

**‘United Nations System-wide Coherence: The Next Steps’
Hosted by UNIDO in Vienna, 4 and 5 March 2008**

**Joint Statement by the UN General Assembly Co-Chairs
Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Augustine Mahiga of the United
Republic of Tanzania
Tuesday, 4 March 2008**

Madam Deputy Secretary-General

Mr Director General

Mr Chairman Vice Minister,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the past ten days or so, my colleague as co-chair Ambassador Kavanagh of Ireland and I have visited three of the eight pilot countries, Tanzania, Mozambique and Cape Verde. In all three we have conferred with the highest levels of State and/or government. We have met with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, coordinating Ministers and Ministers having line or sectoral responsibilities, as well as with an autonomous regional leadership, parliamentary leaders, United Nations Country Teams, Development Partners and representatives of civil society. In the coming days we will visit a fourth pilot, Vietnam. Later on, we hope to visit further pilots.

Everywhere we have gone, the national and regional authorities at all levels have been enthusiastically positive in their assessment of how the UN ‘Delivering as One’ project has been proceeding to date in their country or autonomous region. In Tanzania, Mozambique and Cape Verde, the UN ‘Delivering as One’ has been tailored to the respective circumstances of each of these countries. This is important and we are

greatly encouraged by it. It demonstrates that a ‘One Size Fits All’ approach is not being followed despite concerns which we had heard in the General Assembly, that the contrary might be the case. Suffice it to recall that:

Tanzania, with a population of some 40 million, is a United Republic with a semi-autonomous regional government in Zanzibar. Tanzania has been challenged, with the north western part of its territory, impacted by refugees, to make the transition from international humanitarian response to longer-term development support. It has a sizeable resident UN country team of Agencies, Funds and Programmes as well as a significant presence of bilateral and multilateral developing partners.

Mozambique, with a population of approximately 20 million, continues to recover remarkably from the pervasive effects of several decades of conflict. Mozambique is regularly challenged by intermittent floods and droughts and therefore must regularly engage in relief and recovery even as it seeks to make progress in development and democratic governance with the support of a mid-sized UN country team and an expanding presence of development partners.

Cape Verde, with an industrious population of some 500,000, is a climatically and ecologically vulnerable archipelago of small islands with no conspicuous natural resources that has nonetheless succeeded in graduating to the group of middle income States – the latter bringing with it specific challenges which ‘Delivering as One’

is being designed to address with the support of a small resident UN country team.

The widely diverse circumstances and development priorities of these countries are, as a matter of fact, being addressed in a highly differentiated manner by the UN system through ‘Delivering as One’.

We asked the national and regional leadership and other authorities in all three countries which we visited, whether the ‘Delivering as One’ project was increasing the UN Development System’s strengthening of the principles of national ownership and the governmental leadership in their development partnership. We also asked whether ‘Delivering as One’ was resulting in significantly greater alignment of UN System activities to their national programmes, plans and priorities. Repeatedly, all of our government interlocutors responded strongly in the affirmative on both counts. Again, we drew great encouragement from these authoritative responses, which should go a long way to allay worries and misperceptions in some quarters of the General Assembly that some extraneous priorities were being imposed on participating States through the ‘Delivering as One’ project. For example, a key senior official in Tanzania told us that, in Tanzania, national ownership were no longer an issue; it had been accomplished and consolidated. It was now a matter of ‘managing together for results’.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Pilot process has just completed its first year. The past twelve months or so have been taken up with putting in place the necessary structures and processes for alignment with national frameworks and

priorities in each of the eight pilot countries. The year ahead will be one of implementation. Similar initiatives, in application of ‘Delivering as One’, are being undertaken by a number of other developing countries without their having specifically sought the designation ‘pilot’.

From what we have seen to date in the pilots which we have visited, it is clear that very significant progress has been made in advancing the ‘Delivering as One’ project on the ground. Several of our interlocutors, both governmental and from diverse parts of the UN System, described this progress as already ‘irreversible’. One Programmes, jointly prepared by the Governments concerned and the local UN Country Team have been signed, or are about to be signed. One Funding Arrangements and a One Fund to cover the ‘Delivering as One’ Programmes have been established, or are on the point of being established. Arrangements to assure the One Leadership of an empowered and ‘firewalled’ Resident Coordinator are in place, or soon will be in place. One Office arrangements, in the physical and the operational dimensions, are progressively being put in place. Following an inevitable, initial and temporary rise in transaction costs, increased efficiencies and economies of scale in time and resources have already begun to produce savings. These will increase in the period ahead.

What lies ahead now is the progressive implementation of the One Programmes with already evident ‘new and additional’ support forthcoming from development partners. The implementation will also be subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation against focused and rigorous benchmarks which are currently being elaborated. Savings should be ploughed back into development and an encouraging start has

been made to this process, as one representative of the development partners aptly said, ‘‘Delivering as One’ should lead to delivering more.’

Ultimately, towards the end of 2009 the One Programmes will be subject, through the UN Evaluation Group, to an independent evaluation on the basis of which the Secretary-General will report to the General Assembly.

Accordingly, we cannot, in the period immediately ahead, reach any definitive conclusion on the implementation of ‘Delivering as One’. We can, however, confirm the political commitment of the governments concerned, the demonstrated support of development partners and the tripartite partnership which has emerged within the UN country teams in the field. We can also point to very clear benefits which have already accrued in the countries concerned and some of which I have already cited on behalf of the governments concerned. In due course, these will merit an acknowledgement and welcome on the Assembly’s part. By the same token, many challenges remain and we would like to focus on some of these today, given the limited time available to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greater flexibility is needed for the UN country teams

We have heard from pilot governments and from right across the UN Country Teams concerned that various Headquarters’ administrations have increased their engagement with the ‘Delivering as One’ process. At the same time, we have repeatedly been told, at governmental level in particular, that various Headquarters in the UN System need to replicate more fully the degree to which their representatives in the field have

embraced the process. Indeed, it has been pointed out to us, including at the highest-level of government, that further progress at country level can only bring ‘Delivering as One’ so far. For really decisive change to take place, it will be necessary for the various Headquarters to energise the process and effectively ‘catch up with the field’ in order to bring greater synergy between the field and headquarters.

It has also been repeatedly stressed to us that Headquarters can, and should, do a great deal more to give Country Teams the requisite space or enabling flexibility to progress ‘Delivering as One’.

Any wholesale re-writing of financial administrative, human resources and other regulations could only come about over a lengthy period of time and following due consideration. Nonetheless, as an interim step, Headquarters administrations ought to consider taking limited interim steps (or seeking accelerated authority to do so where this is necessary) in order quickly to confer greater flexibility on their representatives in UN Country Teams.

Such greater flexibility is needed, inter alia, to address issues such as the following:

First, probably very large sums of money continue to be lost to the UN system, to the member States which pay for it, and most importantly to the countries and peoples in critical need of more development support, as a result of the continued proliferation of procurement structures. We heard from one Country Team, for example, that its members have been supplied with an extraordinary variety of laptops through almost 20 separate procurement systems. This is a micro example of unnecessary

costs being incurred to the system as a whole by fragmented procurement procedures.

Second we encountered a situation where governmental authorities responsible for a population profiled by extremely challenging economic and social indicators had placed modern air-conditioned offices at the disposal of the UN team - only for the latter to be unable to agree among themselves on the allocation of these offices, ostensibly as a result of 'inter-agency' considerations directed from various Headquarters. As a result the governmental authorities concerned, after eight months of unresolved discussion, were now contemplating withdrawing their offer of the premises in question. Such a situation should be acceptable to no one in this room.

We have observed that from country to country, representatives of the same agency can vary greatly in their commitment to the One Office. Some are enthusiastically committed to exploring the limits the possible within the existing regulations, whilst their colleagues in the next country appear listless and lacking in engagement. Whether this is due to mixed signals being received from regional and Headquarters levels we do not know, but we would suggest that individual Agencies take the necessary steps to empower and motivate their field officials behind the One office concept, so that they might, for example, emulate the Country Team in Mozambique that has devised a plan to integrate their email communications, intra-net and web access arrangements and has harmonised security and travel arrangements. Implementation of this plan will release very significant savings in Mozambique in the year ahead.

Third, we heard repeatedly from governments in the developing countries which we have visited that the UN System should do more to empower and build the capacity of national structures and mechanisms. Repeatedly, we were told that UN agencies insist, whether because of current regulations or for other reasons, on implementing directly many elements of development programmes which could be implemented instead, in a transparent and accountable manner, by the governments themselves. A move to the latter approach, we were told, would reduce costs to the UN system and with appropriate international monitoring, would help significantly to build national capacities in the countries concerned. Once again here, we would encourage UN agencies to consider embracing this approach to a greater extent. Where current regulations foreclose this option, Agencies should examine expeditiously how the regulatory framework might be adapted and made more flexible.

Fourth, we have heard it said that administrative savings in support costs often cannot be applied for the benefit of programmatic or substantive development work because of the legal frameworks which apply in a number of agencies. This is the case despite the fact that in the General Assembly the great majority of member States insist that savings realised through mechanisms such as ‘Delivering as One’ should precisely be ploughed back into the development account. During our visits to pilot countries we have in fact observed two cases of administrative savings, realised through the productive application of ‘Delivering as One’, which have been applied to programmatic development work. The first was in Mozambique where UN agencies collectively made travel savings in a joint programme initiative. These savings have already been reinvested to bring electricity to a Millennium village. The second was in Cape Verde where savings from the establishment of the Joint Office amounted

to 25% of the combined cost of the separate offices in the preceding year. These savings have also been reinvested in additional training and educational opportunities. We would suggest that all Headquarters in the System empower their respective representatives in the field, to the maximum extent possible under the existing legal framework, so as to enlarge the incidence of locally obtained administrative savings being applied in that country to the “development account”. Where this is genuinely foreclosed by the current legal framework, agency administrations might consider securing quickly the necessary legal authority to confer greater latitude on their field representatives. We would be the first to urge that flexibility, desirable as it may be, ought to be consistent with legal and administrative procedures both at Headquarters and in the field.

Fifth, as the pilots enter the second phase of implementation of the ‘Delivering as One’ in the areas of One Programme and One Budget, the tasks will be more complex and will demand creativity and greater flexibility in managing the change. The pooling of financial, human, technical resources and knowledge will need more coordinated guidance from Headquarters to enable field operations to deliver accordingly. We trust that this meeting will be useful in making appropriate preparations to address the expected challenges and anticipated benefits, not only in ‘Delivering as One’ but also in the implementation of System-wide Coherence as a whole.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My colleague as Co-Chair, Ambassador Kavanagh and I, of course, recognize fully the individual mandates and vitally important capacities of individual entities within the System. In our view, ‘Delivering as One’ will have to strike a judicious balance between the oneness of UN delivery and the strength and roles of individual agencies. These represent an enormous asset for the international community and for developing countries in particular. At the same time, reform and renewal of the UN System cannot plausibly co-exist with a ‘business as usual’ approach. Put another way, one cannot envisage having a UN One Programme simply as a supplement, whilst individual agencies continue to deliver all that they would have delivered in the absence of a One Programme. The full implication of this may not arise immediately in all pilots. However, such implications need to be worked through, sooner rather than later, in individual Boards as well as in the Chief Executives Board (CEB).

The President of the General Assembly has observed in this context, that the United Nations System operates in a competitive environment. In each of the countries which we visited, the System provides no more than 5 or 6 percent of the overall ODA spend. This represents an order of a magnitude much reduced from that of thirty, twenty and even ten years ago. Yet, we have heard from pilot governments – whether in large Least Developed Countries or in a small vulnerable island State recently graduated from that grouping – that the ‘Delivering as One’ approach makes persuasive sense to them and responds better to the pressing needs of their peoples. At the same time, in each of the three pilot countries which we have visited, a number of development partners have declared

new and additional funding to support the One Programme in each case. Indeed, we heard well-grounded estimates that the One Programme in each of those Pilots would be fully funded from such resources. While the management of the One Fund needs to be shaped and implemented with great care, and the predictability of future “new and additional” support ought to be better assured, there is in all of this the outline of a virtuous circle – to be sure for the UN itself, but more importantly for the benefit of those peoples who most need our support and who must be at the centre of our consideration.

Before closing and in the presence of so many Funds, Programmes and Agencies of the United Nations System, my colleague as co-chair Ambassador Kavanagh and I would like to recognise the great dedication and professionalism which we have encountered right across UN Country Teams which we have visited of late. In the pilot countries, these personnel have been called upon in the past year to deliver for their individual Headquarters (in terms of reporting, auditing etc.) as per the traditional ways of doing business – even as they work flat out to design ‘on the hoof’ a completely new paradigm. We trust that respective Headquarters in the System will recognise the extent of the demands which have been placed on these dedicated and talented staff and their families in a transition phase that is of such vital importance.

Thank you

