

## **Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia**

**16–17 May 2019**

**Budapest, Hungary**

**Background Note**

**Session 5**

**UN reform and implications for FAO in the region**

### **1. Introduction**

On 31 May 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution “Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” (A/72/L.52). The resolution calls upon the entities of the United Nations development system to strengthen capacities, resources and skill sets to support national governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda in order to promote progress on those goals for countries lagging behind, in line with respective mandates, using comparative advantages and reducing gaps, overlaps and duplication across entities. The main aim is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN development system.

FAO fully supports the key goals and aspirations of the UN reform, which provides an opportunity for all of the UN to deliver results towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a more efficient and integrated manner at regional and country levels. Moreover, FAO considers the reform proposal a powerful tool to foster better alignment of the UN development system to the priorities of the 2030 Agenda, particularly in its new, developmental vision for achieving zero hunger and its recognition across many SDGs of the many vital contributions of agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources for achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, at the 160th Session of the FAO Council, FAO’s Members expressed appreciation for FAO’s engagement in the joint planning for the implementation of the UN repositioning.

Taking into consideration that the reform and the implementation plan have implications on the work of FAO, this paper outlines briefly the main elements of the reform that have implications related to the future programming of FAO in the Europe and Central Asia region.

The first section of this document briefly outlines major issues and the current status of discussion. The second part particularly refers to the updated United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), now renamed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) guidelines, and its implications for the FAO Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs). The third part outlines the progress and efforts made to adjust the regional level of the reform. Finally, some conclusions are made regarding the implications and opportunities of the UN reform on FAO’s work in the region.



## 2. Key aspects of the UN reform

### *A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system*

A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, led by a strengthened Resident Coordinator (RC), is at the centre of the repositioning of the UN development system. With strengthened authority and impartiality, full-time leadership and an enhanced supporting team, the Resident Coordinator can effectively lead the UN Country Teams' contribution to countries' implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It will strengthen accountability for results; it will provide greater incentives for integrated policy support and action; and it will enable UN Country Teams to deliver – and report on – in-country results at a scale that responds to national needs and priorities. To that end, the Resident Coordinator system will continue to be led by sustainable development professionals who are capable, staffed and resourced to tailor and steer UN Country Teams on the basis of country needs. This entails alignment of Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team skills and profiles with national sustainable development needs, including better preparation to ensure operational coherence and synergies in development and humanitarian and peacebuilding action, according to the country context. The Resident Coordinators will need to be strong, development-focused leaders, with independence and impartiality, and supported by adequate and predictable resources. Success will be measured on the delivery of results in advancement of country efforts to eradicate poverty and ensure that no one is left behind, based on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework<sup>1</sup> and well-aligned country programmes. Strategic, effective, efficient, and accountable impact will be the baseline for performance and success indicators of the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system.

To ensure clarity on the new roles and accountability under the repositioned system, the job description of the Resident Coordinator has been revised to realign functions and responsibility as defined by the General Assembly. The primary function of the Resident Coordinator is to coordinate the United Nations assets on the ground to advance sustainable development and leave no one behind. The Resident Coordinator has a direct reporting line to the Secretary-General.

### *Management and Accountability Framework*

A key element of the adjustment of the responsibilities of the Resident Coordinator is clear accountability lines across all actors in the UN development system at country, regional and global levels. Following the General Assembly resolution, a clear, matrixed, dual reporting model will be established. According to this model, UN Country Team members will maintain a direct reporting line to the headquarters of their respective agency; in addition, they will report to Resident Coordinators on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, on the basis of UNDAF. The modality and details of the reporting are outlined in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF).

As such, the MAF is a foundational piece in the reinvigoration of the Resident Coordinator system. It aims to be a clear framework for management and accountability within UN Country Teams, to ensure a consistent approach across countries. The dual accountability system – at the centre of the reform effort – ensures that country representatives of other UN entities remain fully accountable to their respective entities on individual mandates, while periodically reporting to the Resident Coordinator on their entity's individual activities and on their joint (with other entities) contributions to the collective results of the UN development system towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the country level on the basis of UNSDCF.

---

<sup>1</sup> See more details on the UNSDCF in Section 3 of this document.



The MAF describes, in detail, the roles of the Resident Coordinators and the UN Country Teams, as well as describing relationships and accountability at country, regional and global levels. The MAF also includes an informal dispute resolution mechanism. The country level chapter has been approved, and the regional and global dimensions of the MAF are expected to be finalized later in 2019, following consideration by Member States of the regional review, at which point any necessary adjustments to the country level chapter will be also considered.

In addition to the implementation of a new system of accountabilities and reporting through the MAF, new approaches to coordination and configuration of UN Country Teams will be facilitated by a redesigned UNDAF (UNSDCF).

#### *Implications for FAO related to the MAF*

The new Management and Accountability Framework is a result of intense negotiations with active engagement of all participating UN agencies, funds and programmes. From FAO's perspective, it creates an enabling framework for enhanced coordination and collaboration among the new generation of Resident Coordinators and UNCTs on the ground. In particular, FAO's country offices may *inter alia* fully benefit from the new MAF in the following areas:

- utilizing the full potential of empowered and neutral Resident Coordinators and their convening power to leverage political and financial support from the host government to FAO's SDG-related agenda, including through advocacy, communication and expertise;
- improving and strengthening FAO's capacities under the new RC/UNCT configuration for integrated policy support, data management, partnerships and investments, particularly by fostering multi-sectoral collaboration;
- accessing the new joint SDG-fund facility at country level;
- enhancing access to higher and more strategic country planning and financing actors and authorities; and
- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of FAO offices through promoting joint administrative services, business operations and common premises, where applicable and cost-neutral.

### **3. New UNDAF guidelines (UNSDCF)**

FAO's country planning instrument is the Country Programming Framework (CPF), which defines the development priorities for collaboration between FAO and a Member Country, the outputs to be achieved contributing to national priorities, FAO regional priorities and corporate results, and the resources and partnerships required to achieve the development priorities and outputs. Within the UN reform, it is important that the FAO CPF is fully integrated into the UN planning framework.

The new UN planning framework, as part of the UN reform, is the so-called United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), known in the past as UNDAF. United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/279 elevates the UNSDCF to be "the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)." The final version of UNSDCF is expected to be approved in May 2019.

The UNSDCF guides the entire programme cycle; it drives the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the UN development system's collectively owned development results to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The UNSDCF determines and reflects the UN development



system's contributions in the country and shapes the configuration of UN assets required inside and outside the country.

Taking the universality of the 2030 Agenda into consideration, it is important to include a wide range of stakeholders; therefore, the UNSDCF significantly broadens the concept of partnerships. It goes beyond the previous concept of "implementing partners" to one that embraces all entities and individuals identified as critical to forging sustainable development solutions in line with UN values. Accordingly, the UNSDCF has partnership components with the government, individuals (particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable), and a broad range of stakeholders. In addition, the UNSDCF is a partnership compact amongst the UN development system entities, including the UN Resident Coordinator.

The UNSDCF provides the overarching framework for development results from which individual UN development entity programmes and contributions are derived, and it drives the UN development system's contributions, be they implemented individually or jointly. UN development entity country programme outcomes are derived from the UNSDCF, not vice versa. They are hence developed in parallel to – not ahead of – UNSDCF formulation.

The priorities of the UNSDCF are directly derived from an analysis of the country's priorities and needs as well as from the UN's Common Country Analysis. The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) is the UN system's independent, impartial and collective assessment (description of what is happening) and analysis of the country situation (description of why it is happening and its implications). The CCA examines the progress, gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks *vis-à-vis* the Member State's commitment to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, UN norms and standards, and the principles of the UN Charter.

In line with the UNSDCF's expanded notion of partnerships, the CCA also represents a powerful process to engage with relevant stakeholders through continuous and inclusive dialogue to address, amongst others, complex issues of inequality and exclusion. The CCA shifts from a one-off event to a "real-time" core function to be more agile and adaptive to the evolving country context. Periodic updating of the CCA will also reduce the formulation cycle for a new UNSDCF.

The UNSDCF design process will include a clearly articulated, evidence-based and robust Theory of Change that describes the interdependent changes necessary for the country to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The Theory of Change is a comprehensive articulation of different pathways and choices that illustrate how and why the desired change is expected to happen in the country, and the risks and bottlenecks to be addressed.

In line with General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/279 and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF), the Resident Coordinator coordinates implementation of the UNSDCF and works with UN Country Team members to ensure alignment of agency programmes with national development needs and priorities as well as with the UNSDCF and the 2030 Agenda.

The Resident Coordinator will be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the UN development system entities' programming documents before their endorsement, with a view to (1) confirm alignment and coherence of UN development system entity programmes with the UNSDCF; (2) identify opportunities for synergies and complementarities; and (3) avoid duplication and overlap across the UN system's development activities. Once a new UNSDCF is approved, UN development system entities will adjust their entity-specific programming documents for full alignment.



UN development system entity country programming instruments (such as the FAO Country Programming Framework), UNSDCF results groups, joint work plans and the joint work plan annual reviews are key tools for implementing the UNSDCF, while UNSDCF is also the central framework for joint monitoring, review, reporting and evaluating of the UN development system's impact *vis-à-vis* the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. UN development system entities are expected to contribute their expertise, tools and platforms in a coherent, integrated and synergistic manner, in line with their respective mandates and as agreed in the UNSDCF.

A Joint National/UN Steering Committee is planned to oversee the implementation of the UNSDCF. The Joint National/UN Steering Committee is co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator and the most senior representative of the central government counterpart for the UN system. Its membership includes key partners identified in the UNSDCF for joint contributions to national priorities and the 2030 Agenda.

#### *Implications for FAO related to the UNSDCF*

FAO actively contributed to the preparation of the UNSDCF guidelines. Its headquarters, regional and subregional offices will need to provide special support in order to strategically contribute to the underpinning UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) and UNSDCF Theory of Change, and to the formulation of the joint work plans.

The FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) remains the central planning document for FAO, but it must be duly aligned to UNSDCF. Some key points in this context:

- CPF outcomes will be derived from the UNSDCF, not vice versa. Hence, CPF will be developed in parallel to – not ahead of – the UNSDCF formulation.
- CPF will have UNSDCF outcomes copied verbatim, plus additional outcomes that are not in the “Cooperation Framework,” included only on exceptional basis to capture FAO’s normative activities not prioritized in the UNSDCF.
- CPF will be reviewed and adjusted once a new UNSDCF is approved, and the CPF cycle may need to be aligned with the UNSDCF cycle.
- CPF will be grounded on the UNSDCF CCA and UNSDCF Theory of Change (ToC) as well as on FAO’s Strategic Framework and normative work.
- Greater and proactive engagement from country offices is foreseen in the UN CCA/ToC.

#### **4. UN reform issues at regional level**

The UN reform also puts emphasis on restructuring regional UN assets in support of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>2</sup> This is based on the fact that the delivery of strengthened results by a new generation of UN Country Teams very much depends on the support the system receives from the regional level. It is expected that the regional assets need to be effectively and efficiently leveraged at country level so that country programmes are anchored in the regional context, take into account the relevant cross-border dimensions, and benefit from the large expertise the UN system has at regional level. Based on internal and external regional reviews, the report of the Secretary-General indicates that the overall outcome confirms that there are invaluable UN assets and expertise at the regional level that are essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda but that are not currently deployed in an optimal manner.

<sup>2</sup> The Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 (April 2019) is available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/SGR2019-%20Advance%20Unedited%20Version%20-%202018%20April.pdf>.



The Secretary-General thus proposed to create a unified mechanism for coordination in each region: the UN regional collaboration platform to foster collaboration on sustainable development among the UN development system entities operating at the regional level. It is also envisaged to establish strong knowledge management hubs in each region by pooling policy expertise by or across sectors and to implement a series of initiatives to enhance transparency and results-based management at the regional level. Furthermore, it is planned to launch a region-by-region change management process that will seek to consolidate existing capacities around data and statistics and to identify administrative services that could be provided more efficiently to regional offices through common back offices.

## **5. Conclusions**

The UN reform offers new opportunities for FAO, at both country and regional levels, in Europe and Central Asia. The adjusted UN Resident Coordinator function will enable FAO – particularly in countries with smaller programmes and limited presence – to benefit from the neutrality of the Resident Coordinator and her/his new leadership role in the formulation of the UNSDCF, thereby allowing FAO to increase its role in the joint programming and planning in the areas of comparative advantages and strengths across various Sustainable Development Goals.

The upcoming multi-country office recommendations would provide additional opportunities for FAO's offices under multiple-accreditation modality in the region to contribute more substantially to the Common Country Analysis and the new UNSDCF formulation.

It is important that the FAO Country Programming Framework is derived from this analysis, and thus the participation of FAO in the UN Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF Theory of Change is of significance. This will pose new challenges to the regional and subregional offices and will require enhanced analytical, socio-economic and policy development capacities to ensure continued support to the country offices. On the other hand, the increased collaboration and the establishment of new UN Country Teams offer opportunities to increase partnerships and enhance the mobilization of resources, both at country and regional levels.

Given the vital importance of the normative and standard-setting dimension – deriving from the Organization's global mandate and commitments for FAO's work in Europe and Central Asia – maintaining flexibility for these activities and prioritizing them in relevant CPFs and Regional Initiatives, even outside UNSDCFs, remains an important and valid option. On the other hand, if those activities are not adequately strategized in the respective UNSDCFs, there is an increasing risk of their further de-emphasis and devaluation by respective resource partners and government counterparts.

It is expected that the UN Resident Coordinator will rely on agencies' vast technical and operational experience of working directly with the relevant line ministries. The reform could provide further synergies to FAO's leading role in its contribution to SDG 2 and in increasing the policy support to countries through a strengthened regional architecture.