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Other matters

Proposals for the joint field visit in 2004

I. Background

1. In its decision 2003/15, adopted at the annual session 2003, the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board acknowledged the value of joint field visits and noted that in future such visits should focus on themes of common interest to the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). They invited the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA to collaborate with the Bureaux of the Boards of UNICEF and WFP in preparing a range of options for a joint field visit in 2004

II. Criteria for joint field visits

2. The criteria for joint field visits evolved during discussions at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP held from 6 to 9 June 2003, and again at a meeting of their respective presidents on 9 June 2003. The criteria were further refined during extended discussions at the annual board meetings of the individual organizations.

3. Recommendations made included the following:

- (a) The mandate of the joint visit should be reviewed, and its link to the joint session of the Board clarified, to make it an opportunity for the members of the respective Boards to work together.
- (b) Country selection criteria for joint visits need be defined. Some suggestions were: countries preparing country programme documents; 'roll-out' countries; or randomly selected countries.
- (c) The cost-effectiveness of joint visits should be examined. It was suggested that the number of participants be reduced.

- (d) An appropriate balance should be ensured between field visits and meetings.
- (e) The degree of 'jointness' of the visit needs to be increased. Joint field visits without an individual agency component were suggested, depending upon the country visited.
- (f) The preparation of joint visits should rotate among Executive Board secretariats.
- (g) Frequency of joint visits needs should be defined. It was suggested that, considering the cost and burden to country teams, they should be no more frequent than every other year.
- (h) The outline of the joint visit report should be discussed before and after the visit.
- (i) Countries to be visited should be selected carefully, while respecting geographical rotation.
- (j) The composition of missions should be balanced and equitable among all groups represented in the respective Executive Boards.
- (k) The active involvement of the Bureau is needed in preparing joint field visits for 2004.
- (l) Consultation must start as early as possible and be held with maximum transparency.

4. Based on the above recommendations, the overriding criteria to be used in making a selection for the 2004 field visit are:

- (a) The substantive focus of the visit must be linked to the agenda of the joint Board.
- (b) Geographical rotation must be observed in accordance with the recommendations.
- (c) The composition of the mission must be balanced and representative of all parties.
- (d) Focal point responsibility for the 2004 field visit must be assigned to the relevant Executive Board secretariat at the outset.

III. Options for joint field visits in 2004

5. As a result of the above discussions and consultations, the presidents of the three Executive Boards met subsequently, on 8 September 2003, to review suggestions for joint field visits from Board members for the 2004 field visit. With regard to the frequency of the visits, the presidents agreed that a joint field visit should be undertaken in 2004. At the same time, they agreed that the issue of whether to have annual joint field visits in the future should be revisited.

5. Taking into account the overriding criteria listed above, the presidents agreed upon the following:

Two options

Option 1

5. One of the five countries where the new simplification and harmonization tools are being piloted (Benin, Ecuador, Kenya, Niger, Pakistan). Such a visit have the dual benefit of covering a theme of compelling interest to all members of the joint board – simplification and harmonization – and of exploring an issue to be taken up as an agenda item at the joint meeting. Niger was preferred under this option as it was the only one of the five pilot countries that had not been visited by any of the Boards.

Option 2

6. United Nations response to HIV/AIDS. Haiti was proposed as the country to be visited under this option.

Timing of the visit

7. The joint field visit should take place in the first half of 2004, preferably in March, subject to agreement with the relevant host Government.

Number of participants

8. It was recommended that there should be 20 participants: one representative for each of the four organizations (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) from each of the five regions (African States, Asia and Pacific States, Latin America and Caribbean States, Eastern European States, and Western Europe and other States).

Secretariat focal point for the preparatory process

9. Since the UNDP/UNFPA secretariat was the overall focal point for 2003, it was recommended that the UNICEF secretariat should lead in 2004.

Next steps

10. The presidents agreed to present these proposals to their respective boards with the aim of reaching a final decision by the end of September 2003, in order to allow sufficient lead time for preparations.

Annual UNDP/UNFPA field visit

11. The present paper focuses on a joint field visit for 2004, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2003/15. The selection of the country to be visited by members of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA Board members on their own annual field visit will be further discussed in the Bureau and amongst regional groups.