report on Member States and NGOs consultation.

<sup>39</sup> In Zambia, given the size of UN agencies, some donors expressed strong reservations about the capacity of these agencies to effectively manage development-engendering operations. Consequently, it was the view of these donors that the agencies’ niche lies in the coordination of development operations carried out by other bodies. The UN’s convening power and its neutrality make it an appropriate body to perform the essential development coordination role

- direct support;
- support to emergency/reconstruction activities/post-conflict

The 12-typology reflects the set of UN operational activities quite well. There is a general recognition of the need to balance policy advice (in the broadest sense, and thus including types 1, 2 and 7) and advocacy, on the one hand, and direct assistance, on the other, and to link them.

## **6. THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UN OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The Consultation brought to light a general and keen sharing, on the part of all the Agency representatives, of the distinctive features of the UN operational activities, as they have been reaffirmed in several resolutions of the General Assembly, including resolution A/56/201: i.e. universality, voluntary and grant nature, neutrality and multilateralism. Not only are they recognized but there is also widespread awareness that these basic characteristics provide the necessary legitimacy to perform a unique and irreplaceable service to Member States.

These characteristics are considered fundamental not only by UN officials but also by the majority of Member States who replied to the questionnaire and/or participated at the Turin Seminar. There were some, who did not express their view on this matter, but there was no one – and this should be stressed – who denied their importance. The attitude of the NGOs<sup>40</sup> is partially different.

The distinctive features of the UN operational activities are unanimously considered to be:

- The foundation of the morality of the UN, on the basis of which the UN is, in any case, considered a Trust partner.

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<sup>40</sup> Several NGOs recognized and emphasize the basic characteristics of UN operational activities, while many do not. Some expressed perplexity. For example, some NGOs, in Zambia, cited for example, the role of a UN agency in championing the cause of GMO (genetically modified objects/organisms) and against the clear position taken by the Government of Zambia and civil society organizations on the subject. By siding with the GMO advocates against the Government, the agency, according to the civil society interlocutors, had violated the doctrine of neutrality – the very foundation on which the UN's global legitimacy rests.

- A sort of common denominator of the operational activities of all the UN system entities (and thus of the UN as a whole), while – *de jure* or *de facto* – at least in part, they are not found in the operational activities of other actors present in the international cooperation arena (such as in bilateral agreements or in the large NGOs).
- An unalienable asset of the UN family that must not and cannot be called into question by any kind of reform (general or specific of one or other Agency), including those of a managerial nature<sup>41</sup>; the UN officials are particularly proud of this asset.

The importance accorded to the basic features of the UN operational activities should not in any way be interpreted as an attempt to raise a bulwark against current or future reform processes. In the Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminars, there was much talk of reforms (and, in particular, of reforms in the management field), taking those very basic features of the UN as a starting point for the discussion.

A separate debate should be started on another basic feature identified in the Background Document, and namely flexibility. Compared to many other entities (e.g. the European Commission or some bilateral cooperation), the UN Agencies undoubtedly present a greater flexibility in designing and carrying out their operational activities. This is due to their prevalent interest for results rather than procedures, which – when necessary (or, sometimes, when merely appropriate) – may also be “forced” if not downright distorted. Flexibility, however, is not a peculiar feature of the UN and, often to a greater extent, also characterizes many other actors of international cooperation (among NGOs, bilateral cooperation, etc.).

The basic features of UN operational activities generate – or are at least underlie – certain other traits (according to what emerged in the Consultation of both people and documents) that are on the whole distinct from UN entities within the international cooperation field.

According to the FAO<sup>42</sup>, these traits (of the FAO and of other UN Agencies) all bear legitimacy and are the following:

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<sup>41</sup> While good management is an absolute requirement, no UN entities can neglect the basic characteristics of operational activities either without taking the risk of losing legitimacy or acceptance of member states.

<sup>42</sup> FAO, The strategic framework for FAO, 2000-2015, Rome, 1999.

- authority and status as a global intergovernmental organization;
- “honest broker”, i.e. capacity of identifying and advocating common solutions that are independent of specific ideological and national perspectives;
- unparalleled information source and institutional memory;
- broad networking capacity with members and other partners (a partnership vocation);
- decentralized capabilities;
- professional and multidisciplinary staff;
- capacity to respond to unforeseen needs of member countries;
- responsible financial and administrative management.

Many of these traits (particularly the “honest broker”, “unparalleled information source and institutional memory”, “broad networking capacity”, “professional and multidisciplinary staff”) were highlighted also during the Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminars. They were also stressed during the Country-Missions carried out in the context of the TCRP preparatory process (in Zambia, Laos, Benin, etc.) and/or are cited in other documents (of UNAIDS, for example) to characterize the comparative added value of UN operational activities with respect to the ones of other actors present in the international cooperation field. This will be dealt with in the following section.

## **7. ADDED VALUE, MISSION AND IDENTITY OF UN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

The basic features and their deriving traits, presented in the previous section, are – according to the people and documentation consulted – the main elements that characterize the added value or comparative advantage of the UN development cooperation (i.e. operational activities).

These basic features generate a particular added value in some types of operational activities. What the IFAD wrote in its own contribution delivered at the Rome Seminar will suffice for all: “IFAD has a comparative advantage in some situations where other bilateral and CSO’s may be unable to operate. By virtue of its neutrality as well as impartiality, the UN can and must work in situations where all other development agencies cannot do so. This is a major advantage of the UN system and it must be used to its full potential”. The

situations referred to are the emergency/reconstruction ones or peace-keeping/conflict prevention ones, but even “normal” ones where policy advice is by now much more welcomed by UN entities rather than bilateral cooperation or other actors, even involuntarily non-neutral ones.

Other elements of the UN comparative advantage in carrying out the operational activities (partly indirectly connected to the basic features mentioned above), according to what emerged in the consultation of representatives of the various Agencies and the documentation, and on which there seems to be unanimous agreement, appear to be the following:

- their perception of the UN as a “partner” rather than a “donor” – with the UN’s neutrality comes the trust that it would place domestic stakeholders in the driver’s seat rather than impose “conditionalities”;
- their international character and ability to promote technology transfer between countries<sup>43</sup>;
- their universal presence (the UN is everywhere, even in the smallest countries, in countries where the political situation makes any operational activity impossible and where the UN keeps the “flame of rights” burning, in places where there is no interest in staying; no other actor of international cooperation normally behaves in this way)<sup>44</sup>;
- their historical “incarnation” in almost all the realities in which they are currently present<sup>45</sup>;
- their capacity to access any market and the lack of restrictions in procurement, such that – as a rule – they should always be able to obtain the best offer at a global level;
- their convening power – the UN’s prestige and legitimacy enable it to bring different interests together to deliberate on issues of common concern;
- their negotiating ability as well as the capacity to construct partnerships and alliances;
- their decades of attention to CSOs – in part institutionalized at a universal level with the Consultative Status – with UN ECOSOC and UN Special

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<sup>43</sup> FAO, 2003 Program Evaluation Report, Rome, 2003.

<sup>44</sup> In this regard, in the Geneva Seminar, there was talk of the “UN as a form of world governance”.

<sup>45</sup> Of the various Agencies, special mention must be made of UNESCO with its system of National Commissions in 190 Member and Associate States. The Commissions form a vital link between civil society and the Organization. They provide valuable insight concerning the Organization’s program and help implement many initiatives including training programs, studies, public awareness campaigns and media outreach. The Commissions also develop new partnerships with the private sector, which can provide valuable technical expertise and financial resources.

- Agencies, and more generally with all actors which play a role in development (including the private sector<sup>46</sup>);
- their knowledge of the world, in all its forms (there are contexts which others know better, but nobody, or hardly anyone, knows them all);
  - their breadth of knowledge, skills, and expertise – the UN and its Agencies are staffed by experts in different specialized fields, with the result that if an Agency is deficient in one area, it can expect to find the appropriate mix of skills in other Agencies;
  - their normative function (i.e., standard and norm setting), both as an asset and as the capacity to prescribe or guide<sup>47,48</sup>;
  - their transparency: the UN is also viewed as having no “hidden agenda”.<sup>49</sup>
  - their harmony of interest – in contrast to the conflicting interests pursued by bilateral donors, the UN looks for opportunities to reconcile differences;
  - their predictability – while the UN remains a bureaucratic organization, it is at least predictable, and could be relied upon by its Member States to come to their rescue without laying down stiff conditions. In contrast, bilateral donors frequently “tie” their aid one way or another;
  - their feature as “championing human rights in the development process”;
  - their capacity to mobilize financial resources (above all in emergency situations);
  - their familiarity and a sort of paternity with regard to the wealth represented by the IADGs/MDGs and with all the negotiation process that led to their identification and proclamation (their goal-setting) and, consequently, the capacity to operationalize the IADGs/MDGs at country levels.

Moreover, according to some, the UN is the “conscience” of the international community – one that has the moral authority to champion the noblest ideals

All the UN Agencies tend to have the aforesaid elements in common. Generally speaking, it is worth mentioning that the UN officials (HQ and national

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<sup>46</sup> In this regard, we can recall, amongst others, the Global Compact Initiative that provides an opportunity for partners to learn from the private sector.

<sup>47</sup> Albeit with some exceptions, the normative activity of the UN tends to have a more orienting rather than prescriptive character.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, WHO develops international standards for food, biological and pharmaceutical products. Then, a WHO comparative advantage is that it is a Global Health Agency with policy and normative guidance based on international best practice. It has clinical guidelines and training for health personnel and supports disease and epidemic surveillance; ILO develops standards on decent work; etc.

<sup>49</sup> Jana Gracia Ricaso, Monica Nogara, Mission report – Review of country experiences for the 2004 TCRP – Laos – 23-26 February 2004

level), Member States and the NGOs that were consulted tended to highlight the added value of the UN operational activities making reference to the UN system as a whole and not to the single “elements” that make up the UN (Secretariat, Funds, Programs, Agencies, etc.).

There are also other traits characterizing the specific comparative added value of some Agencies, and namely:

- for the ILO, a tripartite feature (composed of member states, trade unions and employers’ associations);
- for the ITU, multiparty feature (composed of member states, telecommunications firms, research institutes and NGOs);
- for UN-Habitat, the special relationship with local authorities and their associations.

Even other actors of international cooperation have one or more of the aforesaid elements, but generally to a lesser extent with respect to each of the UN entities and more so compared to the UN as a whole. To “enhance” the comparative added value of the UN, we have to stress complementarity, increase cooperation among UN Agencies and stress their multi-sector nature and catalytic function on the whole.

Obviously, the various elements listed were not mentioned by all those that were involved in the consultation (UN-HQ, UNCT, Member States, NGOs), but only by some of them. In any case, no obvious disagreement emerged concerning this. However, there were some who raised the question<sup>50</sup>, as to whether there is a partial fracture regarding some features of added value between perception and reality.

Then there is a further element that could be constitutive of the UN operational activities added value, but on which the opinions expressed vary greatly. This issue concerns the “continuum” between humanitarian aid, peace building and peace keeping on the one hand, and development on the other. During the seminars held in Rome, Geneva and Turin, many UN officials and some UN Member-States (such as Iran, Finland, Germany and United Kingdom), as already mentioned (cf. § 5), considered this a problematic element, underlining the division between emergency/reconstruction peace-keeping/building and conflict prevention activities on the one hand, and development activities on the other, and

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<sup>50</sup> Jim Balogum, Tom Edward Eriksen, Masahiri Igarashi, Juliet Masswa-Mugambwa - Mission report of country experiences for the 2004 TCRP: Zambia.

highlighted the need to produce an institutional and operational framework that facilitates the connection between these types of operational activities. Instead, many other UN Member States (France, Ireland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Tanzania, etc.), underlined how the UN is uniquely placed to contribute to peace and development as the only organization with a mandate spanning from conflict resolution, post conflict rehabilitation and peace-building to long-term development. This issue is amply tackled in the “Report of UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition Issues” of February 2004<sup>51</sup>, as well as by the OCHA<sup>52</sup>.

It is within this general framework – that concerns all the UN entities, according to all those consulted – that the various missions and mandates of each UN entity are identified, and sometimes even of their “parts” (departments, divisions, etc.).

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<sup>51</sup> Transition, for the UN “refers to the period in a crisis when external assistance is most crucial in supporting or underpinning still fragile cease-fires or peace processes by helping to create the conditions for political stability, security, justice and social equity. Therefore, the transition is found exactly in the continuum emergency/development. The following are some annotations regarding this relationship which are useful in the analysis underway in this document.

- a) While in the past, transition processes were largely regarded as *sequential* or a *continuum* from relief to development or even from conflict to peace, it is now increasingly recognized that these facets exist simultaneously, at varying levels of intensity, susceptibility to reversals, and opportunity; the scaling down of humanitarian assistance and scaling up of reconstruction need to be articulated *jointly* by humanitarian and development actors, within a single and integrated strategy that shifts the analytical perspective from the *symptoms* of the crisis to its *underlying causes* and from *short-term* to *medium-term objectives*, predicated upon evidence-based needs assessments and regular revalidation of needs and capacities.
- b) The establishment of a headquarters mechanism is recommended, comprising the secretariats of UNDG, ECHA and ECPS (that is, those entities within the UN that are responsible for emergency and humanitarian affairs, as well as development operational activities), to ensure that headquarters’ support to UNCT remains coherent and timely; we need a “unity of purpose” for the UN system in the transition from conflict to peace,
- c) Moreover, the establishment of a multi-year funding facility is recommended.
- d) There are situations where the UN should take the lead in transition processes because of its value added in terms of expertise, international legitimacy and moral authority. There are other situations in which it is mandated to take such a lead (e.g. UNTAET, or UNRWA prior to the establishment of the Palestine National Authority); and yet others in which it essentially shares the lead (e.g. UNMIK). It is important to develop clear benchmarks that help determine under what circumstances the UN has a comparative edge in leadership.

<sup>52</sup> OCHA is well-placed to contribute to a practical process of gathering experiences and lessons learnt from situations in which agencies have moved from emergency humanitarian operations into working within the overall framework of a UN peacekeeping/ transitional administration operation. Experiences before and including the Kosovo and East Timor exercises need to be captured and fed into future thinking.

These mandates and missions are well identified in the documents of the various Agencies and/or in their websites. They were not discussed in great detail during the consultations since all those who took part seemed much more interested in discussing at UN system level (and the position/role/responsibility of their own Agency with respect to the UN system) rather than at an individual Agency level.

All this leads us to talk of identity.

According to the Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminar participants, to the UNCT and also according to some of the documents consulted, most of the officials (regardless of level and functions) of the various UN entities undoubtedly tend to have an agency identity, but also a UN identity. And the weight of the latter is thought to be increasing. The determinants of UN identity appear to be the following:

- The common awareness of being in an organization (the UN) considered as an international civil service that gives due attention to the advantages of national and cultural diversity, multilingualism and gender diversity both in staffing and in program planning.
- The existence of a UN common system in human resource management that implies a common system of salaries and allowances, on the basis of which all the UN entities have agreed to adhere to certain standards established by the system as a whole; among these: the common career structures and universal recognition within the whole UN system, levels reached, but also common criteria in gender and geographic distribution, common work and family policies and interagency movement.
- The existence and importance of joint programs involving two or more Agencies of the UN system<sup>53</sup>.
- The activation and/or enhancement of interagency coordination at a country level (and the existence of UNCT); it has been stressed in many quarters that this coordination often goes well beyond its institutional duties (resident coordinator system, thematic groups, etc.) and also takes on an “informal” dimension involving contact – sometimes a very close one – between UN staff in each country, with positive consequences at the operational level and for relations with other actors (national governments, other donors, etc.).
- The existence, albeit still in a limited manner, of common premises, equipments and services at national level (see below).

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<sup>53</sup> UNAIDS is also a joint program, but has become so important that it is – wrongly – considered an “Agency”. And we too are led to consider it as such in this Document.

The UN identity begins to be well perceived even by the Governments of Countries where the UN carries out operational activities. For example, in the case of Ethiopia, “the Government knows when to call individual agencies and when to approach directly the UNCT –which in turns speaks well of the work by agencies both within their mandate and as a valued team member and partner in the UNCT. The UN Country Team is not only getting better at resource mobilization, as demonstrated by the recent mobilization of funds for non-food items, including seeds for emergency, but its engagement with the public, and civil society organizations, has deepened”<sup>54</sup>. However, the process is certainly not complete. In Laos, for example, one sees that “most donors view the UN System in terms of individual agencies with which they have contacts and/or have working relations. The majority of them have relations with UNDP, but have little contacts with other agencies, particularly the specialized agencies. There are views that the UN is fragmented.... In the case of some donors, it was apparent that a greater knowledge and understanding of the activities of the UN as a whole and as individual agencies, particularly specialized agencies, might warrant greater interest and cooperation on the part of these donors”<sup>55</sup>.

More generally, one has the impression that the development of a “UN identity” alongside an agency identity tends to find an enabling environment among member states and NGOs in ECOSOC consultative status. Therefore, some pre-conditions are present as of now for the member states – in the General Assembly, in ECOSOC and in the various general assemblies of specialised agencies – to start setting aside (if not actually removing) all those barriers that today prevent the UN from acting effectively as a system – which may be differentiated on the inside (according to each one’s mandates and missions), but must be unitary.

What partly still seems to be lacking is a UN culture. Its acquisition, according to the Rome and Geneva Seminar participants, must be pursued over the next few years in order to be able to increasingly stress a UN identity. For IFAD, this UN culture has to be developed by consolidating the UN country teams. In the FAO’s view, this process can be favored by staff turnover, which will be around 70% in this Agency in the next 15 years. To this may be added the weakness of communication systems, both inter-agency ones and – in the case of large

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<sup>54</sup> Olympios Katsiaouni, UNDESA mission to Ethiopia, Review on current experiences for the UN TCRP, November 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Ricaso-Nogara, cit.

Agencies (such as the FAO, UNESCO or ILO) – between the “parts” of the same Agency, or between HQ and branch offices<sup>56</sup>.

The necessity of building a “UN culture” represents one of the main outcomes of the Turin Seminar, during which the following question was posed “How do we move from an ‘Agency’ culture to a UN culture?”

Moreover, the “representation” (image) of the UN as a system, instead of as a set (or “sum”) of entities, should also be strengthened, above all at a national level<sup>57</sup>. A great deal is being done at this level through common premises, common services, joint projects and so on, as mentioned earlier. These initiatives deserve to be enhanced and, according to the UN officials, should also concern other fields such as thematic evaluations (joint evaluations are already being made, but in a very limited way) or capacity-building and training initiatives.

Some possible initiatives has been identified by UNDG ExCom: use of common flags by UNDG bodies (a new logo to be developed for the UNDG ExCom); common communication that must reflect a shared vision for the future which could take the form of an ExCom agencies common mission statement. Then there is the need to cut short negative publicity (still quite widespread at present) from other UN bodies.

Even the economic aspects regarding common public communication must be examined seriously. According to IFAD, for instance, efforts should be made to allocate 1 % of the program budget to communication activities.

Therefore, one has the impression that more and more UN officials do not believe that it is possible even for those UN entities with the most positive public images, to simply go it alone.

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<sup>56</sup> The latter aspect has been stressed by the WFP which considers how to make better use of knowledge management, including better communications between headquarters and the field.

<sup>57</sup> The issue of the UN’s image at international level deserves a separate study and lies outside the scope of this Consultation. However, what is said in this section points to a clear tendency, on the part of the various Agencies, to increasingly highlight the UN as a system and a little less the individual Agencies. The fact still remains that each UN entity autonomously promotes – in partial competition with the others, also for evident fund-raising reasons – its own image, except for a small number of common initiatives, such as those of the FAO, IFAD and WFP in Rome (Rome as a UN city).

## **8. DEVELOPMENT RESULTS AND IMPACT OF UN OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Both the documentation and the people consulted almost unanimously state<sup>58</sup> – as already mentioned (see §3.1) when talking of the UN contribution to achieving IADGs/MDGs – that there is considerable difficulty – if not impossibility – in evaluating the development results and impact of UN operational activities. It is already, per se, difficult to evaluate those of a direct support action and it is even more so when dealing with policy advice.

Naturally, we can appreciate the results of advocacy activity<sup>59</sup>, such as (and it undoubtedly goes to the credit of UNAIDS, amongst others) those aiming to increase attention and available funds at an individual country level for the fight against HIV or those on reproductive health (UNFPA). Likewise, we can appreciate the results of policy advice<sup>60</sup>, in terms of policy evaluation, for example, bearing in mind the local context in the inclusion and transposition of

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<sup>58</sup> However, this was not the opinion for all. In replying to the questionnaire, several Countries dissociated themselves from this position. First of all, Belgium was openly critical (though without proposing solutions neither on a financial nor methodological level). Moreover, some Countries (Tanzania, Mexico, Turkey) believed, that in any case, they were capable of providing a general opinion concerning the impact/results of UN operational activities in terms of poverty eradication, economy growth and/or sustainable development (and the like).

<sup>59</sup> The evaluations in question are generally either positive or very positive, not only in terms of results reached but also in terms of awareness, as Turkey's representative highlighted: the UN system operational activities had big impact in Turkey to raise awareness in those sensitive issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and gender issue. Those UNDP supported projects directly/indirectly led the way for new ideas flourish in Turkey such as good governance, democratization, participation, accountability and transparency. At the same time, UN helped raise awareness of governmental and non-governmental organizations, political cadres and civil society

<sup>60</sup> The evaluations concerning this aspect are problematic. On the one hand, it is quite evident when the finalizing of policies is based on the work, and in particular, on the advice of UN entities, both Funds, Programs as well as specialized Agencies. In fact, in some cases the UN "substitutes", (in substance but obviously not in form) at least on a technical level, the national entities in finalizing policies, programs and projects. However there are cases in which the impact of policy advice is limited, if not almost null. For example, one can see that in some Countries (e.g. Malawi), UNDP was able to leverage funds for politically sensitive issues but was not able to capitalize on this to influence policy or change in government conduct. In other cases (e.g. Kyrgyzstan), there is the need to remain adequately engaged with sufficient resources over a long time to influence changes in attitudes and perspective. Moreover, the Development Effectiveness Report, drawn up in 2003 by the UNDP Evaluation Office states that, "There is lack of capacity within UNDP COs to provide policy advice, monitoring and reporting, advocacy and coordination. UN agencies are short-staffed in terms of having time to engage in MDG reporting".

IADGs/MDGs in national policies and their relative actions. What is much more difficult to evaluate is the impact (or even the effects) of UN operational activities on people's living conditions, the environment, and the institutional system and so on. Often, as already mentioned, recourse is made to "proxy" indicators or even to a "proxy" approach<sup>61</sup>.

But, here too, there are often several difficulties linked to the poor reliability or validity of the statistics normally available, which leads the Agencies to assist the statistics offices in the various countries (both at a central and a sector level<sup>62</sup>) and to directly carry out their own evaluations.

In this regard, the following notations emerged during the consultation of UN officials, Member States and NGOs:

- Evaluations are increasingly being given more importance. However, while recognizing the importance of evaluation for assessing results and impact, budgetary constraints limit the scope of and capacities for regular and systematic evaluation<sup>63</sup>. However, the offices dealing with evaluation in the various Agencies, even if with great difficulty, continue to conduct thematic evaluations, geographic evaluations, periodic evaluations and global evaluations (such as in the FAO's case with respect to the Food Summit)<sup>64</sup>.
- The capacities of governments to monitor and to conduct evaluations have to be strengthened. And governments, as with other actors<sup>65</sup> at a national level, should have greater involvement in evaluation.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. § 3.1.

<sup>62</sup> With results that are sometimes very satisfactory, as with the FAO in China, but sometime problematic (see note n. 14)

<sup>63</sup> In this regard, one should mention what UN-Habitat has done, that is, to "tax" at 2% programs funded by donors to cover evaluation work and staff support.

<sup>64</sup> To strengthen the UN's capacity in the evaluation field, the Geneva seminar brought to light the need to strengthen evaluation association (IDEAS = International Development Evaluation Assistance Society; IOCE = International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation) that has to also be a place for exchanging knowledge (we need to share evaluation). In both seminars, there was much talk of whether or not to use external evaluators (a procedure that is becoming increasingly more frequent at the ILO, FAO and IFAD). This means greater costs, but could guarantee greater autonomy and independence of the evaluation (and that is why some donors insist on external evaluations). According to some, on the other hand, external evaluators are not at all more independent (considering they must be paid by the Agency whose activities they are evaluating) than internal ones.

<sup>65</sup> On the basis of its own experience, IFAD stresses how evaluations have to be highly participatory and should involve beneficiaries. Participation of civil society in evaluations is also

- UN Agencies have not fully considered the MDGs as a framework for performance evaluation; rather, they mainly use their corporate themes or strategic plans.
- There is a limited connection between evaluators and those responsible for policy design and program/project implementation; evaluations are often not read at all or not read with sufficient care, both due to problems of presentation (they hardly ever consist of 2-3 pages with the main findings and recommendations) and because some say – sometimes rightfully – that they always say the same things. There should be a more provocative, proactive approach to evaluation and using evaluations for more sharing and lesson learning. And, above all, evaluations need to be integrated into the decision-making processes<sup>66</sup>. But – it has been underlined – learning from evaluations is a long-term process<sup>67</sup>.
- Most of the agencies are moving to results-based management (RBM), but there are still difficulties in measuring the outcomes or results. Too much attention is still devoted to aspects such as output indicators (population reached, tonnage of food delivered, etc.) and the focus on delivery tends to diminish the importance of the quality of the processes which, consequently, undermine the impact of the UN's work.

Further notations (perhaps more important here) concern impact limitations of operational activities:

- Financial constraints have posed serious limitations on the range of impact of the UN system's operational activities at the field level and, given such constraints, attribution becomes a bigger challenge<sup>68</sup>.

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useful to its work. The FAO underlines the importance of the government and donor's involvement in evaluation exercises and of participatory evaluations.

<sup>66</sup> For example, with the FAO, although evaluations provide important input to decision-making, they are not of the highest priority in the context of field programs, mainly because field programs have diminished in importance compared to the scale of operations in the past. Moreover, field partners may be too preoccupied with their issues to give much importance to evaluations. With the WFP, in this regard, a new innovation is "real-time evaluation" wherein an outside evaluation team is sent at the start of operations, after 9 months and at the end of operations and assesses the situation. This provides an opportunity for immediate action.

<sup>67</sup> In this regard, UN-Habitat stresses the importance of evaluations being accessible to the entire staff (something already done in IFAD, where, recently, a bulletin was produced containing evaluation results. According to a WHO representative, evaluation must also be a learning exercise (with permanent monitoring) useful for the future, and inter-regional experience exchange is important.

<sup>68</sup> Some go as far as stating that (Iran's Representative) "with current level of financial resources even the implementation of small projects is not possible let alone the medium and large size

- UN operational activities have, in some cases, achieved results at the local level, or through individual projects; there has, however, been a problem of scaling up often successful small scale initiatives to the national level.
- The link between project level work and results in terms of policy changes is sometimes insufficiently underlined with negative consequences on impact level.
- Some projects were pushed or dominated by the UN political power or other political power. As a result, these projects failed... When the projects ended, all activities ended with them.

As we have said, there is little information on actual results and on the impact of UN operational activities. However, those consulted feel that, where there are improvements with respect to a given problem (such as AIDS or malnutrition), and if there is intense UN activity (not necessarily direct support, but also policy advice), then it is right to deem these UN operational activities to have made a real impact.

In this view, all the work done by the UN– at country level, regional level and world level – to document what is happening on issues such as nutrition, poverty, education, health, informal settlements, agricultural production, sanitation and so on, is also functional to the evaluation of UN operational activities. Moreover, over the last few years, there have been considerable improvements in many of these fields, albeit slower than expected.

It must also be stressed that this documentation work has increasingly been associated with dissemination activity over the last few years, both by publishing annual reports (by the WHO on health conditions, by UNICEF on children's conditions, by UN-Habitat on human settlements, by the FAO on the state of food insecurity, etc.) and through websites.

A further aspect concerning impact to consider is connected with the notion of replicability. As already highlighted during the three seminars in Rome, Geneva and Turin (cf. §5), one of the UN specifics is to carry out innovative actions, often through pilot-projects. It is worth noting that that they are often taken on (and replicated) by other actors, both international bodies and bilateral agencies. For example, as the ILO “Perhaps the most significant result of the ILO's activities in the promotion of labor-intensive development has been its adoption by international development agencies, including DANIDA, the World Bank, SIDA,

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projects which are more contributing to economic growth, job creation and ultimately poverty eradication”.

NORAD, Swiss Development Cooperation and the UK DFID (the major joint donors to ASIST), which have their own labor-based infrastructure works. Partnerships have also been established with the Asian Development Bank, Aus-AID, European Union, NORAD, SIDA, Ireland AID, Southern Africa Development Bank, Swiss Development Corporation, and the governments of Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. They all benefit, directly or indirectly, from the policy and conceptual work undertaken by the ILO, with the result that labor-based approaches are increasingly becoming an integral part of the development efforts of these organizations”<sup>69</sup>.

During the whole Consultation (Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminars; meetings with UNCT, government and other relevant partners during country missions, questionnaires to Member States and NGOs), the question was posed of how to increase the development results and impact of UN operational activities. The following can be said in this regard.

- Given the context of globalization, an issue is whether operational activities for development should maintain a mainly national focus or increasingly focus on the regional or inter-country level; it is felt that a regional/sub-regional approach could produce better results for the same resources (according to the FAO, in particular, many countries now work through regional institutions and a limited view of a country perspective might be restrictive); there remains, however, the problem that the UN is much better organized for national level operations rather than sub-regional or regional level ones.
- The UN’s role as a “global forum for reforms”<sup>70</sup> (which could be “included” within the advocacy domain) should be increased; the impact on poverty or malnutrition could be greater than the one the UN is able to achieve with other instruments.
- More importance should be given to policy advice than direct support<sup>71</sup> (also bearing in mind the financial context that makes doing more in terms of direct support difficult).
- More importance should be given also to advocacy (also through awareness activities and policy dialogue).

Moreover, the effectiveness of operational activities and their impact should be greater, the more an RBM approach is adopted (and the Rome, Geneva and Turin

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<sup>69</sup> ILO – Thematic evaluation report: employment-intensive investment and poverty alleviation.

<sup>70</sup> In the words of the FAO.

<sup>71</sup> This is a general view, particularly held by the DESA.

Seminars stressed how “additional resources are needed for improving M&E capacities of the UN system Agencies and aligning them to RBM”), which involves an appreciation of UN activities on the basis of results achieved or which could be achieved with respect to other parameters such as delivery (more about this will be said further on). However, one should talk in terms of an RBM approach and not of RBM as a whole, since many Agencies have adopted procedures similar to RBM, but not RBM itself.

Obviously, the results and impact of the operational activities could also increase in relation to an increment in funds for their financing. As already said, all those consulted unanimously stressed this serious limitation in the effectiveness and impact of UN operational activities<sup>72</sup>. In this regard, while it is not very realistic – although desirable – to expect an increase in funding made available by countries in the near future on the one hand, on the other hand it should underline that the UN is increasingly turning to alternative financing (even if to a very limited extent as yet)<sup>73</sup>, such as:

*(in the public sphere)*

- Regional entities, such as the European Union (with which an agreement was signed in May 2003 for harmonizing administrative procedures in order to facilitate the financing of UN cooperation activities by the European Commission<sup>74</sup>) or (to a much lesser extent) regional development banks themselves.
- Local administrations (the FAO, UNESCO, WHO, UN-Habitat and others receive funding by local administrations, above all, for financing/co-financing decentralized cooperation projects).

*(in the private sphere)*

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<sup>72</sup> For example, the Laos report states: “However, sustainability of activities implemented on the ground is constrained by lack of sustainable financial support for maintenance and lack of locally available managerial and technical skills. (Other major limitations are corruption and government rigidity). Cultural barriers (communicating concepts and technical terms in Lao language) are also a constraint given limited national professional capacities” (Ricaso-Nogara, cit.). .

<sup>73</sup> The issues connected to the financial mechanisms will be examined in § 10.

<sup>74</sup> As regards the European Union (EU), there are still many problems that lie outside the scope of this Document, and the main one being UN membership on the part of the EU (this has been solved in some cases, such as with the FAO, of which the EU is a member).

- Individual citizens and other actors, by fund-raising in the narrowest sense (the long experience in this by UNICEF is now practiced by other Agencies like the FAO, with TeleFood, and the UNHCR and WFP).
- Business enterprises, thanks to Corporate Social Responsibility (a leader in this field, among UN special Agencies, is the ITU, with the great involvement of telecommunications firms).
- Trade unions and entrepreneurs' associations, through the "union twinning" initiatives promoted by the ILO.
- UN officials themselves, through initiatives such as devolving 1% of their own salary as well as voluntary work in specific circumstances.

As far as the public sphere is concerned, it is important to remember that though in a reduced measure, greater funding could be made available by the so-called "dual" Countries.<sup>75</sup>

There is no doubt that the issue of development results and impact of UN operational activities is still very much an open one, in that it is not possible to establish – at international and national level – how much impact the UN has actually has in terms of the reduction of poverty and malnutrition or the increase of access to drinking water (to cite but a few examples). But the existence of this impact is undeniable, as is the will to increase it, albeit through an indirect approach.

## **9. CAPACITY OF THE UN SYSTEM AND ITS HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO SUPPORT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AND THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL CAPACITIES**

### *Capacities of the UN system*

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<sup>75</sup> That is to say that they are both beneficiaries as well as donors, such as Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, India and Turkey. These Countries are increasingly aware of their role as donors (and this role was clearly stressed by N. Chandavarkar - UNDESA, during the Turin Seminar). Many UN bodies also start to count on these funds. For example, in November 2003 India made its first donation to WFP, to support the starving people of Afghanistan.

The people consulted unanimously agree (also at the country level) that the capacities of the UN system and its human resources and skills to support national development efforts are generally insufficient with respect to the challenges and problems which UN men and women have to face in each country.

Not only this, but over the last few years these human resources have decreased in quantity and quality due to financial difficulties (for example, Junior Professional Officers are hired where once there were Senior Experts), while the work has tended to increase, now also including “new” activities such as advocacy. Moreover, the hoped for shift towards policy advice requires UN Agencies to further enhance their capacities.

Financial difficulties have led all the Agencies with country offices to make less and less use of international experts (except for JPOs and UNV<sup>76</sup>) and to turn to national experts. Except for some cases, the country offices of Agencies like the FAO, WFP or WHO have one senior international expert at the most (the Agency’s resident representative). According to some, this change is positive since it makes the most of national experts’ contributions (and perhaps they were sometimes less valued in the past) and allows considerable cost-saving. And, in any case, it is necessary to consider the fact that all the representatives of the State-Members of the southern hemisphere and of the CSI pointed out the need to employ a greater number of local experts as part of the internal UN staff at a national level.

However, this also entails some negative aspects linked to the insufficient training – and thus skills – of these national experts. The national UN experts are sometimes seen to have little “independence” and thus more limited negotiating skills when dealing with their respective national governments, which are the UN’s main opposite party at country level. This is particularly evident in countries with authoritarian regimes<sup>77</sup>.

As regards international staff, the Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminar participants, as well as the other people consulted unanimously affirmed that the personnel have a good grounding although with some flaws compared to the recent past (and compared to the other actors involved in development operational activities). However, what is most striking is the paradoxical situation of the international staff that boils down to essentially an objective inadequacy. It is very

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<sup>76</sup> but JPOs and UNVs appointments are limited to up to two years.

<sup>77</sup> A specific problem underlined by some NGOs is about the recruitment of national consultants. According to them, there would be a lack of transparency in their selection and some favoritism in fixing remuneration scales.

difficult for an individual (since, as we said earlier, there is never more than one senior international expert on site) to possess all the professional and technical skills for dealing not only with the issues pertaining to each of the UN Agencies, but also managerial type issues. There is sometimes also the risk of having eclectic persons who, unfortunately, are not always really technically competent, but may be good or average managers.

With respect to what has been said so far, we should stress the tendency (both in the documentation and in the Consultation, but not always) to treat the issue of human resources and skills available in terms of Agency by Agency without considering the UN system as a whole. By adopting this approach, the qualitative and quantitative insufficiency of UN human resources is unquestionable. However, it is fair to ask whether the situation may not be partly different in the case that, country by country, we jointly consider (above all, through a coordinated staff selection and recruitment procedure) the staff of UN Agencies, Funds and Programs present. In this way, among all these entities (and not in each of them), we may perhaps arrive at having human resources and skills that serve, at least, for a situation of greater adequacy, without the need for greater financial resources (which will certainly not be available, at least in the short run). For example, this is clearly seen by the UNCT of Benin: the team would need to draw from a pool of expertise in various domains comparable to what regional teams are able to assemble. If we were to work in full synergy, an economist within the PNUD could provide expertise to teams in other agencies. The present programming set up still makes it difficult to do so on a regular basis. Also, the UNCT does not have the budgeted means to implement effectively a policy of increased collaboration and joint programming<sup>78</sup>.

Also, on the basis of what was observed and discussed during the country-missions (and not only in Benin) and if we bear in mind what was said earlier about the growing acquisition of a UN identity among the various Agency officials, above all, at a local level, a “systemic solution” of this kind seems closer to hand than may actually appear possible<sup>79</sup>. At the country level, with each Agency still maintaining its own recruitment systems, one could have (and

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<sup>78</sup> Maurice Clapisson, cit.

<sup>79</sup> According to UNDG (Greentree Retreat ExCom meeting – 6 January 2004), technical staff at the regional level can form integrated teams to provide holistic advice both to UNCT and to government. This could be done by co-location at regional level, but can also be done with low cost support for “virtual” teams. On the other hand, ILO mentioned the need of “share consultants” at the national level also to contribute to resolving the problem of extreme tardiness (at the moment) in recruiting people (6-8 months to get the right capacity for provision to governments).

probably already do have) “gentlemen’s agreements” between Agency directors concerning the professional profiles of experts that each Agency has to hire. A more formal first step in this direction could be to gather all the information on experts available “on the market” into a single databank open to all the UN system (as was suggested by a FAO expert during the Rome Seminar).

In widening the analysis, it could be of interest to focus on the gaps and proposals for improvement that were indicated concerning the capacity of the UN system and its human resources and skills to support national development efforts.

- At the country level the UN system tends to be weak on policy analysis and formulation skills. The skills mix at both the level of individual agencies and the UN country team as a whole remains a concern, as well as the evident unevenness in staff quality key skills (for improving UN policy advice and advocacy) in these areas include policy analysis and formulation, macro-analysis, public expenditure reform, and impact assessment<sup>80</sup>;
- Other organizations (with respect to the UNDP) maintain a technical & project skill profile among field staff to a too large degree. More skills in upstream policy dialogue, advice and advocacy are often needed. A broad overview of key development challenges is necessary to be able to play a full role in harmonization and coordination measures. (We need) more mobile, flexible, experienced staff that have worked in more than one UN organization (and the) introduction of more knowledge networks in core thematic areas, preferably across UN organizations<sup>81</sup>
- We note the absence of an organizational strategy for building national staff capacities as well as the necessary budget to support (national) staff development and the absence of corporate effort to assess national staff capacities (in order to rationalize staffing and level and type of support to be provided in specific country context, especially in LDCs)<sup>82</sup>.
- There are often serious deficits in institutional memory, a result of high staff turn-over; there is a need for more continuity.

To bridge, at least partly, the gap in terms of human resources and skills that appears to characterize the UN at the country level, as already mentioned, there is still (in spite of the innovative indications mentioned previously) a tendency to adopt an Agency approach. In this regard, the main solutions identified during the

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<sup>80</sup> UK and Germany representatives

<sup>81</sup> Norway representative

<sup>82</sup> Laos report.

Consultation (and, in some respects, already put into practice) seem to be the following, in short:

- Increasing the support to local offices by HQs where, unlike at the country level, all the necessary skills are normally available<sup>83</sup>. This greater support is much more practicable today than in the past, thanks to ICT enabling participation in meetings and conferences from a distance as well as distance training and advice in real time.
- Stepping up the decentralization processes by trying, in particular, to strengthen regional and sub-regional offices in terms of skills and human resources (this is what Agencies such as the FAO, ILO and WHO are doing).
- Increasing the support to local offices by regional and, above all, sub-regional offices<sup>84</sup>, which, also with a view to the currently available financial resources, can meet the various needs through short ad hoc missions of their staff in the various countries concerned.
- Practicing other actions for a better management of Agencies knowledge resources; for example, the WHO introduced specialized profiles depending on the country profile, for its national staff.
- Introducing “mutual learning” programs<sup>85</sup>.
- Re-profiling, if the case, the staff (f.i. in UN-Habitat or UNDP, there is a need to address governance and related policy issues which require appropriate training in development policy and there are not enough skilled people for such demands; UNEP lacks adequate core professional staff for program areas, such as environmental law, biodiversity, and environmental assessment in its regional offices; etc.).

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<sup>83</sup> For example, as regards advice in the normative field.

<sup>84</sup> On the basis of current experience of Agencies such as the FAO or WHO, regional offices are too “distant” from the countries concerned and tend to have functions more similar to those of HQs. Sub-regional offices, instead, find it easier to carry out a similar function, also because they have to deal with a smaller number of countries.

<sup>85</sup> IFAD had produced 15 case studies focusing on instances in which this Agency – through its field operations – had successfully influenced policies and institutions in favor of the rural poor. Currently, the developing of tools to guide IFAD staff and consultants is well underway. A working group has initiated an internal ‘mutual learning’ program and meets regularly to exchange staff experiences in institutional analysis and policy reform. Work done at the departmental level is integrated into activities at the divisional level. The Africa I Division in June 2002 and the Asia and the Pacific Division in September 2002 initiated a study and training exercise for staff in order to generate institutional assessment tools. The intention is to develop a ‘living’ sourcebook for policy dialogue and institutional transformation (provided that resources to continue this work through a thematic group and external consultancy can be mobilized).

- Greater valorization of UN experts in the country offices – in order to increase their expertise – and particularly of national experts, through training and capacity-building. It is worth underlining that, in this regard, some inter-agency training initiatives<sup>86</sup> (which are still an exception rather than the rule, for the moment) have been positively implemented in some countries.

Turning now to the last point in more detail, the Rome and Geneva Seminars stressed that:

- Training should be as appropriate as possible with respect to the problems that UN experts have to face, and this means broadening their areas of competence (for example, now they have to be competent in governance and in partnership-building), and there must be greater attention to the planning of strategies and policies (such as the WHO’s health planning systems) at M&E.
- Principles of knowledge management should be introduced/strengthened.
- Training should also be of the “distance” or “on the job” type, through internships, staff rotation between various offices and so on.

All the above concerns UN bodies with local or, at least, sub-regional offices (such as the UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, WFP or ILO). There are others, however, which only have a HQ (or little more), such as UNCTAD, ITC and IFAD, or that have a streamlined decentralized structure, such as UN-Habitat, UNEP or, in particular, UNESCO (through national commissions). In these cases, they operate in the various countries through their HQ or regional offices, but especially by enhancing national actors outside the organization (more on this will be said below, when dealing with the promotion of national capacities).

A final issue to consider regarding UN human resources is externalization. In this regard, situations are rather different between the various Agencies. At the two extremes we have UNCTAD<sup>87</sup>, which tends to keep staff to a minimum and, where possible, eliminate any contributions of outside personnel, thus almost exclusively counting on its own staff; and the ILO that, where possible, tends to

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<sup>86</sup> During the Rome seminar, the WFP, for example, stressed that with capacity-building there are integrated activities with other UN bodies.

<sup>87</sup> UNCTAD also aspires to the diffusion of new tools such as handbooks (on internet technologies, open-source software, measuring e-commerce, on-line payment systems, taxation of e-commerce and legal aspects of e-commerce (Review of Technical Cooperation Activities of UNCTAD, Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD (TD/B/50/2), 1 July 2003).

reduce (especially by taking advantage of staff retirement) internal personnel, focusing on a shift from the use of regular staff to external consultants for issues that are not foreseeable as a priority area, and to concentrate staff activities on the agenda, which is, however, much smaller and more focused than before. The other Agencies considered in this Document are somewhere in between these two extremes and tend, for the moment, to be closer to the UNCTAD situation. A completely separate case is that of IFAD, because it is a Fund whose programs and projects are carried out by third parties.

### *Promotion of national capacities*

At the heart of UN operational activities lies the question of the promotion of national capacities. This is an extremely important issue and recognised as such by all the consulted member states and NGOs. The question can be broken down into many sub-issues such as the consolidation of public administrations (both central and local), the strengthening of NGOs (also in technical and managerial terms), the formation of local leaders at grass-root level, the fight against the brain drain, the upgrading of the private sector and so on.

The WHO considers capacity building at the national level “at the core of its business”. The same can be said for the ILO, as demonstrated by the existence of the ILO Turin Training Center<sup>88</sup> and its activities as well as the many training initiatives carried out in the LDCs. For FAO, Capacity building is a core issue viewed as “... work that strengthens the ability of people, groups, communities or institutions to build structures, systems, and organizations to better achieve planned goals. Capacity-building activities are designed to increase individual and organizational skills and competencies, in a manner that reflects the principles of empowerment and equality”. One of the main UNEP objectives is to build in-country capacity to identify mitigation, vulnerability, and adaptation measures and response strategies for key sectors and enhance the capacity of development planners and decision makers to integrate environmental concerns into national planning and development activities. The WFP also invests a great deal of energy in enhancing capacities at national level as regards emergency preparedness, vulnerability assessment, management of school feeding, and logistics management for food handling.

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<sup>88</sup> In 2002 the ILO Turin Training Center trained some 8,000 persons, mainly dealing with trainer-training. It should be noted that the ILO does a lot of work for employment purposes, given its view that poverty can be reduced through employment.

It was noted by UNCTAD that the concept of ‘capacity building’ has now shifted to ‘capacity development’ where the role of the UN is to enable self-development and the resources for countries to access and use knowledge. UNCTAD thus works to provide resources to knowledge institutions while UNAIDS focuses on capacity development for (a) strengthening national AIDS councils that can lead to better coordination; (b) developing partnership forums; and (c) building leadership and management capacities for complex issues related to HIV/AIDS. For the WHO, the capacity-development it carries on consists of giving greater importance to the valorization of existing capacities rather than the creation of new ones.

The Member States also attribute great importance to promoting national capacities, stressing, as we shall see further ahead, the importance of these activities implemented by the UN of their own Country.

The promotion of national capacities is not pursued solely by the UN but also by many other actors of international cooperation, if not all of them.

However, we should mention in this regard, too, that the UN has its own peculiarities:

- in relation to the operationalizing of MDGs/IADGs;
- for the acquisition of innovative capacities (above all, when linked to experimentations and pilot projects conducted by UN Agencies);
- in particular situations such as conflict or post-conflict ones – where national capacities have been eroded – thanks to their neutrality and multilateralism;
- in relation to certain issues of a universal nature, such as globalization.

UN capacity-building is not solely aimed at national governments and their related entities. “Capacity building of the UN should look at the range of entities such as civil society, local authorities, and those who can serve as ‘honest brokers’ – particularly in complex emergencies and post-conflict situations (when governments are party to the conflict, the capacities of other institutions have to be built) and where human rights are not a framework of governance”<sup>89</sup>.

UN-Habitat, in particular, stressed how capacity building must also look at strengthening local authorities (and at improving their relations with national

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<sup>89</sup> An example (according to the FAO) is when there is conflict concerning UN human rights mandates where national governments do not accept or follow human rights principles.

governments<sup>90</sup>), and also stakeholders such as CSOs and NGOs<sup>91</sup>, universities, and research institutions<sup>92</sup>. The ITC and ILO<sup>93</sup> underlined the importance of strengthening entrepreneurial capacities.

What has been said earlier on the training of UN national experts also holds for the promotion of national capacities. In particular, there is the need to develop national capacities in knowledge management and sharing. There is also the need to build a culture of learning in development; this can be done by creating a learning platform for national and project staff. National capacities in the evaluation field must also be strengthened.

Capacity building does not just mean training. For instance, in Laos<sup>94</sup>, some donors suggested that capacity building must involve a cultural transformation (e.g., improving work culture, civic responsibility, a sense of nationhood) and that the UN should articulate this as part of capacity building strategy.

According to this issue, the FAO, for example, highlighted how the national execution and TCDC modalities provide good opportunities for building national

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<sup>90</sup> F.i. the project Enhance National Capacity for Sustainable Urban Management implemented (Nigeria) with Government- Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, National Planning Commission, State Governments of Oyo, Kano and Enugu; Local Authorities- Local Governments of Ibadan, Kano and Enugu; Civil Society- Urban Development Bank of Nigeria and UNDP. The Federal Ministry of Works and Housing undertook a project to extend the Sustainable Cities Program to the cities of Kano and Enugu. The cities recognized the need to be coordinated at the federal level, and agreed to allocate resources to establish a Sustainable Cities Coordination Unit. This allocation was used to procure the services of a National Environmental Planning Adviser to support the cities and to establish a Federal Urban Planning and Management capacity.

<sup>91</sup> According to the Malian NGO AFEM, for example, “The UN development cooperation should develop the capacity of the local organization in terms technical support, training, equipment so that they could one day develop programs through their own capacities. Qualified human resources are essential to effective implementation and partnership”, while according to the international network IFBPW, “UN should support the training of local key leaders at grass roots levels can turn policy into actions to enable them to develop capacity with their communities”.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, the Laos Government suggested possible ways to sustain capacity building by improving the capacities of academic and research institutions to train professionals and support a ‘pre-service’ training program for prospective young professionals who could be recruited into the administration to ensure a sustainable succession of government officials to replace the older cadre and to augment capacity to meet multiple demands on limited national professionals as counterparts for donor-assisted projects

<sup>93</sup> See, f.i. the ILO “Start and Improve your Business” (SIYB) methodology is used in more than 80 countries. By following an institution-building strategy, working with existing local and national organizations to train trainers from partner organizations, who in turn train the micro and small-scale entrepreneurs, the program reaches large numbers of people and is sustainable.

<sup>94</sup> Ricasio-Nogara, cit.

capacities, but their effectiveness depends on a number of factors, such as the “basic level” of these capacities, which is sometimes too low. The ILO has adopted a method whereby top level national counterparts are asked to write the ILO reports and documents, but in doing so, they often meet with similar problems since the ILO demands quality from their work, without achieving an adequate result. WHO has promoted the Observatory of Human Resources in Health Sector Reforms<sup>95</sup> and also deals with the issue of “brain drain” (Migration of health workers – the “brain drain”<sup>96</sup> of health workforce within and between countries) IFAD (which does not act directly, but through third parties even outside the UN) underlines the function of the thematic groups set up in various countries with coordination and policy advice functions, which have also had capacity-building functions and have been efficient.

Finally, we must emphasize that capacity building is a long term process. UN Agencies are aware of this and point out several difficulties: some of the ITC programs were directed too much at individuals and not enough at institutions which harbor them and which guarantee the future. . Greater emphasis should be placed on institutional capacity building rather than individual skills building. Many of UNCTAD’s capacity-building programs are short-term training programs that are insufficient for enabling individuals to sustain activities on their own.

What are the effects of all this UN attention towards promoting national capacities? Important results have been reached from what can be seen by the missions carried out in the framework of the TCRP 2004 preparatory process, For example, in Benin a strengthening of national expertise is noted in the sectors associated with UN activities during the 1990s<sup>97</sup>...In Zambia, UN system, according to UNCT, all things considered, it had been effective in supporting the efforts and building the capacities of institutions operating in the social sector,

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<sup>95</sup> This is cooperative initiative promoted by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and WHO Regional Office of the Americas. The initiative supports the creation of national inter-institutional groups (e.g. Ministries of health, universities, and professional associations). Nineteen countries participate in the initiative, with different emphasis and priorities, according to national concern

<sup>96</sup> Brain drain is an increasingly frequent phenomenon (e.g. mentioned in the Zambia Report and also according to indications given by some NGOs such as WCL, stating that, “The UN should give priority to reversing the brain drain”) as another challenge that requires UN attention.

<sup>97</sup> Maurice Clapisson, cit.

particularly, the institutions managing humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, health, education, and child protection programs<sup>98</sup>.

According to the Jamaican representative, “Today, there is available within the island, a cadre of professionals equipped with in-depth knowledge in project design, project planning, implementation and management. Partnerships have also been forged with communities and local leaders have been trained in project preparation and management to ensure sustainability in the community development process... Assistance has been provided to improve the capacities of the local government authorities.” And, according to the Thai representative, “The development and organization of international training courses and study tours under the trilateral cooperation modality with UN agencies have helped strengthen capacity of Thai institutes. These courses show cases Thailand’s success stories and shared experiences in many fields. Some of these courses have been adapted as regular courses offered by the academic institutes. This is a proof that Thai institutes have to keep build capacity continuously to sustain and support these activities. Some of UN agencies even supported the strengthening of database and further development of more advanced courses.”

In Laos, the DESA Country-Mission sees the issue of capacity building as directly connected to the issue of national ownership. Without adequate capacity, the government cannot take full ownership of its own development process and effectively coordinate donor assistance. In light of this consideration, it was observed that it is critical to reflect on how realistic it is to expect or by what standards national ownership is to be judged and in which area the UN system support would be more effective in supporting the government in building the capacity “to own”. The national execution modality has helped in fostering Government ownership<sup>99</sup>

In this regard, it was emphasized that since capacity building is a long term process, the understanding of what should be considered an effective result achieved with the support of the UN development cooperation might have to be revisited.)

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<sup>98</sup> The donors further commented on the capacity building role of the UN development system. While there is no doubt that the system was a repository of knowledge, skills, and information, it had not been quite effective in transferring the benefits of its expertise on a lasting basis to its Zambian counterparts and target groups – that is, in building *sustainable* human and institutional capacity which would place Zambians firmly in the driver’s seat (Zambia report, cit.).

<sup>99</sup> Ricasio-Nogara, cit.

Finally, all the participants in the Rome and Geneva seminars stressed the need to increase the promotion of national capacities at the country level in the near future.

## **10. MANAGEMENT UPGRADING: COORDINATION, HARMONIZATION AND CONVERGENCE IN UN SYSTEM – PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES**

This is the issue that received the most attention by member states (but also the NGOs and, previously, the UN experts and officials consulted), who obviously linked it to the reform process underway within the UN system.

In order to facilitate the exposition of points of view expressed in relation to the broad issue dealt with in this section, it is worth highlighting the constitutive elements that came to light after the consultation. These elements are:

- Inter-UN coordination at country level and, specifically, the Resident Coordinator System; the pooling of competence and expertise and, more generally, the functioning of the UNCT (United Nations Country Team); as well as the pooling of structures (UN-House), equipment and services;
- UN coordination at world level and, specifically, the role of the UNDG and its ExCom;
- Funding mechanisms and Inter-UN competitiveness;
- Common assessment and programming procedures and, in particular, the CCA and UNDAF, and their relations with other “similar” instruments such as the PRSP, CDF or IF;
- The RBM approach;
- Accounting and procedural harmonisation.

We shall now consider each of these constitutive elements in more detail in order to draw some conclusions on the tendency towards convergence (or divergence) underway in the UN system. Naturally, these elements are strictly interrelated and this is only an attempt at making some “order” for dealing with them separately.

## *UN coordination, RCS and UNCT*

The institution of the Resident Coordinator System and United Nations Country Team is welcomed by all those who had an opinion on this (UN officials, almost all the member states and some NGOs).

With reference to this, the Country-Missions have met with great interest.

In Paraguay, for instance, the United Nations System consists of UN Specialized Agencies (WHO/PAHO, UNESCO, WMO and FAO), Funds and Programs (UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP) as well as the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank). UNFPA and UNESCO are represented by regional representatives residing elsewhere in Latin America but participate in the country team either through national officers (in the case of UNFPA) as well as visits of the regional representatives (both UNESCO and UNFPA). UNESCO is represented through its Cluster Office to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, located in Montevideo. The UN Paraguay website provides a unified portal to access the websites of the agencies and provides easy access to key coordination documents such as the CCA, UNDAF, 2003 National Human Development Report and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. There are five permanent inter-agency teams<sup>100</sup>. The UNCT has been able to achieve its many joint products and harmonious working style in large measure thanks to the personalities and management styles of the RC and his predecessor as well as those of the members of the UNCT. In interviews with the RC and UNCT, the strongest message that came out was their perception of the importance of a “service mentality”, rather than a “visibility mentality”, a commitment to the shared governance of the UNCT, and the collegial treatment of national and international staff, both of whom are members of the UNCT. The experience in Paraguay with the UN House, and the process of preparing a CCA and UNDAF have created an inter-agency culture such as did not exist prior to these developments. In fact, a new language and vocabulary and way of thinking has emerged where people speak of working *interagencialmente*, a Spanish adverb

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<sup>100</sup> (1) the Technical Secretariat for Monitoring the UNDAF (ORC, PAHO/WHO, UNDP, UNICEF), (2) the PAR-INFO Information Database Group (ORC, PAHO/WHO, UNDP, UNICEF), (3) the Interagency Group on Communications (UNIC, ORC, UNFPA, UNICEF, PAHO/WHO, UNDP), (3) MDG Monitoring Group (ORC, UNFPA, UNICEF, PAHO/WHO, UNDP, FAO), (4) UN House Group on Common Services and Administration (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, UNIC).

coined, with no direct English equivalent, to refer to working “in an interagency manner”.<sup>101</sup>

In Laos, the UNCT consists of country representatives of UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, WFP, WHO, WB, ADB, IMF and ILO. (Note: ILO does not have a regular field office representation but is represented by a Chief Technical Advisor). Non-resident agencies are represented by their regional representation based in Bangkok, including ILO, IOM, UNESCO, UNHCHR, UNCHR, UNIDO, IFAD, and UNCRD... An elaborate system of group mail (virtual house) has been established, interconnecting a number of the agencies. Work linking the other agencies<sup>102</sup> is still in progress.

One can see that in both cases, as well as in the case of Benin, the UNCT applies to all UN entities regardless of their standing in Headquarters nomenclature. Also, the World Bank and the IMF are members of the UNCT<sup>103</sup>.

The Resident Coordinator System is more operative, if there is a UN-House in that Country, that is, common premises for all (or a part) of the UN bodies that make up the UNCT. This is the case of Paraguay.

“Since 2003, the following UN entities and agencies are now located in the UN House, a fine modern building in the Villa Mora neighborhood of Asunción, a central location that permits easy access to the government offices downtown and the other aid partner offices: UNDP, UNFPA, UNIC, World Bank and UNICEF. An efficient and effective scheme exists for sharing rent and administrative service costs on a pro-rata and usage basis among the agencies. As an indication, current pro-rata cost sharing shares are: 37% UNDP, 23% UNICEF, 8.5% UNFPA, 9% World Bank, 11.5% UNIC, and 11% for a regional project, executed by UNOPS... Considerable synergies with benefits for coordination work were observed from the common premises. First, there is considerable camaraderie and sharing of information and ideas among the working level national staff of the different agencies, which would be more difficult in separate premises, where only the heads of agencies would come together for regular meetings. Second, it is possible to arrange *ad hoc* interagency meetings much more easily and faster than it would be in separate premises. Inter-agency projects such as the Social Cost Project, led by UNICEF and UNDP, are much easier to monitor because UNICEF

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<sup>101</sup> Nikhil Chandavarkar, UNESA mission to Paraguay – Review of countries experiences for the UN TCRP, January 2004.

<sup>102</sup> Jana Gracia Ricaso, Monica Nogara, cit.

<sup>103</sup> Maurice Clapissou, Review of Country experiences for the TCRP 2004 – Benin. Summary of findings of the DESA mission (23-27 February 2004).

and UNDP share premises. The integration of several UN offices into a UN House in Paraguay have already resulted in advantages for other partners and visiting missions, who are able to visit and interact more easily with the different partners. The creation of the UN House has facilitated harmonization of administrative procedures and has contributed to a better and more efficient use of resources and economies of scale... Indeed even the UNIC, with its budget of some \$60,000 per annum is able to project an excellent general image of the United Nations as a whole. The same point was made by those bilateral donors who have small programs<sup>104</sup>.

One can note, perhaps with surprise, that among the UN agencies that share the UN-House there is also the World Bank. As just mentioned above, the UN-House, at least in Paraguay, does not only have a logistic role: it, in fact, encourages integration among all those that work there<sup>105</sup>.

Therefore, one has the impression, at least in some cases, that “competitiveness” if not “antagonism” between the UN and the World Bank (which many erroneously position outside the UN system) tends to diminish. This has also been noted in Laos (where, what is more, the UN-House does not exist): “The RC considers collaboration between the World Bank and the UN (particularly UNDP) in supporting aid coordination in Laos through the Round-Table Meeting to be a model. Both organizations work harmoniously, with UNDP co-chairing the RTM process and providing technical assistance, while the World Bank assisted in preparing the documentation and also provided technical assistance in the preparatory process”<sup>106</sup>.

Returning to the UN-House, it is opportune to remember that the UNDG (ExCom retreat 6.1.2004) made the recommendation, “to pursue more imaginative inter-agency hosting arrangements”<sup>107</sup>, adding “we need also to reduce overhead cost in countries with very low levels of UN investment through joint offices with shared administrative/financial staff; larger operational agencies can “host”

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<sup>104</sup> Nikhil Chandavarkar, cit.

<sup>105</sup> The same occurs in Belarus (“the establishment of the UN house in Belarus in 1998 allowed some of the UN agencies to reside under the same roof and made their coordination a daily-business, Whereas that do not dwell in the House also manage to work hand and glove with their UN colleagues”) and in Ukraine (“Today, UN house in Kiev is the centre that is gathering regularly all members of Un family to Ukraine as well as representatives of government institutions for meetings and discussions on the priority development issues”), as indicated by representatives of these two Countries.

<sup>106</sup> Ricasio-Nogara, cit.

<sup>107</sup> ExCom UNDG Greentree Retreat, 6 January 2004.

smaller agencies, and form clusters of UN agencies with complementary technical skills. (More generally) UN system can develop knowledge networks where staff from all agencies can share/exchange knowledge, ideas, and best practices. Only one example so far – MDG net”. During the retreat, it was also emphasized that “coordination and cooperation are not free commodities...UN entities would pay its share of core costs based on some formula to be developed (we have to) define savings where possible to help offset new costs” (this issue, as we have seen, has been resolved in the case of Paraguay).

However, the establishment of the RCS is not all smooth running - there are some problems.

First of all, there are delays. The UN-House only exists in a minority number of Countries (among those in which the UN carries out operational activities) and at times, the basic instruments at the electronic communication level (as is the case of Zambia) are lacking. However, the tendency to share at least some equipment and services seems to be an increasing and unstoppable process.

Secondly, there is the increase in workload. At the country level, many lament the quantitative increase in workloads with no corresponding increase in benefits. For example, for the WHO, the birth of the UNDG and of the resident coordinator system (leading to greater coordination of the UN entities dealing with development) “has caused a big burden especially in the beginning. The process implies more relations with other national bodies beyond the Ministry of Health (Finance, Planning, etc.) and international agencies. There is as yet no evidence of the effect in reducing transaction costs. But the costs of the efforts of coordination have certainly increased. The cost of participation in RC/coordination<sup>108</sup> work may exceed the work time devoted to development activities”. Similar observations were made by the FAO and WFP experts consulted<sup>109</sup>. The UN-Habitat representative at the Rome seminar went as far as talking of a “new set of work that distracts from operational activities for development”.

However, the issue regarding the non-decrease (and in some cases, the increase) in transaction costs has also been reported by some UN Member-State

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<sup>108</sup> There is also a tendency to criticize the excessive hegemony of the UNDP in the RC system (a de facto and not normative hegemony that is).

<sup>109</sup> An informal survey of WFP country offices showed significant differences in their access and contribution to the dialogue. Participation in the dialogue is very important; but it is also time-consuming and difficult to balance against operational needs, especially for a small office.

representatives (Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and United Kingdom) and has been ascertained in some Country-Missions (for example, in Zambia).

A fourth problem regards the differentiated level of involvement in the establishment of the UNCS and the RCS in the different UN entities. This problem has been reported by several Member States of the northern hemisphere (Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Finland and Norway).

A fifth problem concerns the Head of the UN Country Team: the criteria selection and the level of authority. According to the UNDG, “the RC should be given more formal authority” and “We have a shortage of candidates with the right mix of qualifications; the RC selection process has to be greatly improved”, but the UNDG states that the candidates from Agencies are few and not ‘outstanding’. On the other hand, with regards to this, there still tends to be an Agency view point, on the basis of which many UN body representatives tend to justify this tendency, stating that their respective bodies can certainly not lose their leading figures. But with this point of view, it will certainly be difficult to reach that level of integration that the UN needs at a Country level.

In strengthening the Office of Resident Coordinator, particular attention should be given to the working relationship between the Office and the UN agencies and options that could be explored to make the Office of Resident Coordinator the hub in the planning, implementation, coordination, review, and monitoring of UN operations<sup>110</sup>. We need to vest “the RC with some directly reporting strategic planning and programming capacities that enhances all UN activities in that country”<sup>111</sup> and UN entities “should assign their personnel to the country mission with a direct local reporting relationship to the RC and with a functional reporting relationship to their home agency”. In short, a dual loyalty is asked of the various UN officials at the country-level: towards the head of the UNCT in the Country and towards his/her own HQ.

A last question<sup>112</sup> is how the vertical structure of a Government characterized by little inter-departmental interaction (like in Laos), affects the UN system in

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<sup>110</sup> From the donors’ viewpoint, in Laos, the work by UN agencies have a mixed record, with some doing a credible job, and others doing good but limited work in the right areas. There was a suggestion from one donor that the UN should be able to effectively leverage its coordinative position in major programs to influence policy shifts toward adopting more efficient implementation strategies to hasten progress in producing results.

<sup>111</sup> UNDG-ExCom Greentree retreat 6.1.2004

<sup>112</sup> Laos country mission – Ricasio and Nogara, cit.

coming up with a holistic overall country strategy and forging greater inter-sectoral coordination and joint programs. On the other hand, the limited coordination capacity of the government was also recognized as an important opportunity for the UN system to play a strategic role for coordination at sectoral and cross-sectoral level.

### *UN central coordination, UNDG and ExCom*

Besides the national level, a greater coordination between UN entities is also desirable at a central level, according to both Member States and NGOs (and also by the majority of the UN officials). In this regard, the Member States firstly refer to the UNDG as a useful tool but whose potential must, at least in part, still be reached (also because of rivalries within the UN system). Apart from the UNDG, the importance of the relationships between the Boards of Funds and Programs and the relative propagation of joint programs<sup>113</sup>, even at a central level, is highlighted.

However, coordination at a central level is much more difficult than at a local level, first of all, for mere logistic reasons, seen that the HQ of UN entities are spread throughout the world. However, the importance of this factor is increasingly less significant thanks to ICT development, though not irrelevant, if one considers, for example, that there is increasingly more promotion of joint evaluations and initiatives, above all, among those Agencies with a common denominator as regards to issues (not only) and, at the same time, with their HQs located in the same city. This is the case with the FAO, IFAD and WFP (based in

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<sup>113</sup> A certain importance is also held by central structures such as the United Nations and other partners through the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC).

Rome), as regards nutrition and agriculture<sup>114</sup>, and the WTO, UNCTAD and ITC (based in Geneva) as regards trade<sup>115</sup>.

Another obstacle which is much greater at a central level than at a national level is connected to the growing competitiveness among the UN entities. This extremely complex issue will be dealt with further ahead (Financial mechanisms and inter-UN competition). A third factor is connected to the hegemony which (at HQ levels) is usually held by the Boards (and by the Assemblies that support them) as well as by the administrative apparatus, that is, by those, who in any case, tend to “defend” the identity of the agencies more than any other. In the case of Boards, this could appear paradoxical at a first glance, in that they generally refer to the same Members (the various Countries in the world). However, the Governments of these Countries are usually all but homogeneous and often the ministries that are referred to, are different (the Ministries of Agriculture/Rural Development for the FAO, of Health for the WHO, of Welfare/Work/Social Affairs for the ILO, of Overseas Trade for the UNCTAD, etc) and, as highlighted by the Turin Seminar, they frequently contradict themselves by representing different views in different governing bodies. Then, it makes it difficult for donors to ensure a consistent approach to the system as a whole

A fourth factor is connected to the role of the UNDP. In fact, the choice (indisputable in some ways) for NEX<sup>116</sup> and the preeminence practiced *de facto* even if not *de jure* at, at both the UNDG, as well as at the various RCS, tend to

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<sup>114</sup> F.i. the three Rome-based food Agencies, IFAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), collaborated in developing a common agenda for presentation to the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development. In addition, the heads of the three agencies presented the fourth edition of the joint publication *Working Together to Fight Hunger and Poverty* at the FAO Conference in November 2003. The three Rome-based agencies have also worked with the Government of Italy to extend bilateral debt reduction in Ecuador and Egypt; the funds previously used to service debt are channelled to increase food security and reduce poverty. Such initiatives notwithstanding, the number of partnership activities is not growing to the extent that the three organizations would like, and other opportunities will need to be identified and developed.

<sup>115</sup> The beneficiary countries themselves have developed a greater familiarity with the comparative roles of the 3 trade agencies based in Geneva. WTO, an institution considered not friendly towards poor countries is brought alongside the more development oriented UNCTAD and ITC that offer opportunities for developing policy options for poor countries.

<sup>116</sup> In some countries, 95% of UNDP projects are implemented through NEX, directed mainly at strengthening government ownership, while incorporating NGOs and other stakeholders. But the greater ownership is often found to be a burden by governments, particularly the arduous administrative tasks associated with project execution. In many countries, governments are unwilling or unable to pay all the administrative costs. In additional, NEX has not been able to address directly the overall problem of weak public sector institutions.

exacerbate the relationships between the UNDP and the various UN entities. This factor certainly does not facilitate coordination which should be the key role of the UNDP.

Finally, a fifth factor which creates confusion, if not an obstacle, is the presence of entities within the UN galaxy with an uncertain statute and which, in some cases is either dysfunctional, *de facto* or perceived as such.

The first of these is the World Bank which, though at times some choose to forget (as seen at the Turin Seminar), is a Specialized UN Agency to all the effects (and in fact, is part of the UNCT). Instead, all too often, a demarcation line is made between the UN and the World Bank considering the last mentioned as *de facto* and outside the system. Today, this no longer has any sense seen that the traditional line of demarcation between the activities of the UN operational programs and the World Bank have broken down and WB moves increasingly into softer areas. But only few donor governments have addressed the issue.

To estrange the WB outside the UN would mean to place a very strong actor that carries out and can carry out operational activities similar to those of other UN entities and which the donors could “prefer” for real financial reasons (capitals tend to see the WB as an easier place to move the Agenda due to their voting control) or presumed financial reasons (the overall costs appear lower when large amounts of projects are lumped into the equation, as often is the case of the WB). It should not be forgotten that the WB’s adhesion in a “less linear” manner to some fundamental characteristics of UN operational activities (see § 6), could create a minor legitimization towards the beneficiary Countries, to their civil society, to the NGOs, etc.

The second entity which we wish to refer to is UNAIDS. UNAIDS is a joint cosponsored program of the United Nations. The program started with six cosponsors (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank) and subsequently increased to eight with the addition of UNDCP (today UNODC) in 1999, and ILO in 2002. This joint program should provide global leadership in response to epidemics; achieve and promote global consensus on policy and program approaches; strengthen the capacity to monitor trends and ensure that appropriate and effective policies and strategies are implemented at the country level; strengthen the capacity of national governments to develop comprehensive national strategies and implement effective HIV/AIDS activities; promote broad-based political and social mobilization to prevent and respond to HIV/AIDS; and advocate greater political commitment at the global and country levels including the mobilization and allocation of adequate resources. One would imagine and

hope that through this entity, the UN (or at least its promoters) would have dealt with the question of AIDS all together. At present this is absolutely not the case. In fact, UNAIDS has become yet another UN body within the UN System that is in “competition” with its very same constituent bodies.

We can also make reference to a third grouping of organizations such as the UNIFEM or the UNCDF (as well as the UNRISD). These entities must deal with enormous issues such as that of gender, research on social development, and providing development financing as a small-scale multilateral investment organization in support of the LDCs. However, with respect to these issues, they have ridiculous means available to them:

- UNIFEM is an innovative and catalytic fund with a budget of just over \$30 million a year, so its efforts on behalf of women have necessarily been limited. The larger UN agencies must get on board...UN partners observed that UNIFEM influence at the policy level within UNCT was limited due to its small size and limited budget. In essence, they noted that UNIFEM was unable to ‘pay to play.’ Likewise, there is great variation in the way that UNIFEM was enabled to participate in UNCT; in some countries, its status as having a ‘project’ prevents it from participating in Heads of Agency meetings, while in other countries, it is invited either as a full member or an observer<sup>117</sup>;
- UNCDF plays a unique role in providing development financing as a small-scale multilateral investment organization in support of the LDCs and its relevance to the implementation of the Brussels Program of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010 but with a portfolio distribution in 2002 of only US\$ 19 million.<sup>118</sup>

Finally, reference cannot but be made to UNOPS, which is not part of the Secretariat, and is neither a Program, Fund nor a Specialized Agency. It was established as an “operative branch” of the UNDP (as an integral part of it), and should have then become part of the Secretariat. Instead, it was constituted as an autonomous body which, in fact, “competes” with Specialized Agencies to carry out projects financed either by UN Funds and Programs or by external donors.

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<sup>117</sup> UNIFEM, Rapid Review of UNIFEM’s Field Programmes on Women, Peace, and Security; UNIFEM, “Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment” by Elisabeth Rehn & Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

<sup>118</sup> A/RES/55/279; UNCDF, 2002 Results-oriented annual report of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (DP/2003/13), 6 May 2003.

Recently, a possibility was raised that it have the role of managing the unified services of the various UN entities at a Country level.

### *Financial mechanisms and inter-UN competition*

Competitiveness between the UN entities is one of the most deleterious issues within the System. During the meeting of the Executive Committee of the UNDG held on 6 January 2004 on 2004 TCRP, it was underlined, among other aspects, that “competition rather than coherence is still seen as the defining characteristic of the UN field system...” and we need “to strengthen the image of the UN development system as one characterized by coherence rather than competition...”<sup>119</sup>. Even Douglas Lindores “from outside”<sup>120</sup>, stressed how the inauspicious effects of “competing UN voices on fundraising (that) create the impression of an overly complex system that is overlapping and duplicative or at the very least poorly coordinated”.

This competition is all the greater since many Agencies today tend to have overlapping responsibilities (due to the increasingly integrated character of the operational activities), increasingly smaller core budgets<sup>121</sup> and the growing need to resort to extra-budgetary financing<sup>122</sup>.

As highlighted during the Greentree Retreat of the UNDG ExCom, both the donors and the UN bodies are responsible for this situation. The “donors are increasingly moving away from the principles of multilateralism by an ongoing growth in earmarked funding paralleled by stagnant or slow growing core funding. Unfortunately, some UN funds and programs are actively encouraging this shift through the cost recovery policies they adopt on earmarked resources...

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<sup>119</sup> UNDG Executive Committee – report on the Greentree Retreat 6 January 2004.

<sup>120</sup> Douglas Lindores, cit.

<sup>121</sup> For instance, in Paraguay, UNDP has the largest programme, exceeding \$100 million over the above period, virtually of all which, except some \$0.5 million of core resources, is non-core in origin. In contrast, the programmes of the other agencies for this period, UNICEF (\$4.6 million), UNFPA (\$4.4 million), WHO/PAHO (\$0.8 million), are funded mostly by core resources.

<sup>122</sup> As has been highlighted in 2003 in a UNDP report on technical cooperation in the UN system, the (proper) propensity to carry out multisector/integrated projects has broadened the competencies of individual Agencies. The various donors intending to entrust the conduction of such a programme/project to a UN Agency can thus choose between various Agencies. With fewer and fewer regular funds available, the Agencies thus compete with each other for these donors.

UN programs are increasingly becoming contract executing agencies for bilateral donors.<sup>123</sup>”

Therefore, it seems that most bilateral donors would probably choose competition rather than coordination or coherence. As Douglas Lindores<sup>124</sup> wrote in his paper, “...most donors are schizophrenic about the UN operational activities... They insist on levels of cooperation and coordination.... (and) by earmarking an increasing % of the funds, they bypass the very coordination mechanisms they have created.”

Still, it should be remembered that in the context of this TCRP preparatory process, several donors<sup>125</sup> clearly declared their desire to correct this situation, and in any case, as recommended during the above-mentioned meeting of the UNDG ExCom “Funds and programs should develop a common initiative to arrest the erosion of core funding throughout the system... a set of common policies that would ensure that earmarked funds pay their full share of administrative and program support costs”.

Competitiveness hinders interagency cooperation. For example, competition for extra-budgetary funds makes ILO units reluctant to be cast in supporting roles as subcontractors to others who are more visible

Moreover, competitiveness between UN entities could create the risk of questioning several basic characters of UN operational activities, as underlined by the FAO: “there is a dichotomy between the neutral policy advice we want to give and the fact that we are also competing for funding for operational activities. If the UN wants to be a “standard bearer” which promotes principles to developing countries, can be competing with other actors? Can we push as donors for certain types of activities? On the one hand, we are trying to show the wide path at the same time we trying to raise funds.”

A second critical element in the UN financial mechanisms is the lack scheduling determined by the fact that contributions made by the various donors

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<sup>123</sup> UNDG ExCom Greentree Retreat 6.1.2004

<sup>124</sup> Douglas Lindores, cit.

<sup>125</sup> Among others, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland Norway and Ireland. Moreover, during the Country-Mission in Zambia, “donors acknowledged that their own frequent tendency to earmark or “tie” funds to specific projects might have been responsible for the inflexibility perceived in the UN agencies’ operations. In general, the donors would like to see the UN system (especially, the UNDP) play an active role in the coordination of external donor assistance. This view was shared by the World Bank”.

(in the majority of cases) are established year by year. During the TCRP preparatory process, several donors<sup>126</sup> also intervened regarding this question, suggesting the insertion of correctives. Moreover, some experiments are already underway such as the establishment of the Indicative Scale of Contributions (ISC) since 2003 at UNEP or the creation of Partnership agreements (f.i. UNEP PADELIA [Partnership for the Development of Environmental Laws and Institutions in Africa<sup>127</sup>] always at that Program. In this context, the Trust Funds could also have a certain importance, in particular the thematic Trust funds. (For example, the UN-HABITAT's Water and Sanitation Trust Fund, launched in October 2002, is designed to improve water and sanitation in African cities, provide sanitation and hygiene education in schools, and demonstrate innovative approaches to providing affordable services to urban poor; etc.).

Paradoxically, a third problem is connected to decentralization. As both representatives of the Netherlands and Denmark highlighted, “the tendency toward decentralization of donor funding decisions to regional or country level may be one factor contributing to the general trend in donor behavior away from increasing the core funding to the UN toward “ring-fenced” or country based funding. There is a risk that increasing reliance on non-core funding could undermine, rather than safeguard, the ability of UN agencies to fulfill their core mandates”.

Finally, there is the key question of scarcity of financial resources (of any type) for UN operational activities. We have discussed this aspect previously (cf. §8) stressing the necessity of mobilizing resources even from additional sources, both public and private.

### *CCA & UNDAF*

As is known, the CCA and UNDAF are instruments, but (as well underlined during the Turin Seminar and in the frame of some Country-Missions<sup>128</sup>) they are

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<sup>126</sup> The United Kingdom and Germany, among others

<sup>127</sup> PADELIA) project is working with seven countries to develop laws and fill gaps in existing legal structures for sustainable development

<sup>128</sup> For example, in Paraguay “In the mission’s view, the greatest value added by the CCA and the UNDAF was less in the originality of the vision, which after all needs to coincide with the national vision, than in the process of creating an interagency culture within the UN system in Paraguay2. N. Chandavarkar, cit.

also actual processes<sup>129</sup> to facilitate a common assessment and common framework for the programming of future operational activities; these facilitating processes do not only concern UN entities, but also other donors, national governments, CSOs and other relevant actors, at the level of each country in which the UN operates.

The opinions given on these instruments/processes vary a great deal.

Firstly, it must be recalled (as also mentioned at the start of this document) that none of the 10 NGOs which answered the questionnaires have ever been involved in any of the countries where these processes/instruments are present. Similar results could be inferred from the Reports of the Country-Missions.

The UN Member States express differing opinions.

As regards the CCA:

- The following countries gave a positive opinion: Belgium, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Tanzania and France (8).
- The following gave an “intermediate” opinion: Belarus, Mexico and Thailand (3).
- The following gave a negative opinion: Uruguay, Jamaica, Norway, the UK, Germany and Ireland (6).
- The following gave no opinion: Iran, Senegal, Turkey, Guatemala and El Salvador (5).

As regards the UNDAF:

- The following countries gave a positive opinion: Belgium, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Tanzania and France (8).
- The following gave an “intermediate” opinion: Guatemala, Mexico, Norway, the UK, Germany and Thailand (6).
- The following gave a negative opinion: Iran, Jamaica and Ireland (3).
- The following gave no opinion: Uruguay, Belarus, Senegal, Turkey and El Salvador (5).

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<sup>129</sup> This viewpoint, if taken to the extreme, can have negative consequences, as observed by the undg ExCom, during the Greentree Retreat (6.1.2004): “It was feared that in some cases, the UNDAF’s are perceived as an end in themselves, rather a means to an end”.

The opportuneness of these instruments and even some significant criticisms are generally shared by UN officials. UNDAF and CCA often go to supplement already existing instruments and mechanisms, mostly belonging to the history and tradition of each Agency, and effectively mean an increase in the complexity rather than the simplification of procedures and tasks. This is all the more serious because it occurs in a situation, as said repeatedly above, of a deficiency of financial and human resources.

Then, CCA and UNDAF are sometimes seen almost as a “necessary evil”. In the Rome Seminar it was noted how the effectiveness of UNDAF, with joint programming, as a means of greater coherence still has to be seen: there are indications from some cases where the UNDAF is seen only as a requirement to get approval for country programs of the Agencies and that it is not central to the programs of some Agencies. According to a UNCTAD representative (Geneva seminar), the CCA and UNDAF are instruments devised in New York and of limited relevance for this Agency which, in this regard, continues to use a previous instrument, at a country level, called an Integrated Framework for trade-related technical assistance to Least Developed Countries (IF). According to some in IFAD, UNDAFs are often abandoned as soon as they are completed. CCA and UNDAF are indeed even unheard of at the ITU. According to WFP, the CCA/UNDAF process is used as a vehicle to attract other organizations into the more isolated areas where they do not normally operate but where WFP has activities. However, WFP cannot expect UNDAF to build all of the necessary field partnerships, and it actively seeks other opportunities. Many potential funding partners, such as the World Bank, regional banks and bilateral donors are not usually involved in the UNDAF processes.

During the Turin Seminar, it has been underlined that there is too many instruments (CCA, UNDAF, PRSP, CDF, IF, etc.). Each claims to follow national priorities “Synergy or not? Growing interaction by the donors with UNDAF increasing interaction Utopia! Problems still remain”<sup>130</sup>.

A further problem consists in the complexity of these instruments. However, it should be mentioned that according to all those who expressed their opinion on this matter (including those of the Turin Seminar and the Greentree Retreat of the UNDG ExCom<sup>131</sup>), the second generation UNDAF, with the matrix results, has

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<sup>130</sup> Turin proceedings.

<sup>131</sup> “CCA and UNDAF... are meant to be short, light, and flexible... with a primary emphasis on producing a strategic results matrix that can serve as a practical programme management and results assessment tool.”

brought notable benefits. In any case, according to some UNCT, an adequate preparation with regards to this is necessary (as also seen during the Country-Mission in Laos<sup>132</sup>), as well as greater circulation of good examples that can be readily emulated by UNCT<sup>133</sup>.

In connection to what has been said so far (the variety of existing flexible instruments), there is also the question of their alignment at the country level. During the Greentree Retreat of the UNDG ExCom, with regards to this aspect, it was underlined how the “UNDG guidelines already reflect the wide-ranging decisions taken on the mechanisms for aligning programming instruments at the country level. These guidelines provide great flexibility to ensure that the approach adopted in a country is tailored individually to its own situation. It has been agreed that the UN funds and programs must work towards national leadership and ownership of an MDG-based PRSP.... UNDAF’s must succinctly reflect how the UN system will work together through its common business plan and contribute to the broader MDG-based PRSP effort.” Viewpoints that are similar in some way to those also expressed by several donors<sup>134</sup>.

Therefore, from what has been said up to now, it is quite clear how the introduction of the CCA and the UNDAF, though (by those who are aware of the situation) evaluated mainly in a positive sense, is all but an “acquired” fact or without problems, such as the overlapping with other instruments and/or with procedures more or less traditionally used by the various UN entities.

*RBM*

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<sup>132</sup> LAOS: A case in point is the desire of the UNCT to conduct a common training on the new CCA-UNDAF guidelines and the Rights-Based Approach for which contributions need to be secured from the agencies’ limited budgets

<sup>133</sup> UNDG ExCom Greentree retreat, 6.1.2004

<sup>134</sup> Norway, f.i. “The UNDAF represents a significant step forward in aligning the UN system within PRS... The new UNDAF result matrix represents a good way to monitor UN performance at country level... (But) is still largely untested. The continued relevance of CCA is questionable... If the CCA is to be continued, its value could be to inform and guide the preparation of a PRS. Then, the sequencing of the planning instruments must be stricter as follows, CCA -> PRS -> UNDAF -> Country Programs. A joint view of the role of CCAs within PRS’s and the Consultative Group architecture must, in that event, be developed and pursued.... New coordination instruments (CCA, PRS, UNDAF, Country programs) are introduced in a way that represents new layers and thereby not leading to decreased transactional costs”.

In connection to what has been mentioned beforehand, this is what has happened and is still happening in relation to the introduction of RBM. The RBM should be considered as a functional approach to calibrate the management in the UN, in view of the results rather than the input or the delivery. This approach is more or less unanimously considered correct even if its use has its limitations in the country context where data is weak and unreliable for monitoring purposes. This is the case of Laos<sup>135</sup>.

Many Agencies have adopted procedures aligned with the RBM approach. This is the case, for example, of UNESCO that has an intranet-based system called SISTER (System of Information on Strategies and Tasks and on the Evaluation of Results)<sup>136</sup>, as well as a procedure called RBP (results-based performance)<sup>137</sup>; the ILO has implemented a self-management approach, introduced for all regular budget activities in the form of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (MERS)<sup>138</sup>. The FAO introduced a program equivalent to the RBM, which monitors and evaluates the performance of field level operations<sup>139</sup>. Other Agencies, though, such as the UNCTAD, have done nothing in this regard.

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<sup>135</sup> Jana Grace Ricasio, Monica Nogara, cit.

<sup>136</sup> This system is a database of “elements” (defined as a means of connecting a result with its responsible officer, i.e. projects and programs) at various stages in their planning and implementation. SISTER also provides a means of monitoring and modifying elements and introducing new elements. The system allows managers at different levels to communicate with each other in the processes of programming (a phase in which the element is being planned, goals outlined, the budget set, etc.), monitoring (a phase in which the element is being implemented), and reprogramming (a potentially continuous process of element modification).

<sup>137</sup> RBP (results-based performance) was “put into action” by the adoption in 1995 of the Medium-Term Strategy 1996-2001. It became operational for the 2000-2001 biennium. The Director-General of UNESCO recommended that, since the development of expected results and performance indicators is a complicated task, this framework would only be included in the 2002-2003 Programme and Budget (31 C/5). It was introduced in order to create “a fundamental change in the management culture of UNESCO,” dealing with “longstanding tendencies towards fragmentation” and to “enhance viewing the Organization as a whole.” (Review of Management and Administration).

<sup>138</sup> The Programming, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (MERS) consisting of a set of management concepts and tools for applying a “management by objectives” is meant to enhance the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of the work carried out by the Office. It has been conceived as an integral part of policy-making, programme planning and budgeting as well as the management of programme implementation. The scope of MERS concerns all ILO activities, irrespective of the source of financing (regular budget and extra-budgetary resources or of the sector of activity), and are subject to self-evaluations that look at work results.

<sup>139</sup> The scope of the FAO’s RBM system extends throughout the organization at all ranks. Further, the system seeks to show (i) the relevance of the project to development priorities and needs, (ii) the clarity and realism of the project’s development and immediate objectives, including specification of targets and identification of beneficiaries and prospects for sustainability, (iii) the

Even the Rolling Assessments of the WFP introduced in Southern Africa<sup>140</sup> can be placed within the context of the RBM approach.

### *Simplification and harmonization of procedures*

Over and beyond the issue of harmonization and coordination, as regards management in the narrowest sense, everyone notes the improvements due to the simplification of certain procedures and to increased flexibility.

At a national level, this progress can be connected to what has been said so far: the RCS e UNCT, common premises, services and equipment (which often also means the harmonization of book keeping and management procedures), the CCA and the UNDAF. However, the situation is far from perfect: there is lack of homogeneity (or lack of harmonization) in recruiting procedures (as already mentioned; cf. note 77), in fund deployment procedures<sup>141</sup>, in programming<sup>142</sup>, and for many other issues in different Countries, the UN entities continue to do things their own way, at least in some fields (as declared by representatives of Member States such as Thailand, Jamaica, Guatemala, Netherlands and Denmark).

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quality, clarity and adequacy of project design (e.g., consistency between inputs, activities, outputs and progress towards the achievement of objectives, (iv) the cost-effectiveness of project designs. During the Rome Seminar, as regards RBM and other evaluation tools, the FAO expressed the view that it does not have the resources, time or people to undertake impact and results evaluation. However, tools such as community-based monitoring and evaluation are available at project level. It was also noted that a problem with evaluations is that when projects are completed, there are no longer any resources from the project available for evaluation 2 years later.

<sup>140</sup> For the southern Africa crisis, WFP introduced the “rolling assessments” concept, assessing needs approximately every three months. The data collected on emergency assistance requirements enabled regular updates on levels and targeting of relief interventions in the six affected countries for a total investment of only 0.2 percent of the planned food relief intervention. The approach is unique because of its wide membership and strong integration with the vulnerability assessment committees of the regional governance structure and the Southern African Development Community.

<sup>141</sup> F.i. in Benin, the national authorities believe that, for a more effective timing of intervention of different UN agencies, procedures to deploy funds should be further harmonized

<sup>142</sup> Reported in several Country-Missions. For example, in the case of the FAO, the programming cycle is for two years and this cannot be easily adjusted within programming cycles of the bigger group of agencies, including UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP.

There is usually greater coordination in those Countries where UN has been carrying out development operational activities for only a few years (in particular, the Countries in central and eastern Europe and those of the CSI).

If, from the country level, we move on to the regional or HQ level, the degree of coordination and harmonization tends to decrease. Indeed, while at the country level we can say that, despite all the problems and delays, there is undoubtedly a tendency towards harmonization among UN entities; at the HQ level this is less evident. There are many delays also concerning, for example, the harmonization of ITC systems and accounting procedures.

According to the UN officials participating at the Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminars, what is still lacking is a “management culture” (in the words of the FAO) and a “culture of performance” (in the WFP’s words), while, according to the IFAD, “there is a need to infuse a greater sector type corporate culture based on performance and efficiency in order to circumvent time consuming procedures” in the UN system. On the other hand, there seem to be some interesting advances made, such as the search for excellence as stated by the WFP: “Moving from external to internal issues, WFP builds upon its programming strengths and address aspects that require review in order to promote excellence in its field activities”.

Therefore, as said earlier on, besides a management and performance culture, what is needed is a greater affirmation of a UN culture and a UN identity in order to overcome these divisions and to accelerate a reform process for the whole UN system.

### *Convergence and divergence trends in the UN system*

The tendency towards convergence at both a local level (to a greater extent) and central level (to a lesser degree), seems unequivocal and well documented. Hardly anyone puts this into question and – perhaps more importantly – the actors who are, at least partly, outside the UN, such as most of the Member States, are well aware of this (which shows that these trends are important) and support it. This is true at a country level (with reference to aspects like the setting up of the UNCT and RCS; the practice of CCA and UNDAF; the setting up of common services and pooling of equipment and offices; the partial harmonization of procedures; the more or less formal agreements for recruiting the human resources needed by the UN; the setting up of inter-agency workgroups; etc.), albeit with

some – at times important – differences between countries<sup>143</sup>, and also at a central level (with the setting up of the UNDG, some inroads have been made in the harmonization of procedures, as well as the, albeit weak, affirmation of a UN identity alongside Agency identities, etc.).

Have we now reached a point of no return? We probably have because not only do a considerable part of the UN officials (at the HQ and at the country levels) but also the Member States seem to actually want to support this convergence trend.

The word “seem” is important here, because there are also opposite situations which significantly involve both the UN bodies and the member states.

The most important of these opposite trends concerns, as already said, funding mechanisms which, as they stand today, cannot but create great competition between UN entities. It is important to note, however, that both UN bodies and some important donor countries like the UK, Germany, Finland and Belgium are aware of this. Not only this, but they also say they wish to change this state of affairs.

Moreover, as many Agency representatives stressed, so far in the coordination and harmonization “issue”, the heads of the various UN entities have not been sufficiently involved and, among these, members of the boards (and thus “politicians”). This issue is usually dealt with by middle managers and not by senior officials: the latter tend to refer more to the institutional, historical and cultural patrimony of their own Agency rather than that of the UN system as a whole. Other actors that have so far not been involved in the issue are the members of administrative structures. As a FAO representative declared in this regard, “It is pointless discussing coordination and harmonization among the supporters of these processes. We need to turn to all those who have not been involved in this yet”.

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<sup>143</sup> The situation has been well summed up by the IFAD, which notes that “success depends on the personality of the people involved and there have been several instances where inter-agency cooperation and coordination on the ground has flourished. In some other cases, people and interests are often pulling in different directions (written contribution specifically drafted by the IFAD for this consultation). We must also add that coordination is greater the more stressful the conditions (conflict or post-conflict situations, emergency situations following a natural disaster, authoritarian regimes, etc.). Finally, there tends to be greater coordination and harmonisation in countries where the UN has started up operational activities only a few years ago in situations of an “emerging nation”, i.e. after the start-up of a reform process involving the introduction of the aforesaid instruments and initiatives, such as in eastern European countries.

Third, it must be recalled that instruments and initiatives devised by the UN Secretariat (and by the UN General Assembly) or by the UNDP do not have, or cannot have, a prescriptive character towards UN Agencies, each of which is autonomous and has its own reference Assembly distinct from the UN General Assembly<sup>144</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> One may also highlight what could be called a “phenomenology of divisions”. Besides the division of political responsibility between the Security Council system and the one of ECOSOC (that is of indirect relevance, here) and that among the Agencies (amply dealt with in the previous pages), there are also another three: between the HQs of the Agencies and the local levels (where the latter sometimes find the former bothersome); between the centre of the UN system and the Agencies (where the latter sometimes look on the former with indifference); between the UNDP and the other members of the UNDG (where the latter sometimes views the former with irritation if not downright hostility).

A similar phenomenology characterises the UN humanitarian activities, to which four “tensions” have been described:

*A tension between predictability and adaptability.* There are internal and external pressures on the IASC to increase the predictability of its functions; on OCHA to increase the predictability of its support mechanisms; on the members to increase the predictability of their participation in various IASC instruments and processes. However, field level analysis suggests putting a premium on flexibility and adaptability in response to the various realities of different field situations. This tension plays out in terms of such issues as the appointment of Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs); the relationship between OCHA field offices and HC offices; the management of the CAP in relation to other funding and planning instruments, particularly in transitional contexts; and the relationship, in the field, to non IASC members, particularly donors. It plays out also in the mechanics of managing the IASC, notably in terms of the management of the agenda and the scheduling of meetings.

*A tension between ‘deepening and broadening’ – i.e. between wider membership and deeper interaction between members.* A central question in the analysis of the IASC is that of whether its membership (including its standing invitees) represents the humanitarian community as it actually operates at field level. Two sets of actors play significant roles in humanitarian operations in the field are not represented: donors, particularly those that are ‘operational’ (see below); and local NGOs; while the representation of international NGOs through the consortia has yet to truly bring full NGO participation at field level. Thus, there is both a case for and a demand for broadening the membership of the IASC to increase the participation of these key actors. Simultaneously, there is a case for limiting the expansion of the IASC and focusing attention on still deeper and more effective interaction between existing members. There are tensions and trade-offs here, as an ever-larger body requires ever more energy spent on the mechanics and has questionable impact on the vitality of field-based mechanisms. On the other hand, lack of participation of key actors weakens those same mechanisms.

*A tension between inclusiveness and decisiveness.* All organizations face a tension between the need to build a sense of morale and ownership through consultative processes and a need for the capacity to be able to take decisions and act decisively. Organizations that emphasize decisiveness and top-down decision making risk losing staff/member buy-in to their core objectives. Organizations that always work through consultative mechanisms risk missing opportunities or being too slow to respond to breaking demands. Successful organizations balance this tension

The fourth opposite trend is of a cognitive type: some Member States (both donors and beneficiaries), perhaps even with the most solid grounds to do so, tend to minimize the convergence trends by highlighting the problem aspects: the fact that transactional costs have not decreased (or perhaps have actually increased) or that consolidated procedures have been less effective (such as the tri-partite commissions for assessing project progress). They thus appear to have little confidence when, instead, such a delicate process, that is full of contradictions, needs not only their support – perhaps rightfully involving constructive criticism – but their keen support, too.

In essence: there is a process underway which most the UN officials and UN Member State representatives seem – despite all the aforesaid problems (which must not in any way be overlooked or set aside) – to support, perhaps to a greater extent than was supposed.

## **11. PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS**

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through leadership: leadership that recognizes when (a) the requirement for speed and decisiveness outweighs the need for inclusion, or (b) when the nature of issues and time requirements enable a consultative process, or (c) when –irrespective of time constraints – the importance of an issue requires full buy-in from all those who will be implicated in a decision. The IASC faces precisely this challenge.

*A tension between headquarters/policy work and field/operational work.* There is unanimity within the membership and among partners that the work of the IASC has been somewhat removed from real field operations. The IASC's involvement in actual operational matters, including the establishment and review of in-country coordination mechanisms, is questionable. The tension is: should the IASC play to its potential strengths and focus its energies on global policy issues; or address its weaknesses and enhance its capacity to steer strategic and operational coordination at field level? This issue was the one with most widely divergent views among correspondents of the review. Some key members argued vigorously and compellingly that unless the IASC WG meeting strongly enhanced its relevance to real-time field coordination questions, bringing the real operational decision-makers around the table, it would fade into irrelevance; others argued with equal vehemence and clarity that to do so would be to play against the IASC's advantages, and that the only viable strategy was to play to its strengths, namely (in their perception) policy work at the global level. However, in the workshop which reviewed a draft of this report, a majority believed that a balance must be struck between policy and field issues.

The last issue dealt with in this broad consultation of UN Member States and NGOs consists of the participation of civil society and of other relevant actors, such as the business or research sector.

First of all, it is necessary to stress how all the UN entities, without exception, tend to highlight strong relations with the world of NGOs as well as the business world. Several examples can be made to illustrate this aspect.

- WFP continues to enhance collaborative partnerships with more than 200 international and over 1,000 local NGO partners. The Program is extending dialogue with the NGO community at Headquarters and the field level, dealing with issues such as structured ways to reimburse NGOs for their expenditures. Another area for further engagement with NGO partners is collaboration in joint advocacy activities. Local NGOs and community-based organizations enable WFP to reach beneficiaries more effectively, thus strengthening their capacities in food logistics and management, gender-sensitive assessment and programming, monitoring of results and accountability procedures. WFP needs to explore ways of funding capacity-building efforts.
- WHO interacts with a wide range of organizations. There is a great diversity in focus, mandate and funding sources of these organizations. The examples include: professional associations (e.g. those representing nurses), disease specific NGOs, development, humanitarian, scientific or academic, health-related. (Review Report: WHO interactions with CSOs and NGOs)
- With regard to civil society and non-governmental organizations, FAO improves information sharing and cooperation with technical and regional NGO networks; encourages policy dialogue at country, regional and global levels, including improved access to FAO technical meetings; promote the Food for All Campaign National Committees; facilitate specific cooperative programs, i.e. by improving Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) participation in planning, formulation and implementation of specific programs and projects, with particular attention to the SPFS; by fostering capacity building for CSOs; and working with CSOs in agricultural rehabilitation efforts; increase the attractiveness of FAO programs to multilateral and bilateral donors which attach importance to CSO participation; and strengthen dialogue with CSOs/NGOs on the use of the resources they themselves invest in agricultural development and food security programs.

However, in some cases, a certain level of “competition” continues among some UN bodies and large nationals and international NGOs. For example, in the case of the OCHA<sup>145</sup>.

The case of the UNFPA is worthy of note. Apart from an intense cooperation with many NGOs/CSOs, UNFPA also collaborates with a specific “category” CSOs that tend not to be highlighted by other UN entities. They are the Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) that the UNFPA involves, both in specific activity<sup>146</sup>, as well as in activities of advocacy and awareness concerning the role of culture and religion in family planning.

With regards to the cooperation between the UN entities and the business world, there are many cases to mention. For example:

- UNEP has a specific program for working with the private sector through the DTIE (Division of Technology, Industry and Economics)
- The ITU initiative “Electronic Commerce for Developing Countries (EC-DC)” - offering secure e-business solutions to developing countries under affordable conditions, through the pooling and sharing of available resources and also providing an easy e-business start-up solution for entrepreneurs, offering first-class security and advanced services through non-exclusive arrangements with industry partners has earned wide support

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<sup>145</sup> At the global level, it is surprising to note that OCHA is one of the few UN humanitarian entities not equipped with a dedicated NGO relations unit. Admittedly, “NGO Units” are not necessarily the most appropriate response to the need for improved partnership. The participation of NGOs in global coordination mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) is already an indication that OCHA recognizes a broader role and responsibility vis-à-vis the whole humanitarian community, not only the humanitarian wing of the UN system. A lot could be done to foster conditions that would permit the UN, NGOs and Governments to define the modalities and conditions of a productive partnership in anticipation of future emergency situations. There is, for example, an obvious need for UN support to NGOs and Governments for the creation of legislation, administrative procedures and training material that would promote an effective role for NGOs and harmonious cooperation within the humanitarian community.

<sup>146</sup> Six Christian denominations in Zimbabwe announced at a UNFPA-sponsored meeting that condoms could be used within the family to prevent transmission of the AIDS virus, marking a major shift from statements in recent years that “condom use was a sin”. The churches have united to coordinate HIV prevention activities, counseling and provision of care to people living with HIV/AIDS. In Yemen, a new book for use by imams and preachers placed reproductive health and family planning in the context of Islam. It was produced with UNFPA support in cooperation with the Government. (B) In Cambodia, more than 300 Buddhist monks participated in UNFPA-supported training on reproductive health issues, including HIV prevention. These well-respected religious leaders then conveyed the information to young people through sermons, workshops and informal meetings

from public and private sector companies, the media and the governments of several ITU Member States. The project attracts the participation of a growing number of industry partners, including MCI WorldCom, Baltimore Technologies, Network Communication Products, Hewlett-Packard, Oracle, Datamatics, Entegriy, Celo Communications, ValiCert, Rainbow Technologies and Vitress, who are contributing their technologies and services to the project for the benefit of developing countries worldwide.”<sup>147</sup>

- ITC works with an extensive network at national and regional levels with enterprises, trade-related government departments, trade and industry assoc, national trade promotion agencies, chambers of commerce and industries, commodity organizations, SME agencies, commercial banks and other trade financing institutions, standards boards, packaging institutes, management institutes, tender boards and central purchasing institutions, state-owned corporations, purchasing and supply management assoc., regional orgs specialized in selected trade and marketing functions.

In the sphere of the private sector, an important “actor” is the financial world to which UN entities have started to propose partnerships in increasingly greater numbers. This is the case of the UNEP with the “Finance Initiative Global Roundtable,”<sup>148</sup> followed by the launch of the UNEP Sustainable Energy Finance Initiative (SEFI), aimed at engaging the finance sector to invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Though to a lesser degree, several UN entities tend to stress their connection to partnerships in the academic world and in the world of scientific research as can be seen in § 5 (in particular, one can see the cases of the FAO, of the UN-Habitat and of the UNFPA, in notes 24, 25 e 26).

Generally, a positive opinion is given regarding these partnerships by Member States and the NGOs in UN-Ecosoc Consultative Status.

The representatives of 11 countries said as much (Iran, Uruguay, Belgium, Senegal, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Tanzania, Jamaica, Mexico and El Salvador), as did 5 NGOs (FX, AVSI, IFBPW, ICW and BNPS). On the other hand, UN commitment is considered rather weak by 5 countries (Finland,

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<sup>147</sup> ITU Telecom Surplus Programme: Electronic Commerce for Developing Countries

<sup>148</sup> 600 bankers, financiers and members of the financial sector participated at this round-table that provides an opportunity for bankers, insurers, and asset managers from around the globe to discuss new ideas and challenges in the fields of finance, insurance, and sustainability.

Guatemala, Ireland, the UK and France) and by 2 NGOs (WCL and AFEM), while 4 countries (Denmark, the Netherlands, Turkey and Germany) and 2 NGOs (MT and TdH) give no opinion on this<sup>149</sup>.

Four countries (Iran, Belarus, Mexico and France) and one NGO (IFBPW) would like closer relations between the UN and the private for-profit sector (also, but not only, for the mobilization of further financial resources for the operational activities for development), while another NGO (AVSI) opposes this kind of relationship for fear of competition.

Finally, a closer relationship between the UN and the academic (and research) world is explicitly considered desirable in two country-questionnaires (Belarus and Ukraine) and two NGO-questionnaires (IFBPW and WCL<sup>150</sup>).

The positiveness of these partnerships has been partially noted even during the Country-Missions. For example:

- In Ethiopia the Director of the NGO umbrella body explained that though relations between his organization, and the UN system were close, especially in the areas of poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and Food Security, he hoped that it would be possible in future for civil society to provide even more directly inputs into the UN system's programs at the country level;
- In Laos, NGOs cited the role of the UN as a "neutral mediator" (given the country's political history and the status of NGOs in the country). The UN is also seen as setting (Human Rights) standards, and it also has a "regulating influence". NGOs also appreciate the UN's role in providing a mechanism for the international development community to share and have access to development information. For NGOs in particular, the UN has opened a venue for them to access policy-making processes through UN-facilitated donor thematic discussion groups linked to the RTM process. NGOs perceive the UN's strength in terms of multi-sectoral and donor coordination. The NGOs however, have mixed attitudes about the UN, some being less inclined to collaborate. Finally, the NGOs likewise perceive a large variation among how the UN Agencies operate depending on who

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<sup>149</sup> Thailand shows a hardly concealed hostility towards the relations between the UN and NGOs, while in the Salvation Army's view this relationship is desirable but currently impossible because the UN is subservient to the member states.

<sup>150</sup> "Poor countries lack institutions that could deliver databases on social and economic national situation. UN should assist government in having such institutions; the formulation of policies and developments programme will be based on real needs and local strategies and ownership"

their national counterpart is and this variation affects the extent of their coordination.

In any case, there are Countries in which a general dissatisfaction has been reported with regards to this aspect. In Zambia, civil society representatives perceived the UN as leaning too much towards state institutions, and by-passing civil society and private sector organizations when implementing its programs of assistance. This class of interlocutors contended that this pro-state bias was a mistake that ought to be rectified, considering the critical role of civil society and private sector organizations in development

### **13. SOME CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS**

#### *The viewpoints of several actors*

One way to draw some conclusions could be to compare the positions of the four groups of actors involved in this broad consultation as regards a thematic area that lends itself best to a certain comparative analysis. This was done as regards the facilitating factors and obstacles of UN entities in carrying out their operational activities. It must be recalled that both the facilitating factors and the obstacles common to all the eight theme areas are dealt with in this Report (from § 4 to § 11). It is thus a kind of “summary” of the results that have come to light so far.

In the following list, alongside each facilitating factor or obstacle there will be the abbreviation “UNHQ” if the item has been repeatedly highlighted by UN officials at the HQ level; “UNCT” if the item has been repeatedly highlighted by UN officials at the country level; “MS” if it is repeatedly mentioned by the member states (questionnaires and country-missions); and “NGOs”, if it has been repeatedly mentioned by the NGOs (questionnaires and Country-Missions).

#### *❖ Facilitating factors*

- The Agenda of the IADGs/MDGs and the broad competence of the UN on the matter. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**
- The distinctive features of UN Operational activities, as they have been reaffirmed in resolution A/56/201: i.e. universality, voluntary and grant

nature, neutrality and multilateralism, as a common denominator of the operational activities of all the UN family, as well as their general sharing by UN officials. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**

- The asset represented by quality skilled human resources (within the UN entities as a whole) in nearly all possible spheres. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**
- The existence of the UN common system in human resource management. **UNHQ, UNCT.**
- Attention to the promotion of national capacities and the related propensity for capacity development. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**
- The relative flexibility of the UN in carrying out operational activities. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The authority and status (prestige) of UN entities as global intergovernmental organizations. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The adoption and dissemination of RBM approaches. **UNHQ**
- The universal presence of the UN. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**
- The UN's capacity to play the role of "honest broker". **UNHQ**
- The UN's wealth of information and institutional memory as well as the resulting documentation and dissemination capacity. **UNHQ, UNCT, NGOs**
- The high negotiating capacity. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS.**
- The recognition on behalf of external actors of the regulatory role of the UN. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The UN vocation for partnerships and networking activities. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs.**
- The UN convening power. **UNCT, MS, NGOs;**
- The UN transparency. **UNCT, MS**
- The UN harmony of interests. **UNCT**
- The UN as championing human rights in the development process **MS**
- The capacity to respond to unforeseen needs of member countries. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS.**
- The high capacity to call upon other actors involved in the determination and implementation of development policies at national level/ The capacity of mobilizing financial resources. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The UN's historical "incarnation" in almost all the realities in which it is present, with the resulting vocation and competence with respect to policy advice. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The propensity to the search and valorization of knowledge. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**

- The propensity to innovation. **UNHQ**
- The UN's international character and ability to promote technology transfer between countries **UNHQ**.
- Stress conditions (situations of conflict and post-conflict; situations of emergency following a natural disaster; authoritarian regimes, etc.)<sup>151</sup>. **UNHQ, MS**
- The existence and importance of joint programs involving two or more Agencies of the UN system and other joint initiatives. **UNHQ, UNCT**
- The growing affirmation of UN identity traits among officials of the various UN entities and their recognition by external actors such as MS and NGOs. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**.
- The activation and/or enhancement of inter-agency coordination at country level, also in its "informal" dimension. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**.
- At country level, the existence of UN common premises (and the consequent human closeness between UN officials) and of common services among UN entities; at HQ level, the territorial closeness of UN Agencies dealing with common issues. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**.
- The condition of "nascent state". **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**.
- The placing on the agenda and practicing (even if in a limited manner so far) of diversification of financing sources (over and beyond those coming from national governments). **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**.
- The partial decentralization of certain responsibilities and functions in some Agencies. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**.
- Familiarity with ICT in virtually the entire UN system. **UNHQ**;
- The continuum from peace to development management. **MS**
- The establishment of the undg and the increasing importance of Joint Meetings of the Boards of the Funds and Programs. **UNHQ, MS**
- OCHA as a coordination model in the UN context. **UNHQ, MS**

#### ❖ *Obstacles*

- The great difficulty encountered in evaluating the real contribution made by every single UN entity – and by the UN as a whole – to achieving the IADGs/MADGs and the need to resort to a "proxy" approach. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- More in general, the great difficulty frequently encountered in evaluating the impact of UN operational activities (and the need, in this regard too, to resort to a "proxy" approach). **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. § 10.

- The gap between objectives pursued by the Agencies and the IADGs/MDGs in the realignment process of their own working program with respect to the IADGs/MDGs. **UNHQ, MS**
- The effective reduction of economic-financial resources available for Operational Activities for Development in general. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**
- The even more drastic reduction of core budgets of the Agencies and the parallel increase in extra-budgetary funding. **UNHQ, MS**
- The overlap of responsibilities of UN entities. **UNHQ, MS**
- The competition in procuring economic and financial resources. **UNHQ, MS**
- The “phenomenology of divisions” (between Security Council and ECOSOC; between Agencies; between Agency HQs and local offices; between the Centre of the UN system and the Agencies; between the UNDP and other members of the UNDG) **UNHQ, UNCT.**
- The quantitative inadequacy of the human resources available at local level (above all, from the Agency standpoint) **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The insufficient or lack of involvement of directors, boards and assemblies in the “issue” of coordination and harmonization among UN entities and the respective procedures. **UNHQ**
- The insufficient or lack of involvement of the Agencies’ administrative staff in the “issue” of coordination and harmonization among UN entities and the respective procedures. **UNHQ**
- The partial practical indetermination in the distinction between UN operational activities financed by core budgets and UN operational activities financed by extra-budgetary fund-raising. **UNHQ, MS**
- The still existent fracture (even if partly recomposed) between emergency/reconstruction, peace-keeping/building and conflict prevention activities, on the one hand, and development activities, on the other. **UNHQ, NGOs**
- The competition among NGOs and UN in emergency and harmonization activities **UNHQ, NGOs**
- The weakness of communication systems, both inter-agency ones and those of the large Agencies (such as the FAO, UNESCO or ILO), also between the various “parts” of the same Agency or between the HQ and other branch offices (in particular, although this is a mere example, between evaluators, on the one hand, and those responsible for policy design and program/project implementation, on the other). **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**

- The lack of a common policy regards the image promotion, public communication and competition between UN entities **UNHQ**
- The weakness of the UN culture. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The insufficient rooting of a management and performance culture in UN entities. **UNHQ**
- The increasing complexity, in some Agencies, of procedures and tasks following the introduction of instruments such as UNDAF and CCA which often go to supplement the existing instruments and mechanisms largely belonging to the history and tradition of each Agency. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The existence, at a Country level, of a variety of assessment and programming instruments. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- The insufficient or lack of harmonization of ITC systems and of accounting procedures. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs**
- Difficulties in up-scaling projects and too small projects. **MS**
- Lack (quantitative inadequacy) of national experts in the UNCT **MS**
- The high international staff turn-over at the country level. **UNHQ, UNCT**
- Lack of ownership depending from some inadequacies in the UN promotion of national capacities. **UNCT, MS**
- Differences in terms of implication in the coordination and harmonization processes among UNDP, other Funds, Programs and Specialized Agencies. **UNCT, MS**
- The non-reduction (if not increase) in transaction costs regarding greater MS coordination. **MS**
- Ambiguity regards to how the WB is viewed in the UN System. **UNHQ, UNCT, MS**
- Governments that frequently contradict themselves by representing different views in different governing bodies. **UNHQ**

The following chart reports the data on the convergence of viewpoints between the UN (HQ and UNCT), Member States (MS) and NGOs as regards facilitating factors (F) and obstacles (O).

	F	O
• <b>Convergence between UNHQ, UNCT, MS, NGOs</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
• Convergence between UNHQ, MS, NGOs	0	0
• Convergence between UNCT, MS, NGOs	1	0
• <b>Convergence between UNHQ, UNCT, MS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>

• Convergence between UNHQ, UNCT, NGOs	1	0
• <b>Convergence between UNHQ, MS</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
• Convergence between UNCT, MS	1	2
• Convergence between UNHQ, NGOs	0	2
• Convergence between UNCT, NGOs	0	0
• Convergence between MS, NGOs	0	0
• Convergence between UNHQ, UNCT	2	2
• <b>Reported only by UNHQ</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
• Reported only by UNCT	1	0
• Reported only by MS	2	3
• Reported only by NGOs	0	0
	36	29

Despite their limitations (the main one being certain arbitrariness in the respondent's evaluation), the data reported in the table suggest certain annotations:

1. First of all, it seems necessary to note the existence of a "core" nucleus of general convergence, above all with regards to facilitating factors between the UN at the HQ level and the Country level, Member States and NGOs (8 facilitating factors out of 37 and 3 obstacles out of 29). These factors concern (facilitating factors from a to h; obstacles j, k, and l)
  - a. the broad competence of the UN on IADGs/MDGs
  - b. the distinctive features of UN Operational activities
  - c. The asset represented by quality skilled human resources in nearly all possible spheres
  - d. The strong propensity for the promotion of national capacities
  - e. The Un universal presence in the world
  - f. The growing affirmation of UN identity traits and their recognition
  - g. The partnership and networking vocation
  - h. The propensity to the search and valorization of knowledge
  - i. The effective reduction of economic-financial resources
  - j. The weakness of communication systems
  - k. The lack or insufficiency of administrative system or procedures harmonization.

2. With regards to “bilateral” convergences among the opinions, there is obviously a good convergence of opinions “within” the UN, that is, between the UNHQ and the UNCT; but this convergence is not an overall opinion, in that it concerns “only” 5 facilitating factors out of 36 and 15 obstacles out of 29. Moreover, in confirmation of what was said beforehand when speaking of the “phenomenology of divisions”, opinions, above all in relation to obstacles, tends to diverge between the UNCT and HQ;
3. Perhaps surprisingly, there is a greater convergence between the UN at the HQ level and the Member State representatives (23 facilitating factors out of 36 and 15 obstacles out of 29).
4. The convergence between the UN at a Country level (UNCT) and Member State representatives is even (27 facilitating factors out of 36 and 18 obstacles out of 29).
5. The level of convergence of both the UN (HQ and country-level), and the Member States with the NGOs is much lower. Apart from the “core” nucleus (point 1) there are:
  - a. two facilitating factors and no obstacles jointly reported by the NGOs and UNCT;
  - b. one facilitating factor and two obstacles jointly reported by NGOs and UNHQ;
  - c. one facilitating factor and no obstacles jointly reported by NGOs and Member States.
6. Despite what was said in point a), there are significant “autonomous” viewpoints of the UN (be they HQ or UNCT) on the one hand, and Member States on the other. These mainly concern elements mentioned by some (regarding facilitating factors as well as obstacles) and not denied by others. For example, several Member States insist that the UN champion human rights in the development process, which is not affirmed (though not denied by UN officials); or that UN officials (HQ level) stress the propensity to innovation that characterizes their System or even the existence of the UN common system in human resource management, which in turn is not emphasized by the MS, but all the same it is not contested, etc. However, there are exceptions that are worth mentioning:

- a. The good capacity to establish an emergency-development continuum that the Member States prevalently mention among the added-value elements of the UN, whereas the UN officials (HQ level, as well as NGOs) speak in terms of a still existing fracture (though adding, even if partly recomposed, in this way reducing the contradiction);
  - b. The insufficient or lack of involvement of Directors, Boards and Assemblies in the “issue” of coordination and harmonization among UN entities and the respective procedures affirmed by UN officials that the Member States have, at least in the context of this consultation, actively refused, demonstrating instead to be strongly implicated (that is “indirectly” demonstrating the implication of the Assemblies and the Boards);
7. And, as previously mentioned, there are significant areas of autonomous opinions within the UN, between the UN officials at the HQ level and those a country level (UNCT) as regards facilitating factors:
- a. The adoption and dissemination of RBM approaches or the familiarity with ICT in virtually the entire UN system tend to be mentioned as facilitating factors at the HQ level and much less at a country level (UNCT)
  - b. The same can be said for the creation of the UNDG or with regards to the “OCHA as a coordination model in the UN context”
  - c. The same consideration was made for “the UN’s international character and ability to promote technology transfer between countries”
  - d. Stress conditions (situations of conflict and post-conflict; situations of emergency following a natural disaster; authoritarian regimes, etc.) as facilitating factor for UN operational activities are mentioned only at the HQ level
  - e. The same was said for the UN’s capacity to play the role of “honest broker” and for the UN propensity to innovation.
  - f. The “UN convening power”, the “UN harmony of interests” and the “UN transparency” are mentioned at a Country level and not at the HQ level.
8. Instead as far as obstacles are concerned:
- a. “The gap between objectives pursued by the Agencies and the IADGs/MDGs in the realignment process of their own working program with respect to the IADGs/MDGs” is underlined at the HQ level and at the UNCT level.

- b. The same was said for the “even more drastic reduction of core budgets of the Agencies and the parallel increase in extra-budgetary funding”, “the overlap of responsibilities of UN entities”, “the competition in procuring economic and financial resources” “The insufficient or lack of involvement of directors, boards and assemblies in the “issue” of coordination and harmonization among UN entities and the respective procedures” “The insufficient or lack of involvement of the Agencies’ administrative staff in the “issue” of coordination and harmonization among UN entities and the respective procedures” “The partial practical indetermination in the distinction between UN operational activities financed by core budgets and UN operational activities financed by extra-budgetary fund-raising” “Governments that frequently contradict themselves by representing different views in different governing bodies”
  - c. Even the issues regarding competition among NGOs and UN in emergency and harmonization activities and about the still existing fracture between emergency/reconstruction, peace-keeping/building and conflict prevention activities, on the one hand, and development activities, on the other are much more evident at the HQ level than at the UNCT level;
  - d. The same was said concerning the lack of common policy regarding image promotion, public communication and competition between UN entities or about the insufficient rooting of a management and performance culture in UN entities
  - e. On the contrary, differences in the level of implication in the coordination and harmonization processes between UNDP, Funds, Programs and Specialized Agencies, and of lack of ownership depending from some inadequacies in the UN promotion of national capacities are more significant at the UNCT level rather than the HQ level
9. Several differences could be “by chance” or rather due to differences of modality and intensity of the consultation of the HQs with respect to the UN at a Country level. This could explain the diversities 7b, 7c, 7e, and 8d. Other divergences could derive from differences of perception, as some issues are (even for reasons of competence) more “sensitive” at one level respect to another. Perhaps this could explain the differences 7b, 8a, 8b and 8e. Finally, the other divergences (7a, 7d, and 8c) could be real differences of opinion.

What has been said concerning facilitating factors and obstacles could be seen in another light, stressing that:

- The NGOs, apart from the “core” nucleus (11 factors), only cite two facilitating factors and two obstacles in convergence with other actors and no isolation factor (15 factors in total);
- On the other hand, the Member States, apart from the “core” nucleus, cite 17 facilitating factors and 14 obstacles in convergence with other actors and two facilitating factors and 3 isolation obstacles (47 factors in total).
- The UN officials at the HQ level, apart from the “core” nucleus, cite 18 facilitating factors and 16 obstacles in convergence with other actors and 5 facilitating factors and 5 isolation obstacles (55 factors in total).
- Instead, the UN officials at a country level (UNCT), apart from the “core” nucleus, cite 15 facilitating factors and 11 obstacles in convergence with other actors, but only 5 facilitating factors and no isolation obstacle (40 factors in total).

The differences mentioned between the UN officials at the HQ level and those of the country level (UNCT) (moreover not enormous: 55 factors versus 40), in our opinion, are due to the modality of consultation. In fact, at the HQ level, seminars in Rome, Geneva, the Greentree retreat and other meetings were carried out, while at a Country level, we essentially have only the Country reports. Even the participation at the Turin Seminar was quantitatively more significant for the UN officials at the HQ level than for those at a Country level.

The situation is different if we compare Member States and NGOs. First of all, the difference is much more significant (47 factors versus 15). Moreover, the “intensity” of consultation, though not identical, was similar (assigning the questionnaires, consultation during the Country-Missions and participation at the Turin Seminar, even if quantitatively more important for the first respect to the second). Moreover, the NGOs seem much less implicated respect to Member States (and obviously the UN entities themselves) and above all, less interested, in a global and general sense, to the reforms underway in the UN. There is no doubt that some of these collaborate intensely with the UN, both at a central level (Ecosoc, International Conferences, GA, etc.), as well as single Countries (in the context of projects, advocacy activities, etc.). However, the NGOs are not generally interested not in the UN itself, but only in certain parts of it, that is, mainly those areas that regard NGOs directly (credit mechanisms, access to information, procurement, single Programs/Projects, etc.).

As we have already said on occasion<sup>152</sup>, to improve relationships between UN entities and NGOs, it is necessary to intervene both at the institutional level unifying the NGO accrediting mechanisms which are differentiated<sup>153</sup> at present, as well as at the public communication level, adopting a UN system viewpoint as far as possible. With reference to this, a considerable increase in resources (both human and financial) at the disposal of NGO Section at the DESA is hoped for. Moreover, increased relations of the NGO Section with those structures connected to public communication within the various UN entities are also desirable.

At the same time, one cannot but stress how the “qualitative participation” of Member State representatives was similar to that<sup>154</sup> of UN officials. One can certainly not forget that those who answered the questionnaires were mainly representative members (many also authoritative) of the UN and that, probably, other exponents of the Member States are less involved and sensitive to certain issues. In any case, this is good news.

### *Prospects*

Finally, it may be necessary to make some considerations of a general nature that can outline some prospects for UN operational activities and, in some respects – obviously, within the scope of this Document – for the UN in general. Taking up the conclusions proposed in the January 2004 Report, correcting and integrating them in light of all the information gathered and elaborated in the steps of the consultation following the Rome and Geneva Seminars, that is:

- consultation of the Member-States and the NGOs through the questionnaires;
- the Country-missions and their relative reports;
- the Greentree Retreat of the UNDG ExCom;
- the documentation of the various UN entities examined either directly or indirectly<sup>155</sup>;
- the Global Consultation Workshop in support to 2004 TCRP of Turin.

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. Report on the Consultation of NGOs and Member States

<sup>153</sup> One can be accredited by the UN itself as well as by the various Specialized Agencies such as the FAO, WHO, UNESCO, UNCTAD, etc.; and crediting, even at the highest level with the UN does not formally have any value for the FAO, the WHO or the other Specialized Agencies.

<sup>154</sup> Using the facilitating factors and obstacles mentioned as proxy indicators (with all the limitations that this involves)

<sup>155</sup> Survey conducted by DESA on the evaluation main available documentation concerning 16 UN entities

1. The UN's Agency System was created between the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the end of the 1960s, that is, over a long period of time. In other words, one could say that the UN Agencies were born in an era different from ours today<sup>156</sup>.
2. One may get the impression that the system of the various UN Agencies, with their operational activities, was quite suitable up to the early 1980s. Since then, some changes have partly created great problems for the system. These changes include:
  - a. The considerable reduction in economic-financial resources available for operational activities for development in general.
  - b. The resulting reduction in human resources available (in quantitative and qualitative terms).
  - c. The even more drastic reduction of core budgets of the Agencies and the parallel increase in extra-budgetary funding.
  - d. The tendency to shift from a single-sector approach to a multi-sector approach that is integrated in the implementation of cooperation projects (since the mid-1980s); the resulting broadening of the areas of responsibility of each Agency (with the partial crisis of the "specialized" approach in the name of which each Agency was born), and the consequent partial overlap of operational activities carried out by the various Agencies.
  - e. The birth and growth, since the late 1980s, of the National Execution (NEX), on the initiative of many African, Latin American and Asian countries; this has made it all the more possible for development projects to be directly carried out by national actors, thus making the presence of UN Agencies in these situations practically superfluous and also strengthening the presence of the UNDP, particularly of its local offices.
  - f. The identity crisis of the political sphere of the UN as a whole after 1989 (the end of the East-West conflict), and the search for a new identity in the areas of economic and social development, human rights as well as the emergency, prevention and handling of local conflicts (in a word, in the ones linked to operational activities of Funds, Programs and Agencies) and thus of a new role for ECOSOC, which should become as important in some way like the Security Council.
  - g. The extension of the territorial sphere of responsibility of UN operational activities after 1989.

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<sup>156</sup> To give some examples, the ITU was set up in 1865, the UPU in 1874, the ILO in 1919, the FAO and UNESCO in 1945, the WMO in 1947, the WHO in 1948, the WFP in 1963 and the ITC in 1964. The exceptions are the IFAD and UN-Habitat, both set up in 1977.

- h. The strengthening of the UNDP as a direct executor of UN operational activities (first through the OPS/UNOPS, then on its own), with the consequent acquiring of funds and activities at the expense of the Agencies (the UNDP is, by its very nature, geared to a multi-sector approach that is per se “adequate” for the purpose, while the Agencies have had to adapt).
  - i. The decade of summits, the proclamation of the IADGs and MDGs, the increased importance of absolutely cross-sector themes in the operational activities (e.g. governance and institutional building) with respect to other areas of own specialized responsibility at the birth of every single Agency.
3. The UN Agencies, each independent of the other, might thus no longer be able to carry out UN operational activities. It would also appear that, although not specifically declaring so, they are at least partly aware of it. So much so that:
- a. In the “new” countries where operational activities are started up, the UN entities (not only the Agencies) tend to present themselves all together (and not separately) and to work as much as possible together right from the start. They tend to do the same also in other countries, such as Paraguay or Laos (and many other). Everywhere RCS and UNCT tend to be appreciated.
  - b. Even if their economic and financial weight remains considerable (at least in some Agencies), not too much importance is generally given to the implementation of actions in the strictest sense (where the peculiarity of an individual Agency tends to fade); instead, there is the tendency to stress other operational activities like policy advice or advocacy, where the specialization of the Agency keeps its importance (even if in a new context).
4. The central UN structures responsible for UN operational activities (today, undg first), on their part, while they could have – at least in theory – been perfectly adequate for supervising a situation where, save for any unforeseen difficulties, each Agency had its own specialization, own areas of responsibility and resources, they have greater difficulty in carrying out this function in a situation characterized by scarce resources, overlaps and competition. Supervising is no longer enough; they must now, at least in part, govern and thus intrude on other Agencies’ areas of responsibility. They try to do it, but there is, however, a lack of (or, at least, inadequate) institutional and normative instruments in order to do so. All this generates conflict between the

UN entities connected to the UNDG, but at the same time, it has brought about a considerable increase in awareness regarding the existing problems.

5. On the basis of what has been said so far, while one may note a sort of anachronism of the “structure” of the UN system responsible for operational activities, one should stress its suitability for the objects and contents of the operational activities. As we have seen, also thanks to their basic features (but not only), UN operational activities in some fields and in some situations present unquestionable comparative added value with respect to other actors present in the international cooperation arena.
6. There is thus a “dialectic” situation between the topicality of contents and the non-topicality of the structure (points 2-4).
7. In the face of this state of affairs, in general terms, we can identify two reactions in the UN entities (Secretariat, Funds, Programs, Agencies):
  - a. Gaining a positive awareness of this situation, with the consequent propensity to a greater coordination and harmonization of procedures, as well as the underlining of UN identity traits (besides the Agency identity traits) and a strong commitment in those fields where the UN has greater comparative added value. A substantial number of those working in the various UN entities at local level (UNCT), the people who maintain relations with the other entities and with external actors, those dealing with the identification, designing and evaluation of policies, programs and actions, tend to identify with this kind of reaction.
  - b. A more or less marked resistance that comes about through the search and affirmation of peculiar traits of every specific UN entity and the safeguarding of their own procedures. This second reaction can be found with senior officials of the Agencies at HQ level, their General Assemblies and their administrative structures.
8. All this could tend to generate a sort of “schizophrenia” for those working in the designing, implementation and evaluation of UN operational activities at various levels (from local to HQ). Hence:
  - a. They must experience the dialectic between topicality and non-topicality.
  - b. They are mainly (not only) type 7/a persons who must continuously measure up to type 7/b persons (their heads or fund managers).
  - c. Moreover, they must respect a double authority system: their respective HQ on the one hand, and the leader of the UNCT at a Country level (which, in many cases is from another UN entity) on the other. All this is

irrelevant from a UN system viewpoint, but it is not in a situation where, strong levels of competitiveness still exist among the various UN entities.

9. A certain level of schizophrenia also characterizes the Member States who, on the one hand, demand greater coordination and harmonization among the UN entities; while on the other hand by reducing the “core” funds preferring ear-marked funds incite competitiveness between the UN entities, both at a central level and also at a Country level. Moreover, the Member States sometimes tend to present different viewpoints at the various Boards and Assemblies of the UN entities (due to the lack of coordination within the respective Governments). However, it should be said that many Member States tend to be more aware of this and, above all express their desire for correctives, even significant ones, to this state of affairs.
10. All this said until point 8 also tends to explain why there can be prevailing tendencies towards convergence at local level and the, albeit partial, divergence (with the “convergent” correctives mentioned in point 7/a) at HQ level.
11. If this is the state of things, then no wonder the phenomenology of divisions, mentioned in §10 of this Document, between the Agencies, Funds and Programs and the Secretariat, between the HQs and the local level in the UN entities, between the UNDP and the other Funds, Programs and Specialized Agencies.
12. It is not so easy to overcome this impasse. One could say that it may be appropriate to start up at least a partial process of refounding the United Nations System, which would go beyond the sphere of operational activities. Some drastic changes should be made, such as reducing the powers of the General Assemblies of the Agencies and the partial reconduction of the latter at a central level (Secretariat, UNDG/DGO, ECOSOC, and General Assembly of the UN). All this is very difficult and may probably meet with great resistance, but, at the same time, it does not lie outside the scope of the political action that should stimulate UN Member States (which, with only a few exceptions, correspond to the Member States of the Agencies), which could greatly benefit from a reduction in the kind of “entropy of power” linked to the excessive proliferation of decision-making bodies (even if Member States do not appear to be inclined to implement sweeping reforms, some Member-States representatives are sensitive to this situation).

13. This optimistic observation, which could have been (and perhaps still can be), considered utopian, now – after the consultation of the Member States – has a more solid basis in some respects. As already said in this very document (cf. §7), there may already be at least some pre-conditions for the member states – inside the General Assembly, ECOSOC and in the various other Assemblies of the Specialized Agencies – to set aside (if not to altogether do away with) all those barriers hindering the UN to act effectively as a system: a system which, although differentiated within (because of the various mandates and missions of each UN entity), is in any case a unitary one.
14. But in any case, a reform of the kind outlined in point 12 certainly calls for political conditions that are not fully present today. If, as would be desirable, one wishes to adopt this line, then a process must be started up, and this will take time. In the meantime, it may be sensible to proceed by “small reforms” that go in the direction outlined in point 12 (“progress has to be made through evolution rather than revolution”<sup>157</sup>).
15. What else can be done in the meantime? The institutional-normative path outlined above (points 12 and 14) appears difficult to take. It may thus be more promising to focus on the presence of staff – inside the UN Secretariat, Funds, Programs and Specialized Agencies – who possess the capacity and the willpower to take action for solving problems, in this way strengthening the tendency towards convergence and the construction of a UN identity. All these people are already working to better coordinate activities and harmonize their own procedures, or are in any case, willing to do so regardless of the instruments proposed to them by entities that are sometimes far away, such as their HQ (for officials at the country level), the UNDG/DGO, UNDP, UN General Assembly or Secretariat. If, despite the aforesaid problems, the UN system carries on working today with a non-negligible effectiveness that is essential to “keep our planet moving”, then we owe it to (amongst other things<sup>158</sup>) a sort of “new emerging order” that these people are giving rise to – a symptom of a UN culture that, although not fully present yet, is appearing on the horizon. This appeared quite evident during the Country-Missions that have been implemented in the frame of the TCRP preparatory process (though various problems, delays etc. had been identified). The Rome, Geneva and Turin Seminars themselves (and also the Greentree retreat) are an indication of this process that is underway. Another – much more powerful – indication is the working methods adopted by UN men and women,

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<sup>157</sup> Douglas Lindores, cit.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. the facilitating factors, see above.

regardless of their respective Agencies, Funds or programs, in conditions of stress (conflicts, post-conflict situations, natural disasters, etc.).

16. Even several Member States are now aware of all this or begin to be so.
17. If all this is true, then it may be worth pursuing the aforesaid by:
  - a. Strengthening the process linked to the “new emerging order”, firstly by understanding it better; in this regard, a rapid appraisal of (overall) UN action procedures at local and sub-regional level is urgently required (something in this direction has been already done within the country-missions envisaged in the preparatory process of the TCPR 2004); secondly, by strengthening the circulation of information on the best practices adopted all concerned for coordination and harmonization; improving capacity building/capacity development; improving joint planning procedures etc. (and also in this direction, more than something has been already done within the whole preparatory process of the TCPR 2004).
  - b. Facilitating as much as possible the definition and stipulation, at various levels (above all, at country level), of “informal agreements” between officials of the various UN Agencies, Programs and Funds present/operating in a certain field (territorial and/or thematic one) in order to maximize the resources (human, financial and technical ones) available, guarantee greater coordination and harmonization and proceed together for assessment and planning, etc. These informal agreements (that already has been done in some cases) could from time to time be adapted to their reference spheres (and, where necessary, should also involve the relative opposite parties, such as national governments).
  - c. Within the context outlined in points a and b, proceeding in a more flexible manner (as requested also by UNDG) with respect to what has been done so far for creating and disseminating instruments for coordination, for common assessment and planning, for management, etc. Besides being created bearing in mind what already exists (obviously), these instruments should, more than anything else, be points of reference, guides or the like and not be prescriptive (the UNDAF second generation is an example in this direction).
  - d. Activating, at central level (if possible, within the Secretariat, even if this could involve problems with the UNDP or with other UN entities), a lightweight structure for the support, facilitating and supervision of the implementation/strengthening of the process outlined in the previous points.

- e. Involving – through the CEB, UNDG and Inter-Agency Task Force, as well as via ad hoc initiatives (like the Rome and Geneva seminars) – the other directors of UN Agencies, Programs and Funds as much as possible, as well as their administrative staff (type 7/b personnel that is) in this reform process.
18. At the same time, through ECOSOC (if not the General Assembly itself), member states should be made aware – perhaps in a more convincing manner than has been done so far – of the issue of the general reform outlined above, by dealing as soon as possible with thorny issues already on the agenda – but in this new context – such as the one of financial resources (financing entities, the core budget/extra-budgetary funding relation, etc.).
19. A last point specifically regarding public communication. More generally, as regards this issue – and not just with reference to NGOs, the UN – as a whole and also its separate entities – should devote more attention to “transforming” information into knowledge. As said above, through reports, newsletters, websites, conferences, work seminars and so on, the UN “issues”, or makes available to interested parties, a great deal of information. For specialists (even “partial” ones), this is a great asset of considerable interest. The same also holds for non-specialists, but only if they seek something specific, otherwise they risk getting lost. And for the United Nations (as a whole), the risk is of not being able to convey anything or hardly anything of their added value, of their priorities and of their very essence. Perhaps more than any other, the issue of public communication should be faced to a greater extent in a uniform manner at the UN system level.
20. Generally speaking, the UN system must therefore become more proactive, more “visionary”; responding to the demands of the changing global environment in a leading manner, both institutionally as well as programmatically.