

Third regular session 1996
9-13 September 1996
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
UNDP

UPDATE ON EFFORTS TO FOLLOW UP ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY
RESOLUTION 50/120 ON THE TRIENNIAL POLICY REVIEW

I. PURPOSE

1. The present document responds to paragraph 4 of Executive Board decision 96/21 of 29 March 1996, in which the Administrator was requested "...to report to the Executive Board at its third regular session 1996 on efforts to follow up on General Assembly resolution 50/120 on the triennial policy review, in particular paragraph 38 thereof, in which the General Assembly invited the United Nations system, including the funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the secretariat, to provide, as appropriate, support to the resident coordinator system, in view of the fact that the Office of United Nations System Support and Services (OUNS) is serving as the focal point in support of the resident coordinator system". In paragraph 8 of the same decision, the Executive Board requested the Administrator "...to bring decision 96/21 to the attention of the funds and programmes, specialized agencies, and United Nations Secretariat".

2. In addition, the present document is an update on the information contained in document DP/1996/18/Add.2 of 15 March 1996, "Reports to the Economic and Social Council", part I of which addressed, inter alia, follow up on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/120.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PARAGRAPH 38 OF
GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/120

3. The Administrator brought the relevant information in Executive Board decision 96/21 formally to the attention of the heads of funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Secretariat of the United Nations in a letter dated 26 April 1996. He requested that they consider what kind of support their respective organizations could provide to strengthen the resident coordinator system, be it in the form of staff secondment to OUNS, financing of resident coordinator system activities at the country level, or any other means that the organizations consider relevant.

4. To date, the heads of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Department of Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) and the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development have responded to the Administrator's letter. The heads of those organizations have reiterated their full support to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120

and to the effective coordination of operational activities through the resident coordinator system. They have extended their complete support to OUNS and the work of the resident coordinator system, but they were not able to offer direct financial assistance to the resident coordinator system or to make secondments to OUNS, owing to their current budgetary constraints. DDSMS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and UNCTAD have offered to collaborate by making staff available for short-term assignments.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES

5. Based on the October 1995 conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the UNDP Administrator, in his capacity as the Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, prepared the United Nations System Conference Action Plan (UNSCAP). The action plan has now been reviewed by the Group of 77, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Economic and Social Council Commission on Social Development, and the Economic and Social Council itself.

6. In conjunction with UNSCAP, OUNS prepared a series of matrixes showing the issues being addressed by the ACC inter-agency task forces (IATFs) established to follow up on United Nations conferences. These issues were also linked, in separate matrixes, to the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and DAC/OECD priorities. Finally, a chart was created to show the follow-up to the conferences from both the intergovernmental and inter-agency perspectives.

7. The Special Coordinator has communicated the great importance of conference follow-up to resident coordinators in three "Direct Line" communiqués, the most recent of which was issued in August 1996. In addition, he met with the heads of the regional commissions to discuss their contribution to conference follow-up. He has also kept in communication with the heads of the IATFs and committee established to follow up on United Nations conferences, and plans to meet with them in September 1996 to review progress and plan the next steps.

8. In February 1996, the Special Coordinator requested resident coordinators to establish United Nations Theme Groups to support coordinated follow-up actions to United Nations conferences at the country level. The country teams, which will receive support from the ACC IATFs operating at the global level, will operate within the framework set out in UNSCAP and should respond well to national priorities. It should be noted that this ACC initiative represented a strong shift to a new type of coordination, from "general coordination", for exchanging information about what each part of the system has done or is planning to do, to "goal-oriented collaboration", for maximizing the application of the comparative advantages of the respective agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to act in concert at the country level.

9. The following is a brief summary of the conclusions of the most recent meetings of the IATFs and committee on follow-up to United Nations conferences:

(a) The IATF on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods has agreed to produce as its major product a synthesis report for use in particular by the resident coordinator system. The report will summarize lessons learned at the country level and across countries, suggesting ways to improve inter-agency

collaboration in the future, and providing a clear understanding of the different ingredients that work for the promotion of employment and sustainable livelihoods in specific situations and of the necessary indicators for monitoring progress in these areas. The report will be prepared with material obtained by conducting a number of country reviews, which will address factors related to employment and sustainable livelihoods. The task force met in July 1996 and agreed on the categories and the selection of countries and lead agencies for the country reviews, as follows: (i) countries in transition to market economies (Hungary, ILO); (ii) middle-income countries (Morocco, UNDP); (iii) small least developed countries (LDCs) (Nepal, ILO); (iv) large LDCs (Zambia, UNDP); (v) countries in post-conflict situations (Mozambique, UNESCO); and (vi) countries with rapid economic growth (Indonesia, World Bank; Chile, ILO). The task force also agreed on the timetable for the work as follows:

July-Oct. 1996: Country reviews (initial consultations, work in the country, writing draft report);
Nov.-Dec. 1996: Inter-agency consultations and national seminars;
January 1997: Final draft of country reviews;
February 1997: Preparation of synthesis report;

(b) The IATF on Basic Social Services for All has decided to produce five end-products: (i) guidelines for the resident coordinator system; (ii) a wall-chart, with indicators for social services delineating where countries are currently and where they need to be (DESIPA and UNFPA); (iii) best practices/lessons learned (World Bank and UNDP); (iv) a pocket-card on advocacy (World Bank); and (v) a set of indicators to measure the implementation of recommendations emanating from recent conferences in the social sector. The task force will be meeting next in September 1996;

(c) The IATF on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development has agreed to produce as its major product a synthesis of best practices or lessons learned, with the aim to: (i) clarify the elements of an enabling environment for economic and social development; (ii) establish mechanisms for improving inter-agency coordination in support of such an environment; and (iii) provide respective constituents with standardized, inter-agency performance indicators of social and economic progress that represent the development agenda reflected in the outcome of the major conferences. The task force met in July and its sub-groups adopted their schedule of work as follows:

Sub-Group on Macro-Economic and Social Framework:

End of July 1996: Deadline for submission of comments on the draft document "Macro-economic and social framework";
September 1996: Finalize the "framework" and hold informal meeting to discuss next steps;

Sub-Group on Capacity-Building for Governance:

End of July 1996: Finalize the "terms of reference";
End of Oct. 1996: Deadline for submission of agencies' "reviews";

(d) Work is also ongoing on preparing the terms of reference for the Inter-Agency Committee on Women, which is expected to have its first meeting in October 1996. Three working groups (on the status of women within the United

Nations, on policy and research, and on operations, respectively) have each held initial informal meetings.

IV. SPECIAL INITIATIVE ON AFRICA

10. The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa was launched on 15 March 1996, with the collaboration of the entire United Nations system. For the first year, UNDP will be providing secretariat services for the Initiative.

11. In preparation for the ACC Steering Committee in April 1996, the Special Initiative on Africa Secretariat prepared a report on the Initiative, as well as a matrix linking the priorities of the Initiative to the ACC IATFs and committee established to follow up on United Nations conferences. The Steering Committee concluded that the main objective was to determine the means of implementing the various programmes and projects. A letter signed jointly by the UNDP Administrator and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Commission for Africa was sent to all heads of United Nations organizations, with the objective of gaining a clear indication of their implementation plans. Emphasis was to be put on the work to be accomplished by the working groups and bringing the resident coordinators up to date on their roles in the Initiative. Of great importance has been the need for increased consultation with Governments and progress has been made on this point. Resident coordinators have been instructed to mobilize the United Nations country teams and initiate a dialogue with Governments in Africa. Preparations have also begun for another Steering Committee meeting, which will be held by the end of September 1996.

12. The first of several workshops that will bring together various partners, including government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations officials and others, to discuss the close relationship between the priorities of the Special Initiative on Africa and work of the ACC IATFs and committee is expected to take place in 1997.

13. On 2 July 1996, an informal consultation on the Special Initiative on Africa was held in Geneva. The purpose of this meeting was to brief donors on the Initiative and to mobilize their support and resources.

14. On 10 July 1996, a high-level panel discussion was held as part of the meetings of the Economic and Social Council. The panel members made a brief presentation on the status of the Initiative and then spoke about progress in implementation, emphasizing political and resource mobilization.

V. RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM

15. In a rather short period of time, the resident coordinator system has firmly established itself, vis-à-vis Member States and United Nations organizations, as the most adequate mechanism through which the United Nations can deliver development cooperation at the country level.

16. The unprecedented statement on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120 issued by ACC on 29 April 1996 reaffirmed the strong commitment of the United Nations system to the strengthening of the resident coordinator system. It states that "ACC will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure that the United Nations system provides recipient countries the

best possible support in their development efforts. To this end, ACC, and its member organizations mandated to undertake operational activities for development, are determined to strengthen further their collaboration through the resident coordinator system, and to ensure the full and coherent implementation of all provisions of Assembly resolutions 50/120 and 47/199, particularly those which have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of United Nations system development cooperation at the country level" (ACC/1996/4). Furthermore, the statement adds that "...the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of ACC, will instruct Resident Coordinators, with the support of the Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, on measures to strengthen the resident coordinator system" (ACC/1996/4).

17. Recent statements of many heads of funds, programmes and specialized agencies further emphasize the particular importance that the United Nations system has attached to improving the functioning of the resident coordinator system, giving clear guidance and direction to their country representatives.

18. The Secretary-General, after consultations with the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, developed a management process which will facilitate the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120 in a fully coordinated manner (E/1996/64 and Add.1 and 2 and Add.2/Corr.1 and 2, and Add.3). The plan, which was welcomed by the Economic and Social Council at its 1996 substantive session (E/1996/42), covers the principal provisions of the resolution, including specific actions for strengthening the resident coordinator system, and detailed targets, benchmarks, time-frames and principal actors for its full implementation.

19. Resident coordinators, in full consultation with national Governments, are moving forward to support field-level follow-up action to major international conferences. Under the leadership of the resident coordinator, the heads of United Nations organizations and agencies, including the World Bank, have constituted thematic groups, involving, as appropriate, national and local authorities, NGOs and the United Nations country teams, e.g., in China, Ecuador, Kazakstan, India, Jamaica, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mauritania and Nigeria. United Nations system collaborative action plans are starting to emerge in some countries and their value is being acknowledged; for example, the resident coordinator in Thailand has stated that the preparation of a collaborative action plan marked the beginning of a new era of close collaboration among the United Nations family in Thailand, in full partnership with its Thai partners. The collaborative action plan is a timely and appropriate response to the tremendous challenge of Thailand's shift to a new paradigm of people-centred development.

20. Initiatives such as those noted above have brought the organizations of the United Nations system together to work closely with national partners in the pursuit and realization of common, people-centred goals. Collaborative action plans for follow up on United Nations conferences, country strategy notes, national Human Development Reports, and common country assessments have been facilitated, and, in some cases, even made possible, because of the decision of the UNDP Executive Board to earmark 1.7 per cent of total UNDP resources for programme support to the resident coordinator functions (see the table in decision 95/23, on successor programming arrangements). In 1996, resident coordinators have received \$50,000 to support activities related to the resident coordinator system.

21. In his effort to widen the pool of candidates for resident coordinator positions, in March 1996, the Special Coordinator invited the World Health Organization, FAO, ILO and UNESCO to join UNICEF, WFP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNFPA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the submission of candidates for resident coordinator posts becoming vacant in 1997. The process will be completed by late 1996.
22. Through an aggressive programme of workshops during the past two years, a large majority of those currently serving as resident representatives/resident coordinators have had an opportunity for intensive examination of their new roles in country-level collaboration and policy advocacy. Workshop participants have also developed statements on key issues, as part of systematic UNDP efforts to enhance feedback mechanisms from country office staff.
23. In September 1994, UNDP introduced a series of annual induction briefings for first-time resident representatives/resident coordinators. These workshops examine the new roles, responsibilities and accountability of the resident representative/resident coordinator function. Now in its third year, 56 new resident representatives/resident coordinators have participated in these highly-rated workshop.
24. In May 1995, in collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre, UNDP began conducting a series of advanced workshops, designed specifically for experienced resident representatives/resident coordinators. Working with senior resource persons, participants develop a deeper understanding of possible country-level impacts of global change and enhanced skills in the country-level application of future-visioning, scenario-building and policy advocacy. To date, 53 resident representatives/resident coordinators and senior colleagues from other funds and agencies have participated in three advanced workshops. Based on the notable impact of the workshop on participants, a fourth workshop is planned for March 1997.
25. UNDP has also continued to provide active and substantial support for the ongoing series of workshops for United Nations country teams of resident coordinators and representatives of United Nations organizations, in view of their success in fostering greater team cohesion and common purpose. By the end of 1996, 19 such workshops on the management of field coordination for senior United Nations system representatives will have taken place.
26. In July 1994, in collaboration with the ILO International Training Centre, UNDP began preparing a training package designed specifically for resident coordinators. By the end of September 1996, it is projected that UNDP will have provided comprehensive training for 60 first-time and 60 experienced resident coordinators. These courses also provide a great opportunity for senior headquarters staff to learn from field experience and are part of systematic UNDP efforts to enhance feedback mechanisms from field staff. UNDP has also supported training programmes for resident coordinators and representatives of United Nations organizations, in order to foster greater cohesion and sense of common purpose. Fifteen workshops have been held on the management of field coordination for senior United Nations system representatives.
27. The number of major, complex emergencies has increased in recent years and the United Nations has played an active role in these situations. Special terms of reference have been developed for resident coordinator posts in countries where the incumbent will likely become the humanitarian coordinator. These

revised terms of reference and an enhanced consultation process with the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs are now in place.

28. A review and analysis of the full set of 1995 resident coordinator annual reports have been completed and the report will be presented to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions at its September 1996 session. The report serves to gauge the level of progress attained by the resident coordinator system thus far, as well as to identify specific areas where further actions are required.
