

9 November 2006



Secretary-General

SG/SM/10724

GA/10530

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

SECRETARY-GENERAL PRESENTS REPORT ON UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE, CALLS

FOR ACTION ON 'ONE COUNTRY PROGRAMMES', GENDER EQUALITY, BUSINESS PRACTICES

Following is the text of remarks today by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to an informal meeting of the General Assembly on the report of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence in New York:

I am grateful for this early opportunity to present you with the Report of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, which I myself received only this morning from Prime Ministers Aziz and Stoltenberg.

As you will recall, Heads of State and Government invited me, in the Summit Outcome, "to launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities ... including proposals ... for more tightly managed entities in the fields of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment". In February this year, I asked a group of respected international figures to help me respond to that invitation. I deliberately chose a group of people, who together, would bring vast knowledge and experience, as well as diverse, critical and fresh perspectives to the task — a truly Herculean one, which involved tackling a wide range of highly complex issues within a very short time.

I am glad to say that the Panel members rose to the challenge, personally investing a great deal of time and energy to exploring the issues thoroughly, and to seeking the views of Governments, civil society representatives and officials of the UN System all over the world, through an impressive series of regional and thematic consultations. This has enabled them to come up with a very ambitious set of recommendations, which I believe are none the less realistic.

I have not yet had time to examine the Report in detail, but, I believe that the analysis and recommendations contained in it open the way to a decisive realignment of the United Nations System, which will make it more coherent and more effective in crucial areas of its work. The Report, appropriately entitled *Delivering as One*, proposes a reconfiguration of all those parts of the System that deal with development, in a way that should allow it to realize its full potential, and to make much better use of the resources entrusted to it. The changes proposed will enable the UN to respond better to new challenges, and to support countries more effectively in their efforts to achieve their development goals. Most importantly, they will make the UN a more effective partner in channelling official assistance to developing countries.

We all now have a solemn obligation to seize the opportunity the Panel has offered, and to take its recommendations forward with the same energy and sense of urgency that its members devoted to formulating them.

Within a few weeks, I shall formally submit the Report to the General Assembly, with a brief preface of my own, in which I will suggest ways for Member States to consider and

implement the recommendations. I will also transmit the Report to my successor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who, in due time, may wish to make more specific proposals for implementing it. He is, I know, already well aware of the importance that Member States, UN system organizations and civil society attach to this process, and the high expectations that they entertain.

The analysis and recommendations in the Report are very rich, and cover a great deal of ground. A process of informal dialogue will, therefore, be needed to build a broad-based common understanding of its objectives, contents and proposals. That process should involve all delegations, as well as Government officials from relevant ministries, senior officials from across the UN system, country-level practitioners, and other experts. This will allow different perspectives to be heard, and all stakeholders to become equally aware of the recommendations and what they imply.

The reason why this is so important is that implementing the Panel's recommendations will demand not only strong and sustained support from Member States, but also collective leadership and ownership within the UN system. In some cases, particular UN Agencies, funds or programmes will be called on to sacrifice their individual interests or autonomy, to enable the System as a whole to function better.

I was, therefore, greatly encouraged by the positive initial reaction to the Panel's work expressed two weeks ago, at a meeting of the Chief Executives' Board, where all the heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes met. I took this as a positive signal that the System is united in its desire to improve coherence and coordination, and in its willingness to enact the necessary reforms.

While the Report as a whole requires careful consideration, some of the proposals in it can make an immediate improvement. I believe we should move forward on those without delay.

They include the proposal to establish five pilot "One Country Programmes" by 2007. I am glad to say that a number of States have already expressed interest in being among the pilot countries — one of which, Viet Nam, would be building on considerable progress already made in improving the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the UN at country level.

Similarly, I believe action can be taken immediately on the Panel's important proposals for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. As the Panel rightly stresses, the commitment to gender equality is, and must remain, a mandate of the whole UN system. To make that mandate effective, it is urgent to endow the System with a single, strong voice on women's issues, based on the principles of coherence and consolidation. I hope, therefore, to begin moving this particular recommendation forward in the coming weeks, so as to enable my successor to appoint a new overall head of our gender activities soon after he takes office.

Finally, I will be pressing for early action on the Panel's recommendations in the area of business practices, which clearly build on, and provide impetus to, advances that the System has already made. We can do much to improve coherence in the System, if we now move swiftly to achieve full compatibility in our processes for resource planning, human resources, common services and evaluation.

Let me thank the Panel members once again. It is my sincere hope that together we will be able to carry out their recommendations, and thus make the UN system stronger, more coherent and more responsive to the needs of people everywhere.

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