

Chapter 5. The Way Forward for the UN system

151. The Charter of the United Nations and the constituent instruments of the specialized agencies and other UN organizations stem from a basic quest for multilateral cooperation and from fundamental principles of international solidarity that have stood the test of time. The Millennium Declaration reinforces these principles and provides the basis for a renewed unity of purpose and a new common platform for action across the UN system. While the functions and activities of individual UN system organizations relate in varying degrees to the Millennium Declaration, each organization is committed to doing its part to make the system as a whole a more cohesive and effective agent in upholding the Declaration's values and in advancing its objectives.

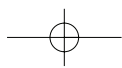
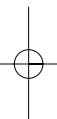
152. This report shows how the Millennium Declaration already is transforming the way the UN system works. Under the aegis of the Chief Executives Board (CEB), the UN system has made substantial progress in reinforcing commonalities to be better equipped to help the international community address global challenges and in fostering a culture of excellence and integrity. Nonetheless, much more needs to be done for the UN system to evolve into “One United Nations”—the cohesive force for progress and change that current conditions require and that Member States have demanded in putting forward the Millennium Declaration.

153. What would characterize “One United Nations”? Although not the only multilateral player, One United Nations could serve as a unique agent and catalyst of progress, applying its varied strengths to a common purpose. It would both support and build on regional and bilateral cooperation. It would engage in concerted effort with all actors—State and non-State—to advance synergies. Its constituent organizations would together have the ability to attract sustained political support, to formulate coherent policies and to translate those policies into coherent programmes and operations that yield concrete results. It would derive direction from a common set of goals and hold itself accountable for better results. The overall result of One United Nations, so defined, would be an international environment more conducive to progress and real change in the conditions and quality of life of peoples throughout the world.

154. Achieving One United Nations will require of the UN system specific changes in policy and in practice. The requisite changes are, in fact, similar to those that citizens increasingly demand of their governments—and can be organized into three categories:

- deepening understanding and better managing knowledge;
- achieving an inclusive, purposeful mobilization of all resources and capacities; and
- increasing transparency and accountability.

Much more action is required for the UN system to evolve into “One United Nations”...



Deepening understanding and better managing knowledge

First, system-wide action to deepen understanding and to manage and share knowledge much more purposefully

The system must strive to become a centre of excellence, within and across areas of competence

155. A collective capacity to acquire and create knowledge and put it to productive use for the common good is as critical to the efforts of the UN system as it is to individual countries. This means, for the UN system, concerted action to deepen understanding and to manage and share knowledge much more purposefully. On the conceptual level, for example, while peace and development obviously have many interconnections, the exact linkages between them are far from being fully analyzed and understood. In the development area itself, UN system organizations need to reflect further together on how to advance and project to policy makers a holistic approach to economic and social development. That approach would emphasize the mutually reinforcing relationship between the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and the pursuit of the wider UN development agenda that has emerged from the global conferences. It would ensure that social objectives are effectively integrated into economic decision-making. And it would factor in the challenge of addressing the inequalities that exist within and among countries, both as an ethical imperative and as a practical necessity to remove a major impediment to growth and sustainable development.

156. In our knowledge-intensive world, the efforts of individual organizations to become centres of excellence in their respective areas of competence will have to coalesce into system-wide action to become—and earn recognition as—a centre of excellence across those areas, particularly on multisectoral approaches that can best advance both security and development.

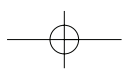
157. In the follow-up to the global conferences and the Millennium Declaration, the UN system has intensified its efforts to more effectively manage and share knowledge, to use information technology and to produce reliable standardized data, all of which enable coherent support of decision-making and cogent system-wide strategies for public communication. The system agenda for further progress should thus focus on:

- *Common, more reliable and more accessible, user-friendly statistical and other data.* This should be accompanied by a joint effort to significantly strengthen support for capacity-building in countries in both data gathering and analysis.
- *A common strategy for better employing information and communications technologies (ICT) in both management and operations.*

Box 5.1

Working together on the information society

CEB member organizations collaborated closely in the ITU-led preparatory and follow-up processes for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva on 10-12 December 2003. Their contributions were coordinated through the High-Level Summit Organizing Committee (HLSOC) led by ITU. At the second phase of the Summit in Tunis, the HLSOC is expected to monitor implementation of the Geneva Action Plan by organizations of the UN system and report on those efforts to the Summit process. (continued on following page)

**Box 5.1****Working together** (continued from previous page)

The HLSOC is engaged in a stock-taking exercise to assess the current level of programmatic activity by CEB member organizations that touch on the Information Society and to provide information on new activities targeted to meet the goals set by WSIS. Supporting the Information Society requires a coherent and coordinated approach by UN system organizations. While some issues directly interest nearly all organizations of the system (such as access to ICT), others are more specific to individual institutions (such as e-medicine, online dissemination of weather information, technical standards and intellectual property). Many UN system organizations already have linked programmes and actions for bridging the digital divide. In many cases, these involve programmes to use and develop e-applications that fall within their mandates. The Geneva Plan of Action provides a framework for re-orienting and reinforcing those programmes, strengthening synergies and sharing best practices.

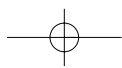
- *Identifying and sharing best practices within the system and outside it.*

Box 5.2**Knowledge sharing and information technology in support of the MDGs**

Work is underway within the framework of CEB to forge new directions and establish new channels for exchanging ideas and knowledge within the UN system. Underpinning these efforts is a UN System Information and Communication Technology Strategic Framework developed by the ICT Network of CEB. Building on past evaluations of ICT opportunities in the system, this Strategic Framework represents a collaborative initiative geared towards the improvement of communication channels and the development of common ICT infrastructure elements across organizations of the UN system. The Strategic Framework sets out the charter for UN system organizations to pursue ICT investments in a way that could result in savings and improved efficiency in technology operations upon which any knowledge sharing initiative rests.

Two key initiatives under the ICT Strategic Framework involve creating a more connected UN, with an expanded UN system network, and a more informed UN, with an initiative for knowledge sharing. The UN System Development Network envisions an unparalleled ability to communicate amongst all the organizations of the UN family. Currently, most organizations of the system maintain and operate independent global networks that allow them to communicate with their own staff but hinder full cross-institutional collaboration. Work currently underway seeks to eliminate this redundancy, resulting in lower overall operating costs and enhancing the ability of all organizations to communicate throughout the system.

Sharing information across organizations is another major initiative under the Strategic Framework. Knowledge management initiatives are ongoing in many parts of the UN system, but widespread sharing of knowledge outside individual organizations has yet to be realized. Building on lessons learned by the World Bank, this ICT Network initiative seeks to identify the most appropriate tools and techniques to facilitate the widespread dissemination of knowledge existing in individual organizations across the UN system.



- *Promoting a system-wide learning culture rooted in shared values and common objectives for all staff of the UN system.*²⁹ The culture building effort must focus on staff as they enter the international civil service, joining not only one organization but also an integrated system of organizations. It should focus on staff as they assume management responsibilities and hence a greater role in steering the UN organizations towards One United Nations. And it should engage senior management, charged with providing leadership, momentum and policy guidance for these efforts.

Achieving an inclusive, purposeful mobilization of all resources and capacities

Second, action to mobilize all resources and capacities in the most inclusive and purposeful manner possible

158. As at the national level, achieving an inclusive, purposeful mobilization of all resources and capacities should continue to drive change within the UN system. Fragmentation and the pursuit of narrow interests have typically—and in some cases justifiably—featured in descriptions of the UN system. In its response, however, to the Millennium Declaration and to the UN conferences and summits on economic and social issues since the 1990s, the UN system has proven its potential: to overcome the obstacles to policy coherence and cohesive action that are inherent in its structures; to integrate sectoral interventions effectively; and to mount more multidisciplinary and well sequenced responses. Further action on this front must take several forms, including:

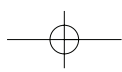
- *A deliberate effort, in the pattern of the global conferences, to engage the active participation of all parts of the UN system in shaping policies.* Participatory processes not only improve the quality and legitimacy of a given policy, but they also help to forge constituencies committed to the policy's implementation. Among the UN organizations, they help to generate the very sense and substance of One United Nations.
- *A constant effort to engage parliaments and local authorities and all forces of civil society in policy development and implementation.* While the implications will vary from organization to organization, the individual and collective actions taken in this area will have to stem from a system-wide commitment, evident to the system's partners. The effort must be pursued coherently at the global, regional and country levels. And it must encompass not only the work methods of the secretariats, but also those of the intergovernmental bodies.

Box 5.3

Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relations

Given the rapidly changing international environment—particularly the spread of social movements accompanying the information revolution—the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relations called for the United Nations to become more attuned and responsive to citizens' concerns and enlist greater public support. The report of the Panel, entitled "We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance" (A/58/817 and Corr.1, June 2004), outlined a set of proposals for enhancing civil society engagement covering four main areas: ensuring the United Nations became an outward looking organization; connecting "the local with the global"; helping strengthen democracy in the twenty-first century; and embracing a plurality of constituencies. (continued on following page)

29. The UN system Staff College, established in 2002, pursuant to GA resolution 55/207 is a system-wide instrument that focuses on building a common culture across all areas of the work of the system.



Box 5.3

Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons (continued from previous page)

The report advocated a paradigm shift in how the UN works, calling on the Organization to foster "multi-constituency" processes that incorporate into its work the perspectives and capacities of citizen groups, policy advocates, businesses, local governments and parliamentarians.

Noting that the proposals of the Panel aim to strengthen the United Nations, enrich intergovernmental debate and improve the services it provides to the world's people, the Secretary-General endorsed the report and called for greater involvement by civil society in the work of the Organization. The Secretary-General suggested that the contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in intergovernmental bodies be built into the General Assembly's regular business and called for improving the UN Secretariat's dialogue with NGOs, including by giving them easier access to information and documentation.

- *A renewed effort, within and across organizations, to ensure that the system's conceptual and standard-setting work and its country-level operational activities proceed in a mutually reinforcing manner.* The capacity to combine analytical and normative functions with operational mandates amounts to a unique comparative advantage of the UN system, which so far has been vastly underexploited. A more integrated approach to the system's conceptual and operational functions would also help further harmonize the system's mission to advance agreed goals at all levels and the system's commitment to the basic principle of country ownership of development assistance.

Box 5.4

The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development

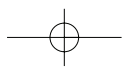
The UN system can only succeed in its mission to help countries implement the goals of the Millennium Declaration if its delivery of services at the country level is well managed, using all its resources and expertise.

Recognizing the need to build on progress underway to ensure a coherent, effective response to country needs, the CEB held a one-day retreat in October 2004, to consider further steps needed to maximize the collective impact and involvement of the UN system as a whole.

The Board identified the need for the UN system to move towards a qualitative shift in its culture to emphasize the primacy of government programmes to which different organizations were called upon to contribute. The Resident Coordinator system had to be so constituted as to fully exploit the contribution of each part of the system, whether or not present on the ground. Certain measures were called for, such as one common UN strategy that would be closely linked to the country's own priorities and to a more inclusive PRSP.

In its resolution 59/250, on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development, the General Assembly set out a road map for organizations of the system, both collectively and individually, to enhance the UN system's development cooperation activities. As this report goes to print, efforts are underway to ensure this is taking place through, among other things, the joint efforts of HLCP and UNDG to bring into closer alignment the policy and operational dimensions of the system's work.

- *A concerted effort to achieve a much more unified system presence at the country level.* Such a unified presence would be centred on the resident coordinator mechanism and draw on all the capabilities available in the system, including especially the organizations and entities represented at the country level. Its guiding objective would



be to promote and sustain capacity development and to support governments in exercising effective leadership over the development assistance they receive. It would enable the system to sequence individual actions to optimize collective performance, in a way that best serves country needs. In order to rally all the talent and resources available to advance coherently agreed development goals and the country's development priorities, the unified system presence would also engage the various constituencies—in government and civil society—to which the different UN organizations relate at the country level.

Increasing transparency and accountability

Third, action to internalize and consistently apply transparency and accountability as basic principles of governance throughout the UN system

159. As it promotes transparency and accountability as principles of good governance at the national and local levels, so must the UN system internalize and apply these principles as the core of what “One United Nations” should embody and project at the global level. Genuine transparency and accountability—for both actions and results—must characterize the conduct of UN organizations and international civil servants. The system and the world's people which it aims to serve should expect nothing less than the highest standards of conduct from the UN system's staff. Those standards should translate into concrete measures within individual organizations, responsible for their further development and enforcement. They should also reinforce the system-wide position of zero tolerance for abuses, of openness to scrutiny, and of proactively implementing the most effective and reliable systems for monitoring, evaluation, audit and oversight. One United Nations should act now to shape and reinforce common accountability instruments. Initiatives to strengthen monitoring and evaluation should converge into common, system-wide action to evaluate UN performance in terms not merely of effort, but mainly of real impact.



160. The 2005 World Summit could do much to sustain and advance the evolution of One United Nations. Governments at the Summit should reaffirm their consensus that these are indeed the directions in which they wish the UN system to continue to move and then act deliberately to advance that movement in the different governing bodies of the system.

The 2005 World Summit could do much to advance the evolution of One United Nations by reaffirming that these are the directions in which Governments wish the UN system to proceed

161. To be an effective foundation for continued progress and change, the consensus produced by the Summit cannot be selective. It will have to entail a strong, renewed commitment to substantive progress in relation to each of the Declaration's three pillars and the construction of strong bridges among them. The bridge between security and development will be key: the new consensus will have to respond to grave, growing concerns regarding arms proliferation and terrorism, while simultaneously giving real hope to those who live with poverty, illiteracy, contagious diseases and environmental degradation as daily causes of insecurity. Building a firm commitment to human rights and the rule of law will also be crucial in determining the strength of the bridges extended from this pillar to both the development and peace pillars—and hence to the strength and effectiveness of the entire multilateral foundation and framework for collective action.

