



STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AT THE INFORMAL MEETING OF THE PLENARY WITH MEMBERS OF THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON APRIL 06, 2006

Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to thank you for organising this informal meeting for an exchange of views with the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence. I would also like to thank the distinguished Panel for briefing us about their deliberations so far. We associate ourselves with the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. President, poverty eradication and securing sustainable development are the first and overriding priorities of developing countries. Accordingly, we believe that the process of UN reform should be driven by a vision of a strengthened role for the UN on development issues.

We are told that reform is needed in view of high administrative and overhead costs, resulting in high cost of delivery of development assistance. What is needed is to address the fundamental issue of the gap between mandates and financial resources available for their fulfilment. We must recognise that the delivery role of the UN will perforce be peripheral, given the modest funds available to the UN and the huge requirements of developing countries. Yet, there is an important catalytic role to be played by the UN. We have to help the UN make its buck go further. With this in mind we would propose that South-South Cooperation play an important facilitatory role in the UN context. The impact and effectiveness of development assistance could be enhanced by the use of local expertise including use of relevant technologies. We have to think global, but use local. Thus, projects in a recipient country may be tackled through "insourcing", both from within a recipient developing country and amongst developing

countries. Such an approach would lead to considerable savings that could be ploughed in to meet other development demands.

Mr. President, there have been references in our discussions to national or country ownership of the process. However, national or country ownership is not in doubt. What we are talking about is national or country "leadership" of the process. This presumes that inputs from UN and others should be in line with and support national plans, programmes and priorities.

Mr. President, several views have been expressed regarding the need for a more coherent governance structure. It has been argued that multitude of bodies, procedures, etc., weakens the efficiency and impact of development activities. It may be a good idea to examine proposals for development/environment institutions being run as "tightly managed entities". After all, who can contest the merits of "tight" management. However, proposals for drastic reengineering of development and environment bodies by collapsing them inwards into "large unified entities" is not a good idea. In this context, we are happy to note that Mr. Greenhill has today spoken about the High Level Panel having "no pre-cooked solutions" in mind. There is still a case for specialised and separate entities to serve specific mandates, which may otherwise not receive the emphasis or financial resources they deserve. Moreover, taking the example of environment bodies, many of them are young and have probably benefited from their geographic dispersal and relatively "independent" existence linked to the concerned Convention, e.g. Climate Change Secretariat at Berlin, Biodiversity at Montreal, Trans-Boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes at Basel, etc.. Mr. President, you mentioned that you would soon be visiting Kenya. I have no doubt that while there you would note the advantages of geographical dispersal of agencies, including via the location of UNEP and UN-Habitat in Nairobi.

Turning to UN coordination in the field, a unified country-level approach for UN offices is perhaps not a bad idea. We are open-minded about it, especially if it leads to more efficient and effective delivery of development assistance.

Mr. President, we are not convinced of the need to identify new horizontal policy themes for promoting coherence. There is no need to separately list environment and natural resources, as we learn has been done in the Concept Paper provided to the High-level Panel, as these are entirely covered within the "sustainable development" concept.

In our view, there may be some need for greater coherence as regards the process to be followed itself. Reference here is to the work of the High-level Panel, mandate reviews, strengthening of ECOSOC especially its oversight and system wide coordination functions and informal consultations on environment. All these considerations and processes would reach a boil or an outcome as per different time horizons and we hope that serious attention is given so that we do not reach contradictory or confusing results.

Lastly, Mr. President, we look forward to a transparent and inclusive process.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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