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To: Nairobi PE
Fr: UNIO
Re: Terms of Reference for a Study on UN System-wide Coherence in
the Areas of Humanitarian Assistance, the Environment and
Development
Dt: 19 December 2005
Cn: NA-232-UNIO-2005

Enclosed is a copy of the "Terms of Reference for a New Study on the United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Humanitarian Assistance, the Environment and Development" which the General Assembly requested the UN Secretary-General to undertake in line with the call outlined in the 2005 Outcome Document.

The study will enable the UN to maximize its contribution in achieving the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals, and in presenting proposals for "more tightly managed entities" in the fields of development, humanitarian assistance and environment for consideration by Member States.

Post's comments and/or inputs on the said terms of reference, particularly in the field of **Environment Activities**, would be highly appreciated.



DR. MACARTHUR F. CORSINO
Acting Assistant Secretary

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TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR NEW STUDY ON UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-
WIDE COHERENCE IN THE AREAS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE,
THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Background

The Outcome Document adopted by global leaders at the 2005 World Summit in New York calls for much stronger system-wide coherence across the various development-related agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations. In addition to supporting current, ongoing reforms at building a more effective, coherent and better-performing UN country presence, it specifically invites the Secretary-General to "launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities." The Outcome Document calls for such work to be focused on ensuring the UN maximizes its contribution to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, including proposals for "more tightly managed entities" in the field of the environment, humanitarian assistance and development.

The Secretary-General intends to commission a small panel of prominent and experienced international figures, supported by Mr Adnan Amin (UNEP) as Executive Director, together with appropriate research and analytical capacity from inside and outside the UN system, to develop concrete and comprehensive analysis and recommendations in this regard. The Secretary-General is determined to ensure that while this work is underway, existing reform initiatives endorsed by the Outcome Document, including those for a strengthened role for Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Resident Co-ordinators, and the strengthening of the UN Country Team through a common management programming and monitoring framework should continue. The Secretary-General considers that the outcome of this exercise would provide an important complement to the on-going reform deliberations in the General Assembly.

Timeline

The Secretary-General intends to appoint the panel during December 2005. The panel will seek to consult on interim conclusions with the UN Chief Executives Board at the CEB meeting in April 2006, with the full study to be completed and submitted to the Secretary-General by June 2006. This timetable would allow for formal consideration first by ECOSOC and then at the next session of the United Nations General Assembly to allow for embarking on possible implementation in 2007.

Scope

As set out in the Outcome Document, the three elements of the study will need to have slightly different scope:

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In the field of Humanitarian Assistance significant progress has already been made in recent years in providing more coordinated response to emergencies at country level. The Outcome Document also commits the GA to the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations and separate follow-up work is already underway in this regard. However, the growing scale and scope of disasters, particularly natural disasters, underlines the importance of improving the timeliness and predictability of humanitarian funding, in part by improving the Central Emergency Response Fund. In part through a thorough evaluation of lessons learned from recent experience. This part of the study will also need to focus on ways of developing and improving mechanisms for the use of emergency standby capacities for a timely response to humanitarian emergencies. There are also significant overlaps between the UN's humanitarian work and its operational activities in development and environment.

In the field of Environmental Activities two separate issues need to be addressed. First in the normative area, is a full assessment of how the United Nations can best provide more comprehensive and coherent management and monitoring of the growing range of multilateral environmental agreements. This should include the development of stronger scientific and analytic capacity in monitoring, assessing and reporting on critical environmental trends. Second is the need for better integration of the environmental perspective within the broad principle of sustainable development in UN country-level activities and in particular capacity building and technology support undertaken by the entire UN system. The GA may launch its own deliberations on the issue of international environmental governance issues in early 2006 and it would be important to ensure these efforts are complementary.

In Development, despite wide-ranging reforms over the past five years strengthening the role of the Resident Co-ordinator and the UN Country Team, developing and donor countries alike remain concerned that overall UN's development impact at country-level remains overly fragmented and supply-driven. The Outcome document commits all countries to map out their own national strategies to meet the international conference goals including the Millennium Development Goals. In this context, the study will need to analyse how the UN system as a whole can be better re-oriented to provide more efficient, coherent demand-driven support to national partners by building on its core normative, technical assistance and capacity building strengths to partner with the longer-term financing and other support brought by the World Bank and other international partners. In this regard, it will be particularly important to consider how to strengthen linkages between the normative work and the operational activities of the system. It will also need to examine how this work can support and complement the wider role the Outcome Document envisages for ECOSOC in ensuring follow-up and assessing progress of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the internationally agreed development goals; and playing a major role in the overall coordination of funds, programmes and agencies, ensuring coherence among them and avoiding duplication of mandates and activities.

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In all three areas, the study will need to encompass both organizational and funding issues, ranging from the duplication and overlap of work products across UN agencies, funds and programmes to prospects for joint, multi-year funding and programming arrangements. The broad issue of more predictable financing of the UN system -- from the CAP process to the growth in non-core funding of Funds and Programmes to the appropriate role of assessed contributions -- and its impact on existing systems and proposed reform will need to be a central element.

The overarching aim of the study is to seek recommendations on a process of rationalization that will maximize the available resources for relief and development programmes in the UN system while minimizing overhead and administrative costs. As such, the study will need to explore ways of fully exploiting synergies between the normative and analytical institutions and departments of the UN, such as DESA and UNCTAD, and operational agencies. It will also need to address how the UN system works and can best exercise its comparative advantages with international partners, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, the European Commission and other regional actors, donors, civil society and the private sector. While the primary focus will be on increasing impact at the country level, in making concrete proposals for improved management, coordination and effectiveness, it will need to make findings with regard to work both at UN headquarters, regional and country level.

In terms of recommendations, the study should seek to identify a short, medium and longer-term vision and benchmarks, thus laying a platform for an actionable plan of implementation rather than open-ended proposals. Change may need to occur in phases, with first initial proposals for rationalization of the current system; then proposals for restructuring of the current system to minimize duplication and overlap, leading to comprehensive revitalization and restructuring of the UN operational role in environment, humanitarian and development work.

Consultation

The Outcome Document separately calls for greater coordination between the governing boards of various operational agencies so as to ensure a more coherent policy in assigning mandates and allocating resources throughout the system. In this spirit -- and to ensure wide acceptance and subsequent implementation of the findings -- it will be essential for the panel to consult widely with all stakeholders, including the management and Governing Boards of relevant agencies, funds and programmes, prior to submission of their final report to the Secretary-General.