



TO: Principals of the United Nations Sustainable Development
A: Group

DATE: 21 June 2018

REFERENCE:

THROUGH:

S/C DE:

FROM: The Deputy Secretary-General

DE:

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SUBJECT: **Planning for the transition into a repositioned United Nations development system**

OBJET:

1. Further to the letter of the Secretary-General, dated 1 June 2018, regarding General Assembly resolution 72/279, I would like to provide you with further information on the current plans for the transition into a repositioned United Nations development system.
2. I join the Secretary-General in expressing my sincere gratitude for your active engagement and dedication over the last 18 months, in the context of the review of the United Nations development system and ensuing intergovernmental deliberations. Moving forward, your leadership will be even more important. In implementing the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 72/279, there are indeed a number of critical and time-sensitive actions that need to occur within the next few months, including, inter alia:
 - i. The development of an **implementation plan for the new Resident Coordinator system** (to be submitted before the end of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly).
 - ii. The **transition of the Resident Coordinator system** commencing in January 2019, which should be preceded by the transfer of the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO), potentially by late October 2018.
 - iii. The **establishment of a funding mechanism to receive funding for the new Resident Coordinator system** - a significant share of which will need to be mobilized in the course of 2018.
 - iv. The **immediate optimization of regional structures** of the United Nations development system.
 - v. **Two separate independent reviews** – a) of multi-country offices; and b) the longer-term repositioning of the United Nations regional architecture – to be delivered to Member States at the Operational Activities Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
 - vi. A **Funding Dialogue** to operationalize the Funding Compact, which will unfold from late July to the end of 2018.

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- vii. **Launching major workstreams with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)**, notably the redesign of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), defining criteria and a process for country-level configuration; an updated mutual accountability framework; the full operationalizing of the revised amounts for cost-sharing of the Resident Coordinator system amongst UNSDG entities; and a plan to move towards common back offices and greater efficiencies at the country level.
- viii. The UNSDG is also required to submit a **new system-wide strategic document in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** at the 2019 Operational Activities Segment of the ECOSOC.

3. Ensuring robust capacities to provide strategic direction, monitor progress and enhance external and internal outreach will be crucial to manage the change process, taking into account the complexities and interdependencies of the different reform initiatives. In this context, the Secretary-General has decided to establish a reform coordination structure to ensure a unified and cohesive change management capacity across all reforms, with dedicated teams to service each individual stream. This note refers, specifically, to the structures and capacities to be put in place to take forward the reform of the United Nations development system, for a period from 18 to 24 months.

The United Nations development system transition team

4. As indicated in the enclosed document (Annex 1) on the structure and key functions of the United Nations development system transition team, the overall transition process will be managed by a three-tiered structure including:

- A small **cross-reform change management office**, which will ensure interlinkages and cohesive outreach across all three reform streams, to manage interdependencies and ensure that senior stakeholders are informed and can assist where necessary. This will be a light-touch mechanism, likely to be led by an Under-Secretary-General on a part-time basis, directly supported by 3 to 5 staffers, including a head of office and a staff advisor who will service all the reform streams.
- The specific **United Nations development system transition team** will lead and monitor all aspects of the repositioning of the United Nations development system. This core team, which is to remain lean and agile, will be led by an Assistant Secretary-General, supported by a Director-level Deputy, who will report directly to the Deputy Secretary-General and coordinate closely with the cross-reform change management office. The team will also include a total of approximately 10 colleagues, including professional staff to support specific workstreams, monitoring and communication experts, and support staff. This team will provide support and oversight to the work carried out by specific working groups or entities of the United Nations development system, including in the areas of organizational functions, funding and partnerships, change management and communications.
- **Individual workstream/task forces** under each area will therefore be driven by specific stakeholders. Each of the individual workstreams will be entrusted to time-bound task forces and existing working groups of the UNSDG, which will provide regular updates on progress to the transition team.

5. The transition team should start to be staffed immediately, to be fully operational before the end of August 2018. It will be resourced through a mix of secondees from the United Nations system and temporary positions or consultancies funded through extrabudgetary funding. Entities of the United Nations sustainable development system are encouraged to consider seconding high-performing staff members to staff the team, for a minimum period of one year.

6. Initially, positions targeted for fully-funded secondees include the three “workstream coordinators” (at P5 level) and a “communications expert” (at P4 or P5 level). Further information on the required functions and profiles are indicated in the document enclosed (Annex 2). Interested entities should submit to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General no more than 3 candidates per entity for the above-mentioned positions, before the end of June 2018.

7. In the meantime, and to ensure swift action towards the priority mandates, additional capacities will be set up within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for an approximate period of 3 months. This time-bound surge team will be tasked with the development of the implementation plan to be presented to Member States by September, the set-up of the transition team, the support to change management and communication, and the early coordination of time-critical activities, including setting up a new Resident Coordinator system and UNDOCO.

8. We are fully committed to ensuring a transparent and collaborative transition process, with strong ownership by the UNSDG. We are therefore proposing to formally involve the UNSDG in at least two different ways: (i) the establishment of a UNSDG Advisory Body for the transition process, which would include all members of the Core Group and Chairs of the UNSDG Strategic Results Group; and (ii) the systematic leveraging of UNSDG working mechanisms and secondees to provide inputs into specific workstreams of the reform. Additionally, the full group of Principals of the UNSDG will continue to be regularly involved through ad hoc meetings or written updates.

9. I am grateful to your support to date and look forward to proceeding on our journey. Our shared objective is to ensure a successful and well-calibrated transition that leads to a system that is more impactful and cohesive in delivering results on the ground. The Secretary-General and I count on your leadership and commitment to advance these reforms, including by remaining actively engaged in the above-mentioned meetings and working structures related to this process, as well as by considering the possibility to second colleagues to the transition team. We look forward to your contributions and suggestions regarding the way forward.

cc: The Chef de Cabinet