

New York, 16 April 2007 - Secretary-General's presentation to the General Assembly of report on the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level panel on System-wide Coherence

Madam President,

Distinguished Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and grateful at this opportunity to present to you my report on the recommendations put forward by the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment.

As you know, the Panel was commissioned by my predecessor, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in response to a mandate stemming from the 2005 World Summit. The reasoning behind it is well known.

It is widely agreed that the United Nations could perform far better in delivering on its vision and mission in the areas concerned. The Organization is seen as fragmented and weak at the country level, where more than a third of UN country teams now include 10 or more UN agencies, funds and programmes on the ground at any one time. And it is seen as lacking in synergy at the global level, where in some sectors, up to 20 UN entities can compete for limited resources without a clear collaborative framework.

I believe the report of the Panel has produced thought-provoking and far-reaching proposals to address these shortcomings. The recommendations merit our full engagement.

In assessing the proposals, I have benefitted greatly from informal but extensive consultations with Member States. The dialogue has been frank and productive. It has strengthened our determination to bring together the UN system's many assets to deliver as one. It has brought home to us our duty to become more responsive to the needs of countries, communities and people everywhere. And it has helped build an understanding of the need to build on common ground, balancing the interests of all Member States.

I have grounded my assessment in the rationale for change put forward by the Panel. At the same time, I have weighed carefully the views I have heard over the past months from a wide range of Member States, individually and in groupings, as well as other stakeholders within and outside the UN system. I have also studied the initial appraisal of the Panel's report put forward by my predecessor.

In exploring a way forward for inter-governmental review, I am convinced we need to place the Panel's recommendations firmly within the context of the wider UN reform agenda. This will allow us to take full advantage of existing processes.

At the same time, we need to balance the momentum towards change with respect for inter-governmental consideration.

Today, as you embark on formal consideration of the Panel's recommendations, I am here to express my broad support for the principle of a stronger, more coherent United Nations, and for the recommendations contained in the Panel's report. I profoundly agree with the Panel's emphasis on efficiency, transparency and accountability. These are at the heart of Member States' demands for UN reform, and form a cornerstone of my own priorities for the Organization.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to briefly highlight a few of the elements that I have addressed in the report before you.

On the Panel's recommendations for coherence, effectiveness and efficiency at the country level, I have outlined the steps taken to initiate voluntary pilots in eight countries testing the approach of 'One UN'. The Panel initially recommended five pilots, but as a result of interest in recipient countries, there are now eight. To ensure the success of this process, we need to work together, all parts of the UN system as well as Member States, so that any lessons learnt can be incorporated into further efforts.

I have also described progress on the recommendation that the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination review its functions. The aim here would be to transform the CEB into a more effective and transparent mechanism for high-level coordination and consultation. When I chair my first CEB session this weekend, Executive Heads will consider a preliminary set of proposals to strengthen the body's effectiveness and relevance. Another essential driver will be the agenda for harmonizing business practices, as advocated by the Panel.

On gender, my report makes clear my support for replacing several current structures with one dynamic UN entity, focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. Such an entity should mobilize forces of change at the global level, and inspire enhanced results at the country level. I am committed to taking this recommendation forward, in accordance with the decisions of Member States.

On governance, I believe the Panel's recommendations warrant in-depth inter-governmental review. The proposals constitute an important starting point, but they require further deliberation and discussion to develop full ownership of a common vision. This applies particularly to the proposals for strengthening ECOSOC. We should bear in mind the reform process ECOSOC has already undergone, and the need to follow it through.

Excellencies,

I have asked the Deputy-Secretary-General to manage and oversee the system-wide coherence agenda. She will ensure that the UN system's initiatives to act on the Panel's recommendations are guided by, respectful of, and closely coordinated with, the inter-governmental consideration of the Panel's report.

Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies and Ministers,

Let us agree: moving forward on system-wide coherence is not in the interests of any one group of countries, nor against those of another.

It is a win-win-win solution and vision.

It is a win for developing countries, who stand to gain more coherent assistance and better service delivery.

It is a win for developed countries, who will be able to explain and justify to their constituents why it is right to channel resources through the UN, and demonstrate real results.

It is a win for the United Nations, for all the above reasons, and because we will be putting our house in better and enduring order.

And lest we forget: how we improve the ability of the UN to deliver in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment is something in which we all have a wider stake. It is a matter of life and death to millions of men, women and children around the world who depend on us to meet their basic human needs -- today and for generations to come.

Madam President, Excellencies, Ministers, I thank you again for giving me this valuable opportunity to speak to you. Not least, Madam President, I am grateful for your personal contribution in carrying forward the consultations. In the months ahead, I look forward to working closely with Member States and inter-governmental bodies. Let us move ahead together in our common vision for a more coherent UN system, capable of delivering as one to meet your needs and expectations.

Thank you very much.