

Deputy Secretary-General remarks

Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD

Executive Board and WFP Executive Board

Rome, 13 September

Your Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

I am grateful to His Excellency Hisham Mohamed Badr, the Members of the FAO Council, the IFAD Executive Board and the WFP Executive Board for inviting me to this informal joint meeting, which marks 15 months since the General Assembly approved its landmark resolution to reposition the UN development system.

I would also like to thank Mr. Beasley, Mr. Qu and Mr. Hounbo for their exemplary leadership.

One year into this transformative journey, the UN development system is moving ahead with implementation, always faithful to the ambitions and guidance of Member States.

If we are so advanced in our journey, it is in great part thanks to the support and engagement of the leaders of UN agencies across the globe – and I thank our leaders in Rome as well as their teams, our staff and partners.

It is also thanks to the decisive leadership of the Executive Boards and Council of the UN agencies in Rome.

You showed continued unity throughout the year to advance the reforms and played a pivotal role in ensuring timely cost-sharing contributions by the entities of the UN development system.

You have provided your respective entities with the mandates they needed to seize this historic opportunity for transformation.

We are determined to continue to move forward with the same level of ambition and at the same pace.

In this exercise, WFP, FAO and IFAD have been leading by example, both at global and country levels, on the implementation of key reform mandates.

WFP's leadership in advancing our efforts to improve business operations has allowed the UN Development System to make significant progress, including through a new mutual-recognition agreement that lays the foundation for more efficient operations on the ground.

FAO contributed to the preparation of the guidance for the new generation of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and is collaborating closely in UN country teams to advance the SDGs and strengthen the coherence between humanitarian and development action in advancing food security.

IFAD is actively engaged in the working groups related to the Cooperation Framework guidance, as well as those addressing the Management and Accountability Framework and the preparation of the system-wide strategy document.

This commitment to reform has also extended to how senior leadership of these entities have directed country-level engagement.

For example, the joint high-level Rome-based agency visit to Laos in May was fully coordinated and planned with the Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team on the ground.

During the visit, Principals strongly signalled the shift to a more integrated approach to development under the strategic leadership of the Resident

Coordinator with both Government and development partners in the country.

In Cameroon, IFAD has visibly aligned its Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2019-2024 with the Cooperation Framework.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Resident Coordinator has been invited by FAO and WFP to visit project sites to ensure greater visibility and understanding of the unique country portfolios of these two entities, and better joint planning in the future.

These are the budding examples of how this reform is beginning to take root and institute a change in culture.

In addition, with the current global state of hunger, food insecurity, and nutrition displaying worrying trends, the three agencies are taking a unified approach to tackling food systems in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which will be essential to meet the challenges of climate change, malnutrition and poverty.

From the evidence that is starting to emerge, we feel confident to say: change is real and will deeply

transform the system and our response in country to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Excellencies,

Fifteen months in, the results are indeed promising.

First, in January, all 129 Resident Coordinators successfully transitioned to the Secretariat.

This transition released time for Resident Coordinators to invest in quality development coordination and system leadership.

And it resolved a historic accountability deficit in the coordination of the UN development system.

Reporting directly to the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators and their staff are the empowered and impartial team leads that work to enable the mandates and maximize the impact of the work of the UN system on the ground.

Second, a new Management and Accountability Framework has been agreed for UN Country Teams at the country level – the ‘MAF’.

The MAF signals a significant shift in organizational culture. It sets out a new dual accountability system for agency representatives: to their respective entities, as well as to the Resident Coordinator.

Third, we have re-designed the UNDAF, renamed the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, or Cooperation Framework in short, so that it becomes the backbone of the planning, performance and reporting of the UN development system. The Cooperation Framework is the anchor of all that the UN development system does at the country level.

It is the foundation of the UN system's accountability to the Government and provides an analysis of development challenges in a given country as the UN sees it.

The Common Country Analysis will also serve as the starting point for joint work across pillars. It will incorporate a new risk management component where the UN teams on the ground are able to identify vulnerabilities that need more coherent responses between development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors.

We can already see the potential of these types of responses in situations such as Haiti, where the new UN special political mission, in accordance with the Security Council mandate, is designed to plan its programmatic work jointly with the UN Country Team from day one to ensure an anchoring of support to the 2030 Agenda.

Fourth, a new funding architecture for the RC system is operational, creating incentives for new kinds of collaboration.

To date, 38 Member States and 19 UN entities have made commitments and contributions to the Special Purpose Trust Fund for the RC system, with around \$195 million mobilized.

A Funding Compact was agreed between Member States and the UN system, recognizing that a fully funded United Nations development coordination architecture is essential if the various strands of the reform are to be successfully implemented.

Fifth, a draft system-wide strategic document was published to foster a collaborative approach in support of country needs, build on entities' comparative

advantages and reduce overlaps and duplication to ensure a cohesive and integrated UN system approach.

Sixth, we have started making inroads on the Secretary-General's efficiency and effectiveness goals.

And here I want to acknowledge the personal leadership of David Beasley, who co-chairs with UNHCR, the interagency team that leads our efforts to provide country teams with more effective business operation tools.

Improved coherence and coordination of the UN development system can translate into more resources for development. This includes more common premises and pooling of resources for local administrative processes.

Excellencies,

While we can celebrate critical achievements, we are aware that the road towards transformation remains long and fragile.

The Secretary-General and I will remain personally engaged to preserve the ambition and ensure action in

areas that require further progress. We welcome your scrutiny – please continue to hold us accountable.

We will continue to ensure open and transparent dialogue with Member States as we move forward with the remaining Secretary-General’s recommendations, including the review of our regional assets and multi-country offices.

Your leadership and guidance, including in the Executive Boards, will remain critical in a number of areas.

Let me take the opportunity to mention five:

First, ensuring that respective reporting systems and country programme documents are guided and in line with the UN Cooperation Frameworks and new accountability systems of the UN Country Teams.

The Boards have a key role in ensuring a better sequencing of the Cooperation Frameworks and respective individual Country Programme Documents, so that individual plans are derived from the collective commitments.

We also count on Boards to be fully behind the efforts by each entity to invest in the common country analysis of UNCTs.

We cannot afford to repeat the mistake that was made with the UNDAF, allowing it to not be an integral part of corporate planning systems. If we do this, we will fail.

Second, we need to continue efforts to increase the share of common premises and common service. A key part of this work is to support initiatives such as the UN Data Cube, ensuring administrative costs are reflected systematically while respecting the unique business models of individual entities.

Third, guiding entity-specific discussions on the Funding Compact, especially regarding commitments for core and pooled funding. FAO and WFP were early signatories of the Compact and we continue to rely on their leadership in this matter.

Fourth, maintaining your support to ensure sustainable cost-sharing contributions to the new RC system and adequate collection of the 1% levy;

Fifth, encouraging and inspiring all entities to put forward their best candidates for our pipeline of new Resident Coordinators, and review human resources procedures to ensure country team members have the right skillsets and incentives, bearing in mind the imperative for parity and geographic balance. We must ensure that the UN development system is led by the best and brightest.

These are all critical actions to ensure alignment and maintain momentum.

Excellencies,

In 2015, you adopted the Sustainable Development Goals – our boldest framework for advancing the well-being of humankind.

Four years later, we are moving ever closer to delivering a repositioned United Nations development system and honouring the ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

Today, let's continue, together, to seize this unique opportunity to leave no one behind.

Thank you.

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