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Conference report

New challenges, new partners, a new UN development system?

Monday 14 – Wednesday 16 May2012 | WP1183

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The Wilton Park conference on "New challenges, new partners, a new UN development system?" took place on May 14-16, 2012 at Wiston House, UK. It was convened by the "Future of the United Nations Development Systems (FUNDS)" project (Geneva) and the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The conference is part of an ongoing process towards greater reform of the UN development system (UNDS). The 60 participants represented key stakeholders: diplomatic corps, development agencies and partner countries, civil society, academia and the private sector. Both the facilities at Wilton Park and the balanced group of participants allowed for diverse and stimulating exchanges. As customary, discussions were "off the record". Funding for the conference came from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the Swiss Development Cooperation and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

UN development system in crisis?

1. What is the state of affairs of the UN development system? Interestingly, there were important distinctions in participants' assessments of the nature of the problems confronting the UN development system (UNDS), which were also echoed by the results from the 2012 global perceptions survey carried out by the FUNDS project. Some saw a system "in crisis" as a result of the fragmentation of structure and governance, and the emergence of competing platforms. Challenges were both horizontal – coherence across the system – and vertical – problems of management within individual organisations. The UNDS was seen as a system operating "under stress", with centrifugal forces – competition within the UNDS as well as outside – often being more powerful than centripetal ones founded on common practices, goals, values. Individual organisations jealously guarded their independence and often seemed reluctant to cooperate or overcome institutional inertia. The financial heft of the UN for its core funds was generally modest compared with other multilateral and bilateral development organisations, and even more modest in relationship to foreign direct investment and remittances.

2. But if the UNDS was imperfect, it was also necessary. It has global legitimacy. There were a number of initiatives which demonstrated the importance and relevance of the system, including the Rio+20 process, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the emergence of the Development Cooperation Forum, the mainstreaming of human development and the focus on global public goods, among others. These were functions and areas in which the UN was the preferred partner, based on its multilateral value-based identity. That middle income countries were increasingly prepared to pay for UN services themselves was also seen

as a positive sign.

Fragmentation and Coherence

3. At best, the fragmentation of the UNDS has remained unchanged and, at worst, accelerated in recent years. The resulting pursuit of funds and protection of turf can, however, also be observed for NGOs and bilateral aid agencies. While demands for more and better coordination affect operational activities more than normative work of some of the specialised agencies, system coherence should be a concern of all UN entities. In the long-run, all parts of the system – including humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping that need to be more closely associated with the development activities - will be affected if challenges in particular issue areas persist. Entrenchment and silo views are not sustainable. Notwithstanding the negative externalities of fragmentation, under specific circumstances, "creative chaos" could also be seen to have positive results in terms of institutional learning and emulation. The argument here is that to an extent, there is strength in diversity within the UNDS.

The State of Multilateralism

4. The reform of the UNDS is embedded in a broader debate about the continued relevancy of multilateralism: since any assessment of the state of the UNDS necessarily reflects views about multilateralism as well, separating the one from the other becomes a challenge. Historically, the UN was placed at the core of the multilateral system, but its relevance is being challenged by non-UN, private sector players and partnerships in the international arena. The critique of the UN is mainly concentrated on the development system; the comparative advantage of other pillars of the UN such as peace and security or humanitarian action and human rights are less disputed. The common perception was that while multilateralism in all areas was in need of modernisation, reforms were possible and it would clearly be wrong to abandon it altogether.

Global Perceptions Survey on the Future of the UN Development System

5. The results of the second global perceptions survey conducted by the FUNDS project in February and March 2012 were a key input for the conference. The survey builds and expands upon a first iteration conducted in 2010. The 2012 survey, in particular, served the purpose of bringing into the discussions on the future of the UNDS the voice of the "third UN", i.e. the external actors like the private sector, civil society and the people – alongside governments/member states ("first UN") and the international civil servants/staff ("second UN").Global perceptions were surveyed using a questionnaire to which there had been 3,345 respondents from 153 countries.

UN optimists and UN pessimists

6. One of the most intriguing results showed a potential global dichotomy of how respondents perceived the capacity of the UNDS to handle its own organisational, as well as new global development challenges. The survey results characterised respondents as "optimists" (23 percent), who were positive about the capabilities of the UN to handle organisational change and meet new development challenges, "pessimists" (19 percent), who took a more negative view, and "neutrals" (58 percent). Intriguingly, the more optimistic respondents tended to be younger people working in the public sector in developing countries, while the pessimists were found among more experienced people from developed countries working in non-UN international public organisations. Illustrative of the dichotomy, the optimists considered insufficient financial resources to be the biggest challenge facing the system, while the pessimists considered international organisational structures, ineffectiveness and lack of adaptability to be the most important. The survey also examined the responses of northern (DAC) respondents separately from southern (non-DAC) regarding desired changes to the UNDS. Both categories favoured increased funding for the UNDS. The

North called for fewer UN organisations, while the South called for single system country representative.

7. In terms of areas of engagement, the survey found the UNDS to be most effective in health, education and human rights. Perceptions of relevance of individual UN agencies and organisations varied greatly, but were not always correlating with overall familiarity and knowledge of those organisations and therefore need to be viewed with caution. Agencies that came out on top were WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF. It was felt that "relevance" and "effectiveness" needed more careful definition, as these terms could mean different things according to whether they were considered from the viewpoint of a donor or a recipient country.

8. The meeting took note of the survey findings, which were just a sample from a large data-base that also included some qualitative responses on concrete reform proposals. There were questions about the geographic distribution of the sample, respondent demographics and about the interpretation of some of the terms. More disaggregated analysis would be useful before more definitive interpretations could be made. It was also recommended that the survey should be combined with the results of other assessments, such as the MOPAN (Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network) and compared with other surveys such as the one conducted by the UN Foundation on the perception of US citizens about the United Nations..Finally, it was recommended that the results of the survey be shared with the heads of UN agencies on a regular basis in order to stimulate debate about system-wide concerns.

The changing global environment

9. In the face of a changing global and landscape, the UNDS is coming under increasing pressure to modernise and demonstrate its continued relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Discussions on the implications of the changing global environment on the UNDS focused in particular on the following issues.

North-South relations

10. The world is currently experiencing a fundamental reconfiguration of the very structure of development cooperation in response to seismic changes in the composition and relative weight of different states. The traditional distinction between donors of the North and recipients of the South has become increasingly blurred. A key question is whether former beneficiaries will bring a new impetus for sensitivity to beneficiary concerns into UN fora. There were also different views on whether, in global negotiations, the North-South divide still held practical meaning; there was no disagreement, however, that it very much polarised discussions everywhere in the system. Tackling polarisation and improving group relations (G-77, EU…), dialogue and collaboration within its governance structures are critical to ensure that the UNDS remains relevant, but also effective and efficient. This would require (re)building trust and forging true partnership, which in the past had been eroded, for example through selective development commitments (such as in the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration or the Monterrey Consensus). Making the executive boards and other governing structure memberships more reflective of today's realities would present a viable option to recapture some ground.

South-South Cooperation

11. ODA is only a small part of the development picture, but it continues to be crucial to a number of developing countries. There is a concern that austerity measures in many OECD countries are likely to have a lasting impact on the provision of global development aid in the short- to medium-term. A clear role of the emerging economies for its engagement with the UNDS based on their resources – financial, ideational, technical and others - is yet to evolve. With several of the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa ("BRICS") having established their own bilateral cooperation programmes over the years – and others currently being engaged

in the process of establishing them - there are expectations for them to take on a gap-filling role for finances as well as other inputs such as technical cooperation. At the same time, the emerging economies have repeatedly stressed that they neither constitute a cohesive group nor consider themselves as "new traditional" donors, emphasizing that South-South cooperation constitutes a distinctively separate mode of engagement that complements – but not replaces – traditional aid. This offers a possible "bridging" role for the UNDS, which could play a role in this growing South-South cooperation, by using its global network to encourage exchange of experience and expertise among developing countries. The UNDS could also facilitate "triangular" cooperation by bringing in traditional donor countries as third-parties. Finally, the UN could act as an appropriate custodian of aid transparency standards, a function that is necessary but whose current institutional home, the OECD-DAC, a number of non-traditional donors do not consider sufficiently neutral and legitimate.

A Changing Multilateralism?

12. Increased interdependency and intensifying global challenges such as climate change present impulses in favour of multilateralism. A speaker from one of the BASIC countries, however, described a clear preference for a bilateral approach to development cooperation, and a mistrust of the UN and multilateralism based on a lack of control, poor accountability and inefficiency. But the overall perception was that emerging economies seek to participate (and not position themselves in opposition to) international multilateral cooperation, such as through the UNDS.

The Interrelation of Funding and the Results Agenda

13. Donor focus on – and the necessity for implementing agencies to demonstrate – (measurable) results is an essential trait of the way that today's (multilateral) development system functions. In the style of the private sector, this "results agenda" can be considered the "bottom line" for operational activities for development. The implications for the UNDS reach far and deep. The growing number of bilateral assessments of multilateral aid organisations, which serve to demonstrate value for money to taxpayers that provide the funding for national aid programmes, is but one effect. There were concerns about the transparency and accountability of the UNDS, and the poor performance in reporting results. In part, this was because some agencies were not good at touting their successes. More fundamentally, the close interrelation of the results agenda with the funding mechanisms and practices of the UNDS could have grave repercussions for the basic substructure on which the UNDS rests.

Growing trend of multilateral aid assessments by bilateral agencies?

14. Multilateral aid assessments have grown significantly in recent years. On the positive side, such assessments could be instrumental in stimulating reform and debate within the UNDS as the majority of UN agencies has not come out on top. Hope was also expressed that the assessments could form the basis for a balanced exchange on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of both bilateral and (not just) multilateral aid. Criticism focused on the emphasis of "measurable" outcomes, which was seen as inadequate for capturing normative work performed in particular by UN specialised agencies. To some extent, the emphasis on "brand recognition" in these assessments was seen as an example of "mixed messages" by donors who advocate for a more coherent and unified UN system in other fora. In order to limit capacity strains and overlap, the development of joint instruments - at least for common variables - for example on the basis of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), should be considered in the future.

The Need for Rebalancing Core and Non-Core Earmarked Funding

15. Donor funding to the UNDS had become increasingly ear-marked by purpose and destination, thus undermining multilateral principles and compromising the capacities of member states to govern. Core funding that directly supports implementation of

multilateral mandates under the direction and supervision of their executive boards constitutes the bedrock of the UNDS, but its weight has diminished in recent years. The balance between core- and non-core funding (roughly 1:5 ratio) had become unsustainable and was in dire need of rebalancing. The current funding framework was seen as a major source of fragmentation of the UNDS. Given high needs and a continued willingness to accept funding on the side of UN agencies, addressing the supply-side of the funding relationship was seen to be a more practical approach for change. The QCPR (Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review) resolution to be deliberated in the autumn/winter of 2012 presents both an opportunity and an instrument to address this issue.

Non-Core earmarked Funding

16. Notwithstanding the systemic challenges associated with an expanding and, in the view of most participants, too large a share of non-core funding, opinions differed about the micro level assessments of the contribution of the modality to the UNDS. In principle, earmarking can be an instrument for stimulating reform and for responding to performance. It was also said to be beneficial for support to cross-cutting issues, such as gender or climate change. On the other hand and depending on the way it was provided, earmarked funding ("multi-bi") was seen to have a potential negative effect on efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of UNDS operations as it could:

- Undermine the multilateral mandate of agencies if priorities were set externally,

- Encourage "mission creep" by incentivising a widening of the field of engagement,

- Increase transaction costs through heavy additional administrative burden,

- Compromise accountability via the governing boards,

- Stimulate even more competition for funding, thereby exerting additional pressures for fragmentation of the UNDS.

- Undermine the neutrality and legitimacy of the UNDS as agencies may end up focussing on the priorities of individual donors instead of multilateral ones.

In order to mitigate and/or address these challenges, some options included:

- Establishing a system of pledged funding similar to the World Bank,

- Increasing the quality of non-core funding through more soft-earmarking and pooling,

- Introducing a system of differentiated management charges and

- Enhancing the visibility of non-earmarked core funds.

Core Non-earmarked Funding

17. Given current imbalances in the UNDS, there was some talk of the necessity to preserve a core of common interests funded by non-earmarked contributions within the UNDS. In reality, core contributions often subsidise activities funded through earmarked contributions when cost-recovery systems for the management of earmarked funds prove insufficient. Benefits of core funding were seen in its potential to even out imbalances of the bilateral aid system, including addressing the specific needs of programme countries which are under-funded from other sources. Related to the issue was the fact that seconded or otherwise transferred technical personnel often accompanied earmarked funding, which could present challenges not just to the financial foundations but also to that of international civil servants, again with wider repercussions for multilateralism. Establishing a new funding source for the UNDS based on a carbon levy or a financial transaction tax could be a long-term solution for more regular and predictable funding. Finally, the idea of a minimum (financial) scale for each UN agency was also advanced as a way to determine targets for consolidation.

A Results Framework for the UN development system?

18. Across the system a more effective results framework was required. It was seen as a necessary basis for continued sustained funding from donors. At the same time, predictable and flexible funding that supports realistic work programmes is a key input for achieving and demonstrating results. Given the close relationship between the results-agenda and the UNDS funding framework, it was seen to be important to prevent a vicious circle of increases in the demand for results – and decreases in the capacity to deliver them. Further challenges stem from the difficulty in measuring the results contributions of the UNDS to cost-effective activities in the field of prevention, building capabilities, providing global public goods or setting norms and standards. While these domains have proven to be more difficult to measure and attribute clearly to the efforts of individual organisations, this is where many see the comparative advantage of the UNDS.

Elements of UNDS Comparative Advantage

19. To attract more and better quality funding, it was important for the UN to define more clearly the areas of comparative advantage – in delivering outputs and inputs - which include the following aspects that were identified by working groups during the conference:

- The UNDS performed numerous and complementary functions, including convening different stakeholders (forum), setting policies and global norms and implementing them, advocating internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs.

- Grounded in its broad mandate, the UNDS was playing a unique role in the area of compiling global statistics and data – such as, for example, the HDR (Human Development Report) or the climate change panels – that were unavailable anywhere else. Close feedback loops between evidence (research, data) and operations were also seen as an advantage of the UNDS.

- Due to its legitimacy edge and the widely acknowledged perception of neutrality, technical cooperation and the UNDS engagement in capacity building in sensitive working areas such as governance or institution building worked particularly well.

- The role of managing and supervising trust funds- which was a side-effect of increased earmarked funding – on the other hand, represents an area with little comparative advantage for the UNDS as there are numerous other organisations with higher capacities in this respect.

UN Development System at the country-level - Delivering as One

20. How can the UNDS be more than the sum of its parts? The DaO (Delivering as One) initiative, which encourages convergence at the country level, had been a recommendation of the High-level Panel on UN System Coherence of 2006. Among the views on the table were those of one of the co-chairs, government officials and UN resident coordinators in pilot countries, and headquarters and field personnel familiar with the experiment. The DaO process had helped to strengthen the role of national governments as coordinators, and had led to some increase in efficiency. There was some evidence of less competition for funds among UN organisations. Although UN funding often constitutes only a small fraction of total assistance at country level, the additional DaO funds provided essential leverage, which was unlikely to continue without renewed funding for this specific purpose.

21. Overall, the DaO – of which an evaluation had just been completed – was considered an important initiative, although it fell well short of full system integration, of which a model had been provided by the unified UN offices established in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. DaO was held back by the fact that the local heads of agency were not accountable to the UN resident coordinator but to their own headquarters, and by the desire of each organisation to promote its own brand, as part of the necessity to attract

funding. It was felt that further progress on DaO would depend in part on achieving more harmony among UN organisations at the headquarters level. The UN coordination of external development partners also faced some resistance.

22. DaO constitutes an approach for UN agencies to work together that differs according to specific country needs and contexts. Success in broadening the DaO approach would in particular depend on further horizontal integration across executive boards. Programming, funding, reporting and accountability lines continue to be predominantly vertical, i.e. from agency at the country-level to headquarters, which hindered country-level collaboration. Financial incentives were a key contributor to inter-agency collaboration, and "One funds" linked with "One Programmes" should become the nucleus of joint operations. The decline in support for the coherence funds was seen as a great concern putting sustainability of the initiative at risk. Several participants suggested that positive achievements were "not irreversible" given their basis in temporary funding mechanisms and requirement of strong leadership. The decline of the unified offices in Eastern Europe was a case in point. Importantly, in addition to the UN DaO, partner countries taking ownership also needed to "demand as one", and executive boards needed to "guide as one". To date, DaO remained a focus in the field and not headquarters.

UN operational activities using national systems

23. During discussions on aid effectiveness, it had been established in other fora that programme implementation by means of parallel implementation systems can have potentially detrimental effects on programme country capacities. Examples of such negative externalities included overburdening national capacities through uncoordinated demands or the poaching of qualified nationals. Some participants therefore challenged the UNDS to make more use of national systems in its operations. A stronger reliance on national system is a potential advantage of South-South cooperation.

The Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Agenda

24. Since the designation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the aftermath of the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs have helped to frame the agenda for the UNDS and gave focus to its work.

Possible Future Scenarios

25. A UN panel - to be co-chaired by the UK Prime Minister, and the Presidents of Liberia and Indonesia - had been appointed by the UN Secretary-General to consider the future of the MDGs. The world was now beginning to consider the succession to the MDGs after 2015, and the meeting sketched several different scenarios:

- Abandoning global goals, leaving the establishment of appropriate targets to countries;

- Continuation of the current MDG framework;

- Expanding the existing framework to cover some areas not previously addressed and

- Reconceptualising the goals on a new basis, responding to a new set of global priorities such as climate change, covering both developing and developed countries.

Proposals for the Process and Content of the Post-2015 Development Goals

26. The process of translating the Millennium Declaration into the MDGs was criticised for its lack of due process and for a selective approach to which commitments to monitor and follow-up ("cherry picking"). It became clear therefore that the selection process of any new development goals needed to be more representative, participatory and transparent. The heightened global attention would make the definition of goals and respective targets much harder than in 2000. A monitoring mechanism following the

model of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council would help to strengthen their implementation. An expanded timeline might be necessary to result in the kind of transformational change that was required to achieve lasting development outcomes. Achieving the MDGs has many prerequisites, and there are also interconnections between the different goals, such as for example health outcomes which required progress on education goals. In terms of content, a number of proposals had been advanced, which included ones on inequality, gender, a more comprehensive focus on maternal mortality and secondary school completion.

What role for the UNDS?

27. Discussions focussed also on the impact a new or revamped MDG framework would have for the role of the UNDS. 2015 was seen as a key threshold that offered an opportunity for the UNDS to realign itself with the new development goals. Other suggestions included a more focussed ("lender of last resort") role on fragile states as the "final frontier" of development, or on particular functions such as capacity building and norm-setting.

Enlarging the Circle

28. UNDS partnering with non-state actors represents a strong growth sector, and defining the function and terms of partnerships is therefore high on the agenda. While the increasingly important contributions by the private sector and civil society to the UNDS were recognised, some participants also pointed out that an emphasis on the role of non-state actors was seen to be disadvantageous for emerging economies who emphasise strong state structures. It should also not be forgotten that non-state engagement also encompasses regional integration organisations. The observer status for the EU in the General Assembly since 2011 and its membership status in FAO were seen as early steps of a changing relationship that could in the long-term develop into a "post-Westphalian" order.

Private Sector

29. The meeting heard from several representatives of the private sector, which was increasingly interacting with the UNDS. The creation of the Global Compact had helped to create some momentum, and there were many areas in which the private sector and the UNDS were finding common ground. To do so meant overcoming mutual mistrust between, on one hand, consensus-driven, development-oriented organisations generally averse to risks, and on the other hand, opportunistic, dynamic and commercially-driven companies. Each side could prepare itself for partnership in order to recognise mutual benefits. Business succeeded best in stable countries committed to development. The UNDS could help businesses to flourish by helping to create an enabling environment. At the same time, different working cultures and orientations had to be reconciled between the private sector and the UN civil servants. Risk-taking was mentioned as an example of dissimilarity. For the UN to become "fit for partnering", it needed committed leadership, as well as the systems, processes and capacity to partner in place. Overall, there was a need for a clearer definition and understanding of the distinct roles.

Civil Society

30. There were now over 3,000 non-governmental organisations registered with the UN. The relationship with the UNDS was undergoing change. Historically, the UNDS supported NGOs as deliverers of development services. But the UN needed to recognise that there were circumstances where NGOs also had an important contribution to make in policy dialogue. Civil society should finally not be seen just as a means, but as an end in itself, since a vibrant civil society was important for development progress and the UN could do more to help it thrive and build NGO capacities. There were cautions, however, since the roles of NGOs were controversial

in some countries and some circumstances.

Reform Proposals

31. How can the reform of the UNDS be taken forward? Discussions oscillated between "big bang" vs. "incremental" steps as the two poles of a reform continuum. A more fundamental and comprehensive reform was theoretically seen as the more preferable option, but incremental reforms that aimed to produce quick, visible but also more limited reform dividends were seen as more viable. Several participants pointed out that historic attempts at reform often required a potent external impulse ("a 1945 moment") that triggered systemic change. It was suggested that comprehensive reform proposals of the UNDS institutional framework – including a redefinition of ECOSOC as the central coordinating organ for the UNDS - needed to be ready in time if and when a "window of opportunity" opened up. There were suggestions for the closure of some parts of the UNDS and, reflecting the views of the survey, the merger of organisations deemed to be performing similar functions. The "courageous" step of the merger of four UN institutions to form the singular entity UN Women presented a positive example of consolidation. It was recalled that many of these proposals were not new, and had already been raised by the High Level Panel in 2006. The Rio+20 summit which will consider a transformation of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) into a Sustainable Development Council (SDC) as well as a strengthening of UNEP represents an opportunity for significant reform. In the absence of more radical changes, incremental reforms such as the DaO initiative focusing in particular on processes and policies were considered the pragmatic second-best solution.

32. Based on their main thrust vis-à-vis the UNDS, proposal for reform of the UNDS can be differentiated into two main categories: a) those that are focused on vertical policies, processes and institutions that concern individual agencies and the dealings of country and headquarter levels, as well as b) those relating to the horizontal, system-wide aspects of the UNDS.

Vertical Reforms

33. Within individual agencies of the UNDS, empowering the leadership and senior management teams to have more say on administrative questions including strengthening the criterion of merit vis-à-vis regional representation in HR policies - and be accountable for the outcomes – was seen as a positive proposal for more effective and efficient operations. One concrete suggestion was for the UN Secretary-General and all heads of funds, programmes and agencies to have only single terms of office of a maximum of six years so that leaders could make bolder reform proposals which could have otherwise alienated supporters of a second term in office. This could be complemented with more discretion and flexibility for members of the UN country teams at the country level. Stronger strategic communication, including of achievements, that created a "climate for change" was seen as a critical element complementing any agency reform effort. The structure and composition of the UNDS reflected past development priorities and should be more geared to the future. It was time therefore also to review the capacities to meet modern challenges and take on new responsibilities. One new area mentioned was global tax cooperation, for which the UN should have the mandate, but currently lacked the capacity.

Horizontal reforms

34. The fragmented governance structure of the UNDS is a major obstacle for a more integrated system overall. Common executive boards were seen as a beneficial means to streamline business processes as well as monitoring and guidance and should be explored further. There was a sense that many administrative services could potentially be provided with higher cost-effectiveness on a system-wide level, either through determining lead agencies or new service centres on the basis of cost-sharing. Other options included more meaningful system-wide results-based management, improved

accrual-based accounting systems and staff assessment. The joint evaluation function for independent assessments – which, like the DaO evaluation, are often implemented on an ad-hoc basis - is currently under review. Opinions differed on how to take the DaO process forward, but a central element was to be a strengthened role of the resident coordinators vis-à-vis the UN country teams.

Taking the Reform Process Forward

35. In the short-to medium term future, four important events were seen as opportunities to advance significant reforms proposals: the second term for the UN Secretary-General, who in principle should be freer and also interested in a legacy; the Rio+20 summit in June 2012 and its debates about the institutional framework for sustainable development;, the QCPR process and resolution in the autumn/winter of 2012; and the debate around post-2015 development goals in the period until 2015.

36. There was strong consensus on the value of the continuing work of the FUNDS team at the Ralph Bunche Institute, particularly to pursue two main types of substantive deliverables: surveys of knowledgeable experts about the state of the UNDS and its future prospects; and original research. Participants endorsed the value of stakeholder scrutiny of the FUNDS output, including off-the record conversations (such as at Wilton Park) between member states, UN organisations, NGOs, the private sector and the media.

Conclusion

37. For the UNDS to continue to be effective, efficient and relevant in delivering on its mandate, it will have to explore and refine further issue-centred operations. In particular, what is required is a better understanding of when to act as a system, when through an individual agency, and when best to rely on "global issues networks" as clusters of international, state and non-state actors collaborating on specific issues as "new partners" that cross institutional and other boundaries.

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