



Statement by Dr. Anupam Ray, Counsellor on Informal Plenary Consultations
on Systemwide Coherence on September 08, 2008

Distinguished co-chairs,

Let me begin by thanking you for organizing today's informal plenary consultations on the issue of Systemwide Coherence. I would also like to place on record the appreciation of my delegation for the exhaustive report of the co-Chairs on Systemwide Coherence as well as the options paper from the Secretary General concerning Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in its institutional dimension. They are both important additions to the ongoing intergovernmental process of consideration of the recommendations of the High Level Panel.

My delegation at this point would like to align itself with the statement on this issue made by the Joint Coordination Committee of NAM and G77.

Distinguished co-chairs,

The report, its conclusions and recommendations, and the paper that we have before us today bring us to an important point in this intergovernmental exercise. Before we continue further, we need to remind ourselves of the objective of this exercise. It is to bring about improvements in the functioning of the development operations of the United Nations. When we talk of improvements, my delegation means genuine, verifiable improvement in the quality of development services, further enhancements in responsiveness to national requirements and a greater share for and a greater control by the United Nations of the global flows of voluntary funding in terms of budgetary discipline and Fifth Committee oversight.

Developing countries greatly value the universal, multilateral and impartial nature of UN Development Operations and would like the present process to strengthen it.

Distinguished co-chairs,

Keeping this overarching objective in mind, my delegation would like to express its support for the decision to restrict further inter-governmental deliberations on the issue of Systemwide Coherence to Delivering as One, the Harmonization of Business Practices, Funding, Governance and Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

Restricting the agenda would improve the relevance of our deliberations and make them more focussed. We would, however, like to make it clear that our endorsement of a restricted agenda does not in any way constitute a pre-judgement of its outcome or our stated positions on the items that remain on the table.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We have noted the conclusions and recommendations in respect of "Delivering as One". We have been told that this is essentially a management exercise, an exercise in rationalization that will improve delivery of services.

We have apprehensions that we are pre-judging the impact of the exercise of "Delivering as One" and "One Leader". Our reservations on this topic have been reiterated on numerous occasions. We would also like to take this opportunity to stress that there is not enough data from the Pilots to analyse the impact of this structural change. We would therefore be ill-advised if we presume at this stage this change will actually make it easier for the UN system to work.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We would like to commend the Secretariat on its excellent presentation on the institutional options relating to the gender entity. The Government of India is fully supportive of the objectives of gender empowerment, gender parity and gender mainstreaming that this entity is meant to support. These are laudable objectives and the United Nations is mandated to pursue them both within and without. To those who believe that the Gender Entity will significantly improve the capabilities of the United Nations in this regard, we would like to sound a note of caution in the absence of clear proposals on funding, as we had stated to the co-Chairs. Gender mainstreaming is difficult to measure. Gender parity is easy. The United Nations was mandated in 1994, in 2000 and 2003 to bring about Gender parity amongst its employees. It is instructive to note that there has been hardly any improvement in female representation amongst UN employees in the last five years.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We believe that an invigorated gender entity must be genuinely accountable to Member States and must be adequately resourced. Genuine accountability can only be ensured if the General Assembly is involved in the process of selection of the entity through a system of confirmation hearings or through a system of vetting a short-list of qualified candidates. It would also require that the entity be subject to the financial and administrative authority of the General Assembly.

Distinguished co-chairs,

We need to ensure that the exercise of creating entities does not become an endeavour to rob Peter to pay Paul. We are distressed to note that there is no commitment to increase the availability of funds

My delegation believes that funding – core, predictable funding, funding without conditionalities, remains the key to the objective of making the United Nations deliver better and more. The Secretary General has repeatedly reported, most recently in A/63/201 that trends in financing the United Nations system, in particular the decline in core resources are of great concern. In the absence of a sound financial footing and an expanded funding base, the ability of the UN system to deliver coherently, relevantly and effectively is impaired.

Distinguished co-Chairs,

My delegation believes that the co-Chairs have correctly captured the mood of the General Assembly when they state in respect of Governance that there is no palpable appetite for establishing new inter-governmental processes. The co-Chairs subsequent remarks that the Executive Boards and ECOSOC need to be more actively involved are of particular relevance given the skewed balance in core and non-core funding.

In concluding, my delegation fears that in the absence of increased funding and accountability, the current debate on management changes and creation of entities may become an exercise in the creation of a system that is low on delivery and high on advice. Advice of a kind that the entities themselves do not or cannot follow and which developing countries do not want.

Thank you, Distinguished co-Chairs.

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