



STATEMENT BY MRS. LOVELEEN KACKER, JOINT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, ON AGENDA ITEM 6: REPORT ON THE OPTIONS TO IMPROVE THE HARMONIZED COUNTRY PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS. PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE UNDP & UNFPA AT THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF NICEF 2006 ON JUNE 6, 2006

Mr. President,

We thank UNICEF for the "Report on Options for improving the harmonized country programme approval process", prepared in consultation with UNDP and UNFPA. We find that the report contains some interesting ideas, which would benefit from further discussion amongst Member States for greater analysis and understanding of their implications.

The document cites paragraph 49 and 50 of the General Assembly resolution on Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (59/250) as the rationale for the proposals that have been set out in the report. Paragraph 49 of GA resolution 59/250 clearly indicates that the development of the framework and its results matrix as a common programming tool for country-level contributions of the funds and programmes towards achieving the MDGs would be done "where applicable", and with the full endorsement and counter-signature of the national authorities. The intention of the paragraph is not to apply the framework universally as a common programming tool. The document provided by the UNICEF, "Report on the options to improve the harmonized country programme approval process, prepared in consultation with the UNDP and UNFPA", does not provide any analysis on whether such application of the framework would be done universally or selectively. It also fails to provide any inputs on situations where implementation of the indicated reform would be more useful. We feel that such an analysis is absolutely essential prior to studying the proposal, which the document presents before us.

India has always emphasized that UN agencies should avoid a "one size fits all" approach. Programme countries differ in size, the complexity of their development levels, national priorities and strategies and even governing

structures. The proposal on improving the harmonized country programme approval process needs to take these aspects into consideration.

Mr. President,

The UNDAF was introduced as a reform only a few years ago. We now have some experience of working with UNDAF. In fact, the process of implementation of the UNDAF is only now beginning to get consolidated. The benefits of the UNDAF and the lessons learnt are yet to be analyzed. In our view it would be beneficial and logical to undertake this process first, before looking at the introduction of yet another UN reform. It is only by incorporating the lessons learnt from the earlier reform that we would be able to come up with a durable and valuable process for the future.

As for paragraph 50 of GA resolution 59/250, joint initiatives including joint programming is an ongoing process, and the UN funds and programmes are regularly engaged in such activities where feasible. The paragraph 50 of 59/250 in no way provides justification for a consolidated UNDAF, which the report has suggested.

The proposed draft decision on this issue provides for an "opt out" option. We are not clear how the proposed system would work if some countries follow one process as opposed to others. It appears to us that the process instead of getting simplified will in all probabilities get more complicated.

Mr. President,

The Government of India supports the process of simplifying and harmonizing the UN programming process, within the overarching principle of national ownership and leadership of the process. However, the process we choose to follow must ensure that we build on the strengths of the various UN agencies while at the same time promoting greater efficiency where and when possible. The process of simplification and harmonization cannot be only a cost-cutting exercise, and the reform process of the UN's operational activities for development should not compromise the principles outlined in GA resolution 59/250 and other previous resolutions on the subject.

UNICEF has consistently supported the Government of India's efforts towards the realization of the rights of children in India. We appreciate UNICEF's presence in our country and the close partnership that we have enjoyed with UNICEF for nearly sixty years. By working together we have developed an impressive level of competence in planning and programming for children, and now have a storehouse of good practices and lessons learned. We expect the Board to ensure that this productive relationship between UNICEF and the

Government of India continues in the future as we tackle new challenges and build on the successes of the past. It is essential that UNICEF's core competence in the child sector should not be compromised through the reform process.

It is of utmost importance that we ensure that the priority accorded to children is not diluted in the process of moving the UN towards "collective, strategic contribution in response to national priorities". Based on our experience in India there is a real risk that, in following a consolidated unified process, children will not receive the priority which is essential for the realization of their rights. We must accept that ensuring the rights of children is not only an obligation under the CRC, but essential because the future of our countries rests with our children.

Mr. President,

We believe that the proposal contained in the report has important ramifications, and needs further analysis and discussion before a decision is taken. We also believe that this is a matter that needs discussion at a much larger forum with the involvement of a wider representation of Member States, such as the ECOSOC or even the General Assembly. The discussions of the operational activities in the General Assembly 2007 would focus on the negotiations of the next TCPR. We feel that this issue along with other issues pertaining to the reform of the operational activities for development would be rightly discussed in that forum.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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