



# IRELAND

**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of**

**UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP**

**26 January 2009**

**New York**

**Agenda Item 3:**

**Harmonisation of the UN Funds and Programmes:**

**Business Practices**

**Delivered by  
Ambassador Paul Kavanagh  
Permanent Representative of Ireland  
to the United Nations**

*Check against delivery*

**PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
885 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017 TELEPHONE 212 421-6934 FAX 212 752-4726  
ireland@un.int**

Ms. Chairwoman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Excellencies,

I would like to thank you for the interesting presentations which you have given us today on the issue of Business Practice harmonization.

Let me begin by thanking Ms Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA and former Chairwoman of the HLCM for her dedicated and distinguished work in furthering the progress of business practice harmonization. The leadership which she has provided has been instrumental in furthering these essential reforms. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food programme, who has recently taken over as Chairwoman of the HLCM. We wish her every success in this important role.

Let me also thank Mr Ndolamb Ngokwey, Resident Coordinator in Mozambique for his presentation on the progress of business practice reform in Mozambique. Ireland, along with Tanzania, chaired the intergovernmental consultations on System-wide Coherence. In the course of these consultations we had the opportunity to visit the 'Delivering as One' pilots including Mozambique and see at first hand the ground breaking reforms which the UN Country Teams are pioneering to ensure that the United Nations improves its ability to deliver aid efficiently and effectively. All of this is squarely based on the dual principles of national ownership and government leadership as well as "no one size fits all". In its consensus Resolution 277/62, the UNGA has given a broad, positive impetus to this line of reform. While we welcome the progress made to date in furthering business practice reform, we would like to underline that it is essential that these reforms urgently continue and deepen at Headquarters level. Operational and technical obstacles remain among the greatest challenges to progress at country level.

The 'Delivering as One' Pilots have yielded many positive examples of how reform in business practices can improve efficiency. Reforms such as the harmonization of ICT systems yield significant savings as well as allowing UN staff to communicate more easily and effectively. We are also gratified to hear of the establishment of 60 UN Houses. The establishment of One UN Offices can also yield significant annual cost savings for all agencies. In addition to cost savings, One UN Offices facilitate greater collaboration among UN staff at country level, promoting a more unified UN presence. Many of the other reforms, such as the work on common procurement or on a common communications team, will ensure that the UN System can work more effectively towards the realizations of development results, while at the same time making significant efficiency gains. In all the countries we visited we saw examples of reforms or proposed reforms which not only improve the way the UN System functions, but also reduce transaction costs.

There can be no doubt that the UN 'Delivering as One' pilots have registered significant progress in fulfilling, through partnership, the national plans and priorities of the States concerned. However, it is equally important to recognize that many challenges remain, and these challenges will not be overcome unless reforms are prioritized by all parts of the UN System. Savings should be ploughed back into country programmes as far as possible. The country planning processes should be reformed to simplify and reduce the transaction costs linked to the planning process. More work should be done so that the United Nations can increasingly use national systems for procurement and as well as new funding mechanisms such as government managed basket funds and sector wide approaches.

Further assistance and consistent support will be required from all of the UN organizations at Headquarters level in order to progress in all countries implementing 'Delivering as One'. In the meantime it is important that Headquarters provide the necessary flexibility and waiver procedures and regulations where appropriate.

This work could be facilitated by senior level inter-agency missions to assist in the reform. It will require increased collaboration among all parts of the System, going from country level to global level and it is important that there be close collaboration between the HLCM and the UNDG efforts so that the work at country level feeds into the work at global level.

We are greatly encouraged by the adoption, by the HLCM, of a plan of action for the harmonization of business practices in the UN System which will complement the efforts at country level. We were very grateful to Ms Obaid for providing a briefing on this plan of action to the assembly last year. We look forward to hearing more about its implementation. We would be interested in hearing more about the concrete outcomes which we can expect both in improving the impact of programmes, as well as increasing available resources for reinvestment at country level. Roll out should be pressed ahead as quickly as practicably.

We commend the UN system for the important work which has been done to date. There are no doubt challenges ahead - harmonizing business practices across the UN System is a long term project and careful balances need to be struck. Any changes made should be done so in a pragmatic and flexible way. However, the size and scale of this task does not change the fact that it is both urgent and necessary.

Last year, as a Co-Chair for System Wide Coherence, this delegation was privileged to confer with the national leadership in a range of developing countries. The leaders in those countries are the ones who have political and administrative responsibility to meet the urgent economic and social challenges facing their countries. Without exception these leaders – whose daily reality is far distant from the pace and tenor of these halls – repeatedly stressed to us that their countries needed these reforms to move ahead quickly. They need a United Nations system that delivers more and delivers better. We should listen to them.