

ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of UN Development System in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Findings and Conclusions¹

The ITA submits this working paper as an input for discussion at the ECOSOC Dialogue Workshop No. 8 to be held on 22-23 June.

The Future We Want – The United Nations We Need

The moment when the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 “Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development”, in the 70th year of the United Nations (UN), marked a historic shift. It was the conclusion of several years of long and intense negotiation processes among Member States and other actors that began with the Rio+20 Conference, in which the vision of the “Future We Want” – itself a reference to even deeper roots of the 2030 Agenda, including the 1995 Copenhagen Social Summit and the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women – emerged.

Now, as a follow-up to this broad multilateral consensus, Member States need to create for themselves “the UN we need” in order to successfully implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Members States embraced several transformative shifts in development-thinking, approaches and cooperation, underscoring the need for:

- **Universality:** The 2030 Agenda clearly states that the 17 SDGs “are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike.”
- **Scope:** The 2030 Agenda is also broader and more ambitious than any previous global development programs. “This is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance.” It “goes far beyond the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Alongside continuing development priorities such as poverty eradication, health, education and food security and nutrition, it sets out a wide range of economic, social and environmental objectives. It also promises more peaceful and inclusive societies.”
- **Integration:** These goals are “integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development”.. [...] “Reflecting the integrated approach that we have decided on, there are deep interconnections and many cross-cutting elements across the new Goals and targets.”
- **Leaving no-one behind:** The Agenda repeatedly underscores the imperative that “no one will be left behind” and that it is crucial for sustainable development to “reduce inequality within and among countries”.

¹ The Findings and Conclusions paper presents the core proposals of the Independent Team of Advisors (ITA). It builds on the previous six papers in which some issues are presented in more details.

- New Development Understanding: “We commit to making fundamental changes in the ways that our societies produce and consume goods and services”, to sustainably manage our planet’s natural resources. “We will work to build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centered economies, promoting youth employment and women’s economic empowerment and decent work for all. [...] There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. [...] We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination.”
- Giving reality to “we the peoples.” “Our journey will involve governments as well as parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people.”

This people centered and planet sensitive process, making sustainability an overarching development paradigm, is indeed an ambitious agenda. It is a collective expression of the determination to do away with business as usual. It is a call to turn into reality the future that we all aspire for.

Making these transformational shifts a reality requires major changes in the way United Nations Development System (UNDS) entities think, function and deliver:

1. Universality, in practice, means that the sustainable development vision becomes a common and accepted policy framework for all countries. This implies that the UN focus on developing countries, which must continue as a priority, must expand to cover relevant policies of developed countries together with an understanding of the way overall global development is moving in the direction of the 2030 Agenda.
2. The integrated and indivisible scope of the Agenda requires a profound change in mindset from prevailing sectorial and partial view of development to an articulation of policies based on integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development while dealing with difficult tradeoffs present. Addressing many systemic interlinkages inherent in the Agenda entails a major operational and knowledge challenge that will also require corresponding changes in the governance, organization and funding of the UNDS entities that go far beyond coordination and coherence.
3. The institutional changes required by the above will demand a UNDS in which individual entities are guided by the notion of cohesion in diversity, where the rich experience, knowledge and constituencies of each organization are welded together in new ways to achieve common results and under clear lines of intergovernmental and internal UN lines of authority.
4. The funding structure of the overall UNDS system should promote, as a stated priority, joint programmes and activities by member entities to implement the SDG’s and reduce the level of funding induced fragmentation and competition. This can lead to more predictable and flexible decisions regarding both core and earmarked resource commitments together with better global information on resource utilization, efficiency and development effectiveness.

Our mission – Our commitment

These and other changes the ITA proposes in this paper are a major task indeed. But we must state at the outset that we believe the leadership of the intergovernmental bodies and of the entities of UNDS themselves is fully up to it. Why? Because the United Nations on many occasions has been up to the task in its seventy-year history and the boldness of the 2030 Agenda again shows its capacity to interpret the needs of the time. It would be unthinkable that having agreed on the most difficult part of charting the future we want for 2030 we then drop the ball and get entangled in institutional tensions that inhibit progress towards the *UN We Need* which we know is a historical weakness of the UN. ITA's often critical analysis is born out of the respect we have for all entities of the UNDS, which in diverse circumstances and historical times have shown the conviction and capacity to be at the service of the Member States and their people needs. They should rightly feel proud of their achievements.

We have a similar feeling for the governments and delegates who produced the 2030 Agenda. We all know the natural limitations of a negotiated text. But the result is outstanding, in the sense that governments decided to do what they can only do: give political and policy leadership to the United Nations System. Now it is up to them to complete the task. They need to take major decisions that will ensure that the UNDS and its entities are fit for the purpose of helping intergovernmental instances at the global and regional level to move ahead in the implementation of the SDG's and to service individual countries and their people at their request for the same purpose.

This is the objective of the ITA analysis and proposals contained in this report. They are conceived as an integrated whole that needs to be implemented with a clear road map. They are also born out of respect for what governments have already achieved as well for to the mandate given to us: "be as bold and transformative as necessary; leave the politics to us", we were told. We are honoured to have been invited to perform this task to which we have dedicated much energy and personal time within a very tight schedule. We have done so with a collective commitment to service the United Nations to the best of our abilities. We feel that the recommendations that we make are difficult and yet feasible. We understand the institutional complexities involved, but we believe it is significantly easier to agree on them than it was to do so, on the 2030 Agenda itself. Our hope is that the same political leadership that made the 2030 Agenda possible will now make the UNDS fit for purpose and deliver a *UN we need*.

The Member States will need to take decisions to implement our recommendations, keeping in mind that the process is underway to elect a new Secretary-General. Some key recommendations are relevant to the manner in which she or he will want to organize the senior team at the Secretariat as well as at the Funds and Programmes level, including the relationship with specialized agencies. They also have implications for the work of the Chiefs Executive Board (CEB). The ITA believes that a discussion and initial conclusions of these issues in Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) now are relevant for the incumbent Secretary-General in relation to reports he will submit to the next session of the General Assembly. It will also contribute to shaping and enhancing the understanding of the new Secretary-General. There is no time to lose, so that she or he can rapidly set the course and the pace for implementing the 2030 Agenda within the UN and for leading the UNDS repositioning, agreed by the Member States.

In transmitting this final paper, the ITA wishes to highlight the central role that ECOSOC and its Bureau will need to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its overall responsibilities will significantly increase, requiring a regular and systematic oversight of the way the process is moving forward at the global, regional and country levels. An indication of this is the fact that more than 20 countries have already come forward to report on their policies and activities to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which is convened by ECOSOC. Also, Regional Commissions are in the

process of establishing Sustainable Development Forums that will report to HLPF/ECOSOC. There are recommendations to strengthen the capacities of ECOSOC to address these expanded responsibilities.

The changing development landscape

The 2030 Agenda creates responsibilities for every Member State to engage in the implementation of the SDGs, domestically, regionally and globally. Development is no longer a concept for developing countries only – as important as that remains in the future for lifting especially the LDCs out of poverty and leaving no one behind. This underscores the need for a broader and more comprehensive perspective on how poverty is measured, for example using a multidimensional matrix structure, ensuring that poverty is not just the absence of income. We need changes in all countries, starting with highest priority in developed countries, in how we produce and consume goods and services, how we manage cities and our planet’s natural resources; we need to make the economy instrumental in decreasing the gap between rich and poor; technology must serve people and decent jobs. Despite increasing global wealth, a huge and increasing gap between the rich and the rest of society, especially those living in poverty, continues to test our moral conscience and is a threat to peace and stability from local communities to the global level. All this has significant implications for how the UNDS has to operate, including for example engagement in developed countries, global monitoring and collective action capacities.

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) find themselves locked in a vicious circle of poverty, crises and underdevelopment. This vicious circle, that can also afflict Middle Income Countries (MICs) in crisis, has to be broken and turned into a virtuous circle. Efforts to achieve that should include, inter alia, education, health, ending the resource curse, investing in infrastructure, tackling illicit flows as decided in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), especially with regard to the exploitation of natural resources, and a special focus on SDG 16 (“Peaceful societies”). For the UNDS, this implies to go beyond the logic of operational activities. Complementary to the sustained and strengthened focus on Least Developed Countries (LDC), the UNDS also has a role to play in addressing the new uncertainties and vulnerabilities faced by middle income countries.

The same is valid for regional and global challenges that require collective action, including the so-called “Global Public Goods”. There simply is no other institution that has similar comparative advantages in dealing with problems that are beyond the capacity of individual states, but which are increasingly part of many SDGs. The UNDS has to make substantial contributions here. Its convening function, its inclusivity and neutrality predestine the UNDS to play a leadership role in the promotion of global sustainability.

There is an urgent need to stop and reverse the trends of bilateralization and fragmentation in the global development landscape and to revitalize multilateral approaches and institutions. The UNDS must be at the core of this. The 2030 Agenda provides a new rationale for an inclusive and UN-led multilateralism, taking into account that global sustainable development is an investment in global peace and crises prevention. The UNDS needs to turn outwards and play a leadership role as convener, norm- and standard-setter, information broker, partnership broker and many other functions.

The 2030 Agenda presents an enormous knowledge challenge. It constitutes an entirely new agenda with which no actor has dealt before in an integrated way. As such, it is critical that the UNDS is the unrivalled center of science and knowledge development. Knowledge is essential, it needs to inform strategic planning and serve as the foundation for early warning and prevention – functions that can lead to huge collective savings.

The ITA recognized the challenges for reconciling humanitarian assistance with longer-term development objectives, taking into account that crisis response, peace-building and conflict prevention are integral to sustainable development. The UN humanitarian response should adequately connect its vision and

activities to the development pillar to build resilience and sustainable peace. As the Chair's Summary of the World Humanitarian Summit states, "[a] new and coherent approach is required based on addressing root causes, increasing political diplomacy for prevention and conflict resolution, and bringing humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts together" (2016). In this effort, care should be taken not to reduce resources assigned to more immediate development needs.

The Independent Team of Advisors (ITA) and how it reached its conclusions

The ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, and the enormity of the challenges, prompted the Member States to revisit and reconfigure the role of the UNDS as the critical driver. In the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Member States engaged in a dialogue on longer term repositioning of the UNDS in the context of the 2030 Agenda last year. The Member States unanimously agreed in the first phase of the ECOSOC Dialogue that the UNDS must reposition itself to serve the needs of the 2030 Agenda. To help define the best way forward, in February 2016, ECOSOC appointed an ITA to take fresh and objective perspectives on the UNDS and identify how the system could be repositioned to meet the collective, universal and formidable sustainable development challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda.

With 14 members from across the globe, and co-chaired by Ambassador Juan Somavia and Dr Klaus Töpfer, the team engaged in a series of formal and informal sessions amongst themselves, and also with the Member States, UNDS entities and other stakeholders in the course of the past four months. They undertook visits to El Salvador, Ethiopia, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA) and the African Union (AU) headquarters, Jordan and Rwanda to understand the UNDS on the ground. Individual members met with UNCT teams in Cairo and Santiago. During their meeting in Berlin, the ITA members also learned about the way a developed country like Germany is implementing the 2030 Agenda. They engaged in consultations with the members of the UN Development Group (UNDG), UN organizations and UN Regional Commission in New York and Geneva. While these consultations and field visits were by no means exhaustive, they offered the ITA members invaluable insights on the working of the UNDS and shaped their conclusions that the UN system must fundamentally change to meet the imperatives of sustainable development. The ITA also benefitted from a number of analytical studies and other reference materials that explained the current state of play in the UNDS. In their deliberations and the reports, the ITA considered and identified the best approaches and mechanisms to ensure that UNDS plays a catalytic role in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The ITA recognizes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an over-arching mandate for all UNDS entities to support and catalyze the achievement of the universal and comprehensive SDGs. The UNDS would need to re-prioritize and integrate many of its functions within and across entities to make them more relevant and effective for the Member States. Greater clarity and specificity about the mandates of agencies, funds and programs should enable UNDS entities to bridge existing gaps and avoid costly overlaps. The UNDS should build upon what already exists, yet respond to the new Agenda's call for new approaches, and ensure maximum coherence and efficiency. It should also help galvanize political commitment and action. The changes must take place at the global, regional and national levels to ensure that the UNDS is repositioned to support the 2030 Agenda.

The ITA acknowledged the urgent need for tackling climate change. This will also require the UN system to overcome compartmentalization of its efforts and integrate functions across economic, social and environmental domains of sustainable development.

The ITA deliberations were also informed by the fundamental shifts in the development landscape. The growing volume of South-South and triangular cooperation as a complement to North-South interaction is an indication of the rise of new development cooperation actors, accompanying increasing demands from developing countries for more equitable and effective representation in multilateral governance structures.

The patterns of resource availability, allocation, poverty, and inequality within and across countries are all changing. There is increasing demand from people for more equitable growth and a need for a transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns starting with the developed countries. Both require the UN system to design and support appropriate development strategies.

The Member States requested the ITA to provide a set of bold and concrete proposals for their consideration. In their papers on functions, funding, organizational arrangements, governance, partnerships and inter-linkages, the ITA has put forward a series of far-reaching proposals for longer term repositioning of the UNDS. All these proposals remain on the table. From among these proposals, the ITA reiterates in this paper the most transformative proposals for the Member States to act upon in ways commensurate with the ambition that they demonstrated while adopting the 2030 Agenda. ITA has made a particular effort to present a balanced set of interdependent proposals that they advise be considered as a whole. Whatever final decisions governments may decide to take on these and other proposals we would urge them to come up with an integrated view and shy away from seemingly easier but likely ineffective piecemeal solutions. It is imperative that Member States seize this opportunity within reach with determination and resolve and give present and succeeding generations the UN we need.

I. The ITA considerations

The 2030 Agenda as well as other far-reaching and profound shifts in the development landscape require an equally fundamental repositioning of the UNDS. In making specific proposal on how the UNDS should reposition itself to deal with the new context. The ITA was guided by the following considerations:

- a. UNDS must function as one coherent whole, embodying the principle of cohesion in diversity. This requires filling the horizontal leadership gap while maintaining the diversity of competences and the subsidiary autonomy of leadership at HQ, regional and national levels. Well-managed diversity can exploit the benefits of specialization with integrated actions;
- b. The UNDS must work in an integrated manner that goes beyond coordination and coherence;
- c. Develop and promote policies, norms and standards as important signals to markets and all stakeholders;
- d. The costs of doing little and basically maintaining the status quo would be higher than the costs of repositioning the UNDS. The Member States should consider the proposed changes and their related costs, as necessary investments in the 2030 Agenda;
- e. The repositioned UNDS, as proposed by ITA, should make it more flexible, responsible, and cost-effective without adding bureaucratic layers and exacerbating bureaucratic challenges;
- f. Consistency of reform steps: A change in any aspect of the UNDS operations must be matched with commensurate changes in other aspects, as identified by the ITA. Without this there is likely to be no integration, no inter-linkage, and therefore no transformative change;
- g. The repositioning should be timed, sequenced and calibrated to maximize the positive impact. This needs intensive cooperation and integration of existing structures, especially of UNDG. Staff should be made part of the change process;
- h. The Member States must determine the modalities and specific elements of these proposals including the sequence and timing of their implementation;
- i. The UNDS needs adequate and predictable resource commitments which can be used flexibly. The UNDS needs to be a credible convener and a reliable broker;
- j. The UNDS has to be conceived of as a dynamic system. It needs to be transparent, accountable, and sufficiently flexible and recursive.

- k. Knowledge development will be essential combining sectorial technical experience and know-how with the capacity to advance policies based on substantive interlinkages and integrated thinking.

The UNDS, its leadership, and its dedicated staff have in the past demonstrated that change is possible. The UNDS has not only grown in size and complexity, but there have also been processes of consolidation (for example the creation of UN-Women, Delivering as One (DaO), the merger of governing boards of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)). These, and other changes, have made the UN better. The ITA appeals to the reform spirit of the UNDS and Members States to translate the shared vision of a reinvigorated UNDS into practice. The reform proposals presented here all aim to secure the continued political relevance of the UNDS and to improve its effectiveness and reputation. Change would be in the interest of all stakeholders that are committed to UN development cooperation. Working for, or with, a revamped UNDS should be a source of pride.

ITA emphasizes that the reform of the UNDS is by necessity an open process. ITA is confident of the adequacy of the changes proposed in this paper, they are the outcomes of its analytical findings. Therefore, ITA, at this stage, is convinced that these are the best responses to current challenges. But it has become clear to ITA during the discussions with Member States in the ECOSOC workshops that in a rapidly changing world, the UNDS needs built-in flexibility for continuously adapting to and framing new challenges in the global development landscape. Transparency, accountability, system-wide leadership and collective undertakings provide the kind of self-reflective capacity that allows the UNDS to organize its own institutional up-dates. It is in that spirit, for example, that ITA proposes a review of interlinkages between mandates and, if that is seen as appropriate, to repeat this. The process of implementing reform proposals should itself be approached as a stepwise process that is transparent and inclusive and therefore allows for learning and constructive feedback. For example, the structure of the functional groups and their operational details can hardly be conjured at the drawing table only, but will have to emerge from the implementation process that remains open for flexible adjustments along the way.

II. Key findings and conclusions

The ITA concluded that the UNDS – as it exists today – cannot be a catalyst for sustainable development, until and unless it transforms itself to become a fully integrated and coherent whole.

A sectorally orientated, fragmented system

The UNDS functions are predicated on, and driven by, globally agreed norms, standards, conventions, agreements, resolutions and declarations. In essence, the UNDS entities help Member States further global goals through a variety of means including direct implementation, promotion of global norms and standards, and collective actions that address global challenges. The functions are often driven by various strategic plan objectives, country-demand and crisis response, as well as by supply-side factors such as the preferences of funding partners and availability of funding.

The ITA took note of the fact that the existing UNDS essentially and predominantly functions in sectoral frameworks, reinforced by the sectoral orientation of the MDGs. The MDGs required the UNDS entities to implement sectoral projects and programs, often at the cost of not exploiting the synergetic effects from inter-sectoral linkages between and among sectors. This exacerbated the fragmentation of the system. The sectoral orientation has been further entrenched by current funding practices, where funding partners often earmark resources at the project level to ensure greater accountability and oversight, forgoing the

potential benefits of inter-linkages and integration. Whilst the desire for accountability is understandable, a better balance is needed for effectiveness. It also undermines the inter-linkages between functions, governance, organizational arrangements, capacities and partnerships. This can no longer continue.

The integrated, universal, people and planet centric SDGs need a UNDS that will transcend sectors, integrate functions, identify solutions and achieve sustainable development results. This will require an entrepreneurial UNDS that is able to rise to the challenge of sustainable development and respond to differentiated country needs and contexts. The process of that transformation must begin now. The ITA recognizes that the UNDS should have an over-arching strategic framework that will link functions, funding and activities to the SDGs at national, regional and global levels.

Governance structures do not support inter-linkages and integration

The existing UNDS governance structures often lack adequate mechanisms and capacities to measure development effectiveness, and ensure accountability. For instance, it is apparently difficult, if not impossible, to track, or account for, how contributed core resource are spent by an agency at various levels (e.g. the headquarters, regional and country level) or how much of that is spent on overheads and how much on the actual operational delivery of development activities or how much is spent to subsidize non-core activities. This lack of traceability undermines incentives for funding partners to channel voluntary contributions through inter-governmentally agreed global UNDS processes. In addition to these weaknesses in vertical governance within an entity, there are also horizontal governance challenges, which undermine coordination and integration across UNDS entities.

The governance structure is also inadequately designed to exercise control and oversight, through commissioning or reviewing evaluation, performance and audit reports. This is possibly one of the most critical aspects of governance that requires most attention to ensure accountability and build trust. The reporting mechanism is often ineffective and is only capable of reacting when it is too late. The existing governance architecture, however, lacks authority to clearly integrate functions and funding or mechanisms for coordination and integration of functions at the global and regional level, which are critical for supporting the 2030 Agenda.

The ITA recognizes that implementing the SDGs will require forms of governance for the UNDS that not only encourage and enable consultation between its entities, but also ensure coordination and integration of functions, programming and funding decisions at all levels. On the other hand, the governing authorities at the entity level often lack time, technical capacities and resources to effectively exercise accountability and oversight, with Member States juggling between many governing bodies and competing priorities. The senior management-level consultations in UNDG, Chief Executives Board (CEB), High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), as bodies of the CEB headed by the Secretary-General play an important role in facilitating coordination among UNDS entities. The ITA recognizes that these cannot substitute for effective and system-wide governance at the level of the Member States. Given the universal and integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, the UNDS needs an over-arching governance structure that can ensure integration of functions, funding and organizational arrangements within and across entities to deliver sustainable development results.

Fragmented and disparate organizational arrangements and capacities

Currently, the UNDS organizational arrangements at the country and regional levels are highly fragmented, undermining the ability of these entities to deliver integrated support to the Member States. According to CEB data, 24 UNDS entities, which represent approximately 95% of the UN Official Assistance for Development (OAD) expenditures (2014), maintained 1432 UNDS offices in 180 countries

across the globe. This includes 1279 offices in non-OECD-DAC countries and 153 in OECD-DAC countries. These exclude multiple field offices of a UNDS entity within a given country. In 168 of these countries (93%), UNDS has five or more entities present and 65 countries (36%) have 10 or more entities present. A few funds and programs (UNDP, United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) etc.) are physically present in over 120 countries.

While the UN has a universal mandate, the ITA concluded that physical presence is not always necessary for all UNDS entities in all country contexts. The physical presence of UNDS entities should be driven by differentiated country and people needs and reviewed periodically in the context of their effectiveness in delivering the 2030 Agenda. The team took note of various models of unified field presence, which not only present the potential for successfully integrating UNDS functions at the country level but can also enhance the cost effectiveness of the system. The team also recognized the critical need for effective leadership and coordination capacities at the top to ensure that all UNDS entities work together and integrate their efforts to deliver a universal development agenda. A duly empowered leadership and accountability structure at the headquarters level will ensure more effective inter-linkages and coherence between governance and disparate organizational arrangements at the entity level. This will also ensure that a strengthened leadership structure is replicated with an empowered Resident Coordinator (RC) system at the country level. The team also noted that the system lacks a comprehensive understanding of its staff capacities for addressing the challenges of the 2030 Agenda. This must change and the system must quickly map its staff capacities and gaps to ensure that the UNDS has the requisite capacities to deliver the 2030 Agenda.

At the global level, the UN Development Group (UNDG) is a key mechanism entrusted with the responsibility for coordinating the functions of UNDS entities. UNDG membership is inclusive, transparent, and open to the entire UNDS. Currently, 31 entities are UNDG members, including all funds, programs, specialized agencies and UN Regional Commissions. The UNDG also includes 16 observers, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Bank.

UNDG, being the only global coordination body for the UNDS, has certainly helped in the exchange of views and to advance some common actions, but it is also an example of coordination without authority – a voluntary arrangement among equals to exchange information and commit to work together without a real mechanism to monitor and enforce commitments. The UNDG remains much less effective than it could be as a coordinating body, as participating entities do not report to UNDG, but to their own executive boards/governing councils. The structure of the UNDG also inadvertently reinforces the “development-humanitarian divide” given that OCHA – the central coordinating body for humanitarian assistance – is not a full member of UNDG.

The current coordination mechanism is inadequate to provide the requisite strong leadership and support for integration of UNDS functions at the regional and local levels. Streamlining of back office operations, scaling up joint UN presence in a larger number of countries, strengthening the RC system and DaO and also enhancing regional-national linkages will require an integrated and fully empowered organizational arrangement at the global level.

Increased earmarking of resources undermines flexibility and inter-linkages

In 2014, some 84% of UNDS expenditures were funded with voluntary and earmarked resources. These non-core resources – typically determined bilaterally at the country level and outside the inter-governmental mandates and processes of UNDS entities – have grown significantly faster than core resources. This represents a growing bilateralization of multilateral aid. Between 1999 and 2014, total non-core resources increased by 182% in real terms, while core resources increased by only 14%. In addition to that, significant parts of core-contributions are also used for subsidizing earmarked funded

projects. As a result, funds and programs are left with very little resources for implementing internationally agreed, strategic plans. This also underscores a critical disconnection between the inter-governmentally agreed development priorities and strategies of UNDS entities and their actual activities on the ground, which are typically funded with locally mobilized non-core resources.

The ITA took note of the fact that funding is currently the key determinant and lever of UNDS functions and organizational arrangements, characterized by increasing trends in earmarked, non-core resources that are often deployed by the funding partners at the country level. While it provides the funding partners with greater transparency in, and accountability for, the resources used by the UNDS entities, it also limits the ability of the system to align and integrate funding and functions to support the realization of inter-governmentally agreed development goals. Continuance of the prevailing patterns of excessive earmarking of resources – in a manner that is often highly inflexible, unpredictable, piecemeal, and earmarked for specific projects and activities – will pose a serious challenge to pursuing an agenda that demands an integrated approach. The ITA identified the critical need for reversing the trends in earmarking of UNDS resources, ensuring that the funding architecture becomes more predictable, flexible and integrated to the 2030 Agenda, while addressing the concerns that have brought about the recent trends. This requires a major effort by UN entities and governing bodies to enhance accountability, transparency, oversight and development effectiveness of UNDS funding in order to create the conditions for reducing earmarking. The team also underscored the need for a more robust, inclusive and transparent platform to ensure that all stakeholders – funding partners, UNDS entities and beneficiary countries – can negotiate funding priorities and requirements.

Disparate partnership arrangements often do not meet full potentials

Currently, the UNDS lacks a system-wide capacity for assessing the needs and scope for various types of partnerships. Presently a number of UNDS offices have assigned roles in furthering multi-stakeholder partnerships, namely the UN Office for Partnerships, the Global Compact Office and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). According to a 2010 study of the Joint Inspection Unit, these entities typically work in isolation, resulting in unclear responsibilities, overlaps and duplication of effort among them. The UNDS should facilitate partnerships and provide various partnership services, including simplifying the rules of engagement and promoting multi-sectoral partnerships. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the role of partnerships – the inter-linking of human agency to achieve a common purpose – as a critical means of implementation. Its Goal 17 entrusts all countries and all stakeholders, working together to achieve the SDGs and the inter-linkages of the goals need partnerships at every level. While the UNDS entities engage in multitude of partnerships, determined by their functional and sectoral priorities, the system as a whole lacks standardized rules, procedures and good practices, which help might help entities to forge efficient and effective partnerships to deliver the SDGs.

A weak and fragmented regional structure

Regions are of growing importance in the international political system. Regional and sub-regional organizations are acquiring significant presence (like the AU in Africa, ASEAN in Asia and recently CELAC in Latin America and the Caribbean) and are important development actors. They represent ownership, they provide resources and capacities and they can mobilize political will. The UNDS ought to interact regularly with these organizations to tap into this global trend, which also is the basis for global multilateralism.

The UNDS organizational arrangements at the regional level are sporadic and loosely connected with each other. The UN Regional Commissions – based in Bangkok, Beirut, Addis Ababa, Geneva and Santiago – and their sub-regional offices in a number of cities in all continents lead the Regional Coordination Mechanisms, while the UN Regional Development Group also aims to coordinate UNDS

functions at the regional level. However, these mechanisms have not been effective in integrating UNDS functions at the regional level. The UNDG provides support to the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) at the regional level. The voluntary coordination mechanism in each region is supported by United Nations Development Operations Coordination (UN DOCO), and also by UN Regional Commissions which are physically present in the region. This leads to costly overlaps and duplication of efforts at the regional level. The UN Regional Commissions ought to play a far stronger and pro-active role in providing support to UNDS efforts to give coherent programs, including those requiring collective actions at the regional level, and more generally should play a role in integration efforts among UNDS entities. They are also suitable platforms for convening development actors, for mutual learning and the brokering of peer reviews within regions. This function would be greatly enhanced if Regional Commissions would act as think tanks and clearinghouse for technology.

Shifting functional structure

The UNDS performs a wide range of functions in the spectrum from direct policy advice and service delivery, at the country level to norm- and standard-setting in the normative sphere at the global level.

ITA recognizes that the transformative shifts necessitate a strengthening of the normative, knowledge, and policy advice function of the UNDS. What the UNDS lacks in terms of financial weight, it should offset through policy development and normative functions and also through bringing together development actors. Policy advice will be the essential UNDS function in graduating and MIC countries (tacking into account, however, that per capita income should not be the only indicator for classifying countries). The cross-border dimension of development problems, the regional and global challenge which require collective action will increasingly become an integral part of development solutions. This also holds for the obligation of strategic thinking and prevention. Dealing with crises requires to tackle root causes and to effectively build resilience; preventing them in the first place requires early-warning, prognostic and preventive action capacities. Monitoring is essential for mobilizing action and for targeting resources to where they are most needed. All this requires a substantial capacity for gathering information, for analysis and for sound evidence- and science-based decision-making. The UN, with its wide, impartial and diverse network of operational, policy development and normative activities, is in a unique position to create, manage, and disseminate knowledge in order to help shape efforts and policies to attain the 2030 Agenda. The strengthening of the normative agenda will not delude the UNDS from its increased operational activities to bring especially LDCs out of poverty and to lead them into the virtuous circle of sustainable development.

III. Proposals by the Independent Team of Advisors

These findings and the fundamental shift in the global development landscape identified above, call for a fundamental repositioning of the UNDS. Marginal change is not an option. The UNDS ought to function as one coherent whole that embodies the principle of cohesion in diversity. System-wide cohesion requires filling the horizontal leadership gaps in the system, while maintaining diversity of competencies and subsidiary responsibility at the headquarters, regional and national levels. Well-managed diversity can exploit the benefits of specialization with integrated action. In contrast, fragmentation leads both to duplications and to failure to take advantage of opportunities for cooperation; it is costly and burdensome. Incentives for cooperation need to be strengthened and costly competition reduced.

The ITA believes that the operational activities of the UN Secretariat departments and offices should also be fully aligned and integrated with the operational activities of UNDS entities to ensure stronger linkages among normative, analytical and operational activities of the UN. The Committee for Development

Policy (CDP) of ECOSOC could be strengthened to provide knowledge support and strategic guidance to UNDS. Furthermore, a repositioned UNDS should be able to take full advantage of the research of the United Nations University (UNU) and other UN research institutions and entities to strengthen the linkages between policy research and operational activities for development.

Recognizing the urgent need for repositioning and rebranding the UNDS, the ECOSOC should formally adopt the terminology, “UN Sustainable Development System (UNSDS)” in all official communications and resolutions.

a. GLOBAL/HEADQUARTERS LEVEL

Strategic governance at the inter-governmental level

i. Full-time ECOSOC President

Without a stronger ECOSOC the UN’s high level capacity to follow the evolution of the multiple facets in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will not be possible. This would create a leadership vacuum at the heart of the global intergovernmental system.

In supporting the realization of the 2030 Agenda and implementing the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), ECOSOC ought to play a greater role than in the past in leading, coordinating, integrating and reviewing UNDS efforts. As the convener of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), it also ought to ensure that the forum plays an effective role in the follow up to the 2030 Agenda and has an added value since duplication and overlap in governance is just as unhelpful as duplication and overlap of the UN entities themselves. A strengthened ECOSOC should provide system-wide strategic policy guidance. It should evaluate the implementation of the SDGs, including the analysis of emerging issues, and suggest priorities as well as mid-course corrections. In order to effectively fulfill its mandate, as first step, the ITA proposes that ECOSOC should have:

- A full-time elected President;
- Adequate full-time support staff, drawn from within the UNDS.
- A detailed analysis of the demands on its work resulting from the new responsibilities that the global Sustainable Development Agenda brings to ECOSOC’s doorsteps together with the measures to be taken in order to reinforce its ability to address them, so that it may be suitably supported by the UNDS and Member States in its oversight role. Consideration should be given to the fact that its responsibilities cover a wide spectrum of actions linked to global, regional and country activities, as well as substantive, operational and management issues.

ii. Strengthening the scope and effectiveness of QCPR resolution

The ITA proposes that the QCPR resolution of the General Assembly should become a system-wide strategy for all UNDS:

- The QCPR should be transformed into a strategic system-wide tool to assess, monitor and report on operational activities for development. QCPR will provide vital guidance for a Global Strategic Framework (GSF) to be adopted by the UNDS;
- Expand the QCPR to include specialized agencies, through appropriate prior decisions by their governing bodies which set out the role each wishes to play in implementing the QCPR goals so that all UNDS entities adhere to the QCPR resolution;

- Each governing body of a UNDS entity, including the specialized agencies, should annually undertake a thorough, evidence-based review of its progress in implementing the QCPR resolutions. There should also be a system-wide evaluation drawing on these inputs;
- QCPR process, including negotiating the resolution, should be given higher relevance by the appointment of high-level facilitators with enough time to conduct consultations and deliberations. ECOSOC should monitor progress in the implementation of the strategy/framework.

iii. Sustainable Development Board

The ITA proposes the establishment of an overarching Sustainable Development Board (SDB) to enhance system-wide governance of the UNDS. The creation of the SDB would involve gradual merger of the governing boards of UN funds and programs. Over time, the SDB could be mandated to govern the operational activities of all the 19 funds, programs and other entities reporting to the General Assembly and ECOSOC and for which the QCPR resolution of the Assembly is formally applicable.

The SDB would have both system-wide and agency-specific governance functions. Those of system-wide nature would include the following: (a) adopt the proposed GSF (discussed later in the section) which would link together the global, regional and national level work of the UNDS along with information on key resources such as funding, staffing and other; (b) promote alignment of functions and funding in the UNDS; and (c) provide strategic guidance and allocate common resources linked to system-performance (e.g. Delivering as One, RC system, joint office and other types of integrated delivery and coordination mechanisms at regional and country levels). The agency-specific functions of the SDB would include all those normally performed by governing bodies of funds, programs and other entities. These extensive responsibilities would require the SDB to meet frequently and for members to devote adequate time and to be adequately supported. The representativeness of the SDB would be ensured through mechanisms to be determined by ECOSOC.

Through these functions, the SDB would become the main governing body responsible for creating system-wide harmonization and simplification. This would greatly enhance the overall cost-effectiveness in the delivery of operational activities of the UN system. The SDB could help to establish good practices, for example a stricter link between core- and non-core activities to realistically recoup the overhead costs of the non-core-activities and to ensure a strategic focus on system priority areas. The work of the SDB could include regular dialogue with specialized agencies on issues of common concern, including QCPR implementation. It is envisaged that the membership of SDB would be elected by ECOSOC for a term of 2-3 years. The SDB would report to ECOSOC and its composition would be determined in a resolution adopted by the General Assembly, giving due consideration to the principles of equity and effectiveness in representation. In addition to country representation, experts might also be added to the SDB as full or partial members.

The SDB should:

- Provide strategic guidance to the implementation of the GSF and identify funding needs and priorities;
- Serve as the platform for periodic negotiated pledges for funding the UNDS entities individually and together;
- Review and approve the strategic plans of UNDS funds and programs, ensuring that they are inter-linked with each other and also to the GSF the SDGs;
- Evaluate the monitoring of progress toward the 2030 Agenda and identify and recommend mid-course corrections in strategic plans of the UNDS;

- Allocate necessary financial resources to the Resident Coordinators, periodically review performance, and recommend adjustments as necessary in the context of scaling up DaO and related initiatives for integration and coordination of UNDS entities;
- Set criteria for determining when individual field presence is appropriate and for consolidation of UNDS presence, striking a balance between the need for universality and cost effectiveness;
- Establish a broader and more comprehensive perspective on how poverty is measured, for example using a multidimensional matrix structure, ensuring that poverty is not just the absence of income;
- Undertake periodic external review of the mandates of UNDS entities;
- Approve the consolidated budget as presented by the DSG-SD;
- Give consideration to invite independent experts to be advisers or even members of the SDB.

Executive leadership of UNDS

iv. Deputy Secretary-General for Sustainable Development

The existing post of the Deputy Secretary-General should be re-designated as the Deputy Secretary-General for Sustainable Development (DSG-SD), in line with the General Assembly Resolution 52/12B that created the position of the DSG-SD and its office. The re-designated DSG-SD under the authority of the Secretary-General should provide objective, effective and impartial leadership to the UNDS. The office of the DSG-SD should:

- Facilitate the representation of all UNDS entities in the SDB; the secretariat for the board should be provided by the DSG-SD;
- Lead the Strategic Executive Team (SET), comprised of the heads of the functional groups of UNDS, and provide guidance to the implementation of the strategic plans at the entity level, ensuring coherence and integration across entities;
- Design, implement and review progress of the implementation of the Global Strategic Framework;
- Manage the UN Resident Coordinator system, providing leadership and strategic guidance;
- Manage a pooled fund of un-earmarked resources, on behalf of the SDB, to fund the RC -system and other priorities identified by the SDB;
- Facilitate negotiated pledges for funding the consolidated budget;
- Draft a consolidated, transparent system-wide budget on the basis of individual entities budgets and non-core contributions to be approved by the SDB. This should include the negotiation of the minimum for a critical mass of core-funding as a basis the neutrality of the UNDS.
- Ensure common system wide policies on financial and human resources matters including accounting and ethics
- Be the focal point in the Secretariat for the relationship with Regional Commissions.

The Office of the DSG for sustainable development should be created with adequate support staff drawn from within the system as a whole under his/her authority and feed from existing organizational arrangements within the different entities. It could be an option to include the absorption of UNDOCO with all its staff and budget including that which comes from funds and programmes.

v. Strategic Executive Team of UNDS Functional Groups

The ITA proposes the consideration of a Strategic Executive Team, comprising of the heads of functional groups of UNDS entities to support the DSG-SD and the SDB. Four or five functional groups could be established around the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, bringing cohesion to the diversity of the UNDS. Functional groups should remain open to horizontal cooperation, avoiding siloes. The heads of the

functional groups would be accountable to the DSG-SD and the newly constituted SDB, as recommended by ITA. The specialized agencies should also consider how to align themselves with functional groups among themselves and other entities on the basis of joint programs and activities.

ITA has considered that, in the process of conceiving the function of SET the experience of UNDG has to be integrated and after a transition period, the functions of UNDG will be absorbed by the SET. Within ITA, there were also alternative considerations suggesting that a functional grouping structure, represented in the SET, should immediately replace the UNDG as the main coordinating body responsible for inter-agency policy coordination and integration, or not to consider the establishment of SET.

New tools for better strategic reach

vi. Global Strategic Framework

The ITA proposes the adoption of a GSF to harness the system-wide inter-linkages in functions and activities. The proposed framework instrument should enable UNDS entities to link their own activities to the inter-related activities of other UN entities and also to national development strategies and other development actors, providing a comprehensive map of sustainable development efforts at national, regional and global levels. The exercise will enable the UNDS to inter-link their functions and funding to specific sustainable development indicators, targets and goals. The instrument will also serve as an instrument for system-wide monitoring of achievements and gaps in terms of funding and actions. The re-designated DSG-SD should be responsible for developing the GSF, which should:

- Take into account differentiated country needs and inputs from the UN system at the country and regional levels comparable to the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in the climate field, taking note of the findings from countries' periodic process of mutual assessment and learning (discussed further below);
- Complement the strategic plans and frameworks of individual UNDS entities and not replace them;
- Enable the UNDS to inter-link their functions and funding to specific sustainable development indicators, targets and goals;
- Serve as an instrument for system-wide funding decisions, reporting and monitoring, as well as the identification and recommendation of needed mid-course corrections;
- GSF also needs to be the basis for the consolidated budget.

vii. Negotiated pledges for funding the UNDS

Funding has an external (contributions to the system) and internal (managing resources) aspect. The two are inter-linked. ITA recognizes that transparency and accountability in spending money are essential for donors and investors, especially for core-funding. Demonstrated and proved as well as prospective efficiency and effectiveness are prerequisites for successful funding. The more accountable and efficient the UNDS becomes, the better are its chances to attract the resources needed for making the investments for change on the ground. The UNDS' credibility and attractiveness for donors crucially depends on its economic and professional handling of resources.

To improve the internal use of resources, the UNDS under the leadership of the DSG-SD should work towards a system-wide consolidated budget. Matched with the Global Strategic Framework, it would not only help to identify funding gaps and bottlenecks, but it would also constitute a leadership tool for both the DSG-SD and the SDB. A system-wide balance sheet assembled from the budgets of individual agencies would be a first step to trigger the longer-term process towards a system-wide balance sheet.

The Member States should harmonize varying and divergent funding modalities that exist at the entity level to ensure that funding decisions are transparent, predictable and flexible. Negotiated pledges in the SDB can harmonize and streamline funding flows to the funds and programs overseen by the SDB. Negotiated pledges for individual entities should be integrated in the consolidated budget and should:

- Ensure more predictable resource flows, allowing direct negotiations among all stakeholders and enhancing transparency and accountability in resource allocation;
- Encourage earmarking of resources at the level of SDG-related outcomes and programmes rather than highly specific activities within entities;
- Prevent counter-productive competition and a zero-sum mentality among funds and programs by rewarding collaboration and joint programmes among entities
- Create opportunities for pooling of resources, through introduction of standardized and system-wide cost recovery framework and applicable surcharges, especially for funding the RC system with predictable and earmarked resources;
- Ensure that a critical mass of core funding is secured in order to secure the multilateral aspect of the UNDS and the need for total neutrality in the implementation of many of its functions.

Pooling financial resources has been shown to be a helpful mechanism promoting cooperation among entities. Consideration should be given to setting a target for an increase in pooled resources to support the SDGs, for example, a doubling of current pooled resources. The ITA proposes that UNDS entities, under the guidance of DSG-SG and his/her leadership team, should take appropriate measures for scaling up pooled funding to support joint programming at global, regional and country levels. The SDB should periodically set targets for pooled funding at the level of functional groupings to support implementation of joint programs and activities.

The UNDS should also scale up and strengthen its role of a “financial broker” to support the capacities of developing countries in matching funding opportunities (domestic/external) with local funding/investment needs and augment the overall resource envelope for sustainable development. In that context, ITA recognizes Member States in the AAAA pledged “to help combat illicit flows” and for that purpose “invite the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the UN to assist both source and destination countries.” The UNDS should therefore strengthen synergies with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other stakeholders to identify innovative financing options, including utilizing SDRs, to assist Member States in accessing resources for sustainable development. That asks for mutual supportive activities between UNDS and Bretton Woods Institutions.

viii. Comprehensive, external independent review of mandates of UNDS entities

The ITA proposes an externally, independent, participatory review of the mandates of all UNDS entities, with a view to streamlining their functions, funding and organizational structures to better implement the Sustainable Development Goals. The review of mandates should aim at reducing costly overlaps among the UNDS entities, reducing operational costs and improving their development effectiveness. Where deemed necessary, the review of mandates should recommend merger, dissolution or enhanced cooperation on SDGs of UNDS entities, if deemed necessary, for consideration of ECOSOC. The ITA urges the Member States to fully support the review of UNDS mandates.

ix. Mapping of staff capacities

The UNDS should have a comprehensive understanding of its staff capacities at national, regional and global levels to identify strength and gaps in supporting the realization of the 2030 Agenda. This is also critical for ensuring that the staff capacities in UN funds, programs and specialized agencies are inter-linked to support the implementation of an integrated agenda. The DSG-SD should:

- Lead and implement the mapping exercise in consultation with the UNDS entities;
- Ensure that the mapping exercise serves as an important input to the GSF;
- Establish a mechanism for periodic review of staffing needs, capacities and gaps to ensure that UNDS is sufficiently flexible and yet responsive to meet changing demand at national, regional and global levels.

UNDS entities should adopt a common human resource policy ensure staff capacities are fully aligned with SDGs. Progressively, all UNDS staff should be able to be flexibly deployed across various entities.

x. Partnership Delivery Support

The primary purpose of creating multi-stakeholder partnerships is to leverage the strengths of different public and private actors towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Such partnerships are generally of four main types: (a) knowledge generation and sharing (e.g. Global Water Partnership), (b) service provision (e.g. GAVI), (c) standard-setting (e.g. Alliance for Water Stewardship) and (d) financing vehicles (e.g. Global Environment Facility). In some partnerships, the UN is the initiator or driving actor (e.g. UN Global Compact, Sustainable Energy for All); in others UN entities are represented in governance (e.g. GAVI); while in still others they serve as permanent observers (e.g. Global Water Partnership). There are also currently eight Action Networks in the UN system, which are described as “initiatives that aim to catalyze new commitments within a certain thematic area.” These Action Networks are partnerships themselves but also often include other partnerships.

A Partnership Delivery Support mechanism will facilitate multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships, assuring transparency, accountability and the alignment of stakeholders to the 2030 Agenda and UNDS’ strategies for its implementation. The Delivery Support could also be linked to the office of DSG-SG. There is an acute need for streamlining partnership procedures across the system to encourage effective partnerships and minimize risks without, however, limiting the creativity of entities individual partnership approaches. The Partnership Delivery Support should:

- Develop and support the implementation of standardized procedures for partnerships, simplifying and harmonizing applicable rules, processes and good governance principles;
- Maintain a repository of information, guidance and good practices on partnerships;
- Minimize costly overlaps, delays and risks in partnerships;
- Monitor and review the performance of various partnerships within the system for consideration of the SDB;
- Draw on staff resources from the partnership offices in UN funds, programs and specialized agencies not only to minimize costs but also to enhance coordination and integration of various partnership efforts.

xi. Stakeholder Integration and Awareness Raising

The UNDS must acknowledge the historical role that nongovernmental and citizens’ organizations have played in contributing to shape UN development policies. They have also become central actors in the national and regional implementation of the United Nations global decisions through their networks and activities. There already is a wide, dense and active net of civil society actors that bring knowledge, competence, resources, innovations, and enthusiasm to the implementation process and sometimes necessary initial views. These can cover a wide spectrum of activities including contribution to research, policy formulation, monitoring, reporting, learning process, communication and awareness raising. The UNDS must make full use of this capacity.

b. REGIONAL LEVEL

The regional dimension of the UNDS functions should also play a more important role by elevating the responsibilities of their Regional Bureaus. The Regional Economic Commissions – re-designated as Regional Sustainable Development Commissions – with their considerable staff resources should become the regional focal point – both internally, but also with regard to strengthened relationships with regional inter-governmental organizations and regional economic blocks. The operational activities of the Regional Sustainable Development Commission should inter-link the national and headquarters level activities of UNDS entities and Resident Coordinators, providing both strategic guidance in regional contexts and also strengthening knowledge development, dissemination, monitoring and evaluation at the regional level. This will require a realignment of staff capacities within the reformed Regional Commissions to deliver on the new role.

xii. Enhanced regional coordination

The ITA proposes the merger of the coordination functions of the Economic Commissions and UNDG at regional level. The Regional Economic Commissions should also serve as think tanks and knowledge hubs, supporting a tightly knit and streamlined regional presence of UNDS.

Reformed Regional Commissions can help to identify regional challenges requiring collective action as well as the relation between these and corresponding global challenges. For this, their role as think tanks that are well connected to developments in the region and that can identify and fill research gaps needs to be strengthened. They need to lead the knowledge-challenge at the regional level.

Governments should enhance practical support to Regional Commissions for generating, processing, monitoring and dissemination of data, analysis and regional review of progress in SDG's implementation according to national plans.

They should:

- Aggregate country strategies to regional portfolios;
- Lead region-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts;
- Engage partners, facilitate partnerships including civil society and private business;
- Serve as regional facilitator and platform for the MAL process of periodic assessment and learning among peers and partners, and sharing of experiences generally;
- Work together with Regional Coordinators to reinforce the links between national and regional efforts and support their own regional coordination. Especially in conflict-affect regions there must be a team spirit of RCs.
- Promote interregional policy cooperation with other Regional Commissions including on the basis of the Regional Sustainable Forums they are creating.
- Interact with Regional Intergovernmental and development organizations including public financial institutions.

There is much room to enhance the collaboration between the UN and academic and a broad range of professional experts through innovative collaborative mechanisms which draw on the knowledge of the latter as individuals as well as members of institutions. The regional commissions should convene regional-level Committees for Development Policy (CDP) to enhance knowledge support and policy guidance to UNDS activities at the regional level. The role of the existing global CDP should be reviewed and enhanced so that it can provide more effective support to the SDB.

c. COUNTRY-LEVEL

xiii. Reform the Resident Coordinator system

The RC system would be managed by the proposed Office of the DSG-SD. RC would also report to the DSG-SD. The ODSG-SD would prepare a global budget for the RC system and submit to the SDB for review and approval. The RC system would be funded with predictable, un-earmarked pool resources, raised through assessed contributions or through negotiated pledges.

At the country level, the RC would continue to lead the preparation of the UNDAF and the Common Budgetary Framework documents, which would become key building blocks in the development of the Global Strategic Framework. The UNDAF should be re-named and re-branded as the UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF). UNSDF should be broader in scope and mandate, moving away from UN providing assistance to UN supporting and facilitating sustainable development. The RCs would also be responsible for mobilizing and allocating system-wide funding for activities at the country level through mechanisms such as DaO funds. The SDB would provide intergovernmental guidance regarding the management of the RC system. It would be the role of the DSG-SD to further develop the guidelines for selection of RCs, in consultation with the SDB. The DSG-SD would also annually report to the SDB on progress in implementing policy guidance on the RC system.

The recruitment of UNRCs should be strengthened to ensure that the selection of the most qualified candidates and most suitable to the needs of the country concerned. Where necessary, recruitment criteria should include capacity to perform as a humanitarian coordinator. The existing high application fees for UNRCs examination presents a barrier to entry for individual candidates and should therefore be abolished.

The ITA proposes the strengthening brokering role of RC to identify project/funding needs and availability of funds. The RC should have a UNDS country-funding envelope. The ITA also underscores the need for strategic funds for RC management and appropriate institutional safeguards to ensure the independence, neutrality and effectiveness of the RC system.

xiv. Developing Delivering as One

The findings strongly suggest that there is a need to strengthen the horizontal governance of the UNDS. In that context, the ITA proposes that the DaO initiative be scaled-up, with entities uniting and serving under a common UN logo in countries applying this approach, while mentioning under it the entities active in a particular role. The Addis Ababa outcome document has also called for strengthening UN coherence, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, including through achieving further progress in the DaO approach. One cornerstone in that regard should be a common logo as an expression of cohesion in diversity. This is based on the notion that in the post-2015 era with greater emphasis on integrated approaches in addressing complex national and global development challenges, UN entities will not only have a comparative advantage in their own right, but also as part of a “system”, where the sum is larger than the individual parts.

The DSG-SD should be expected to scale up the DaO, encouraging participating UNDS entities to function under one UN logo to further integrate their efforts and minimize costly competition for resources at the country level. The country presence of the UNDS in the DaO should be akin to a typical government representative office in a country. The one UN logo would strengthen the DaO approach and prevent costly competition among UNDS entities at the country level that undermines inter-linkages. This will entail significant cost savings for the system.

To ensure the independence of RCs, utmost importance must be given to impartial mechanisms for the selection, evaluation and promotion of RCs and for the protection of the reporting line between RC and DSG-SD from inappropriate political or institutional pressures.

xv. Comprehensive review and progressive consolidation of UNDS field presence

The SDB, on behalf of the entire UNDS, should comprehensively review the rationale and justification of field presence of UNDS entities in each country contexts with necessary support from the DSG-SD. The review exercise should:

- Set criteria for determining when individual presence is appropriate and for consolidation of UNDS presence, striking a balance between the need for universality and cost effectiveness;
- Suggest a timeline for selective consolidation of UNDS field presence for consideration of the SDB;
- Suggest a mechanism for periodic review of UNDS field presence, ensuring that presence is sufficiently flexible and demand-driven;
- Develop system-wide rules and procedures for integrating back office functions of various UNDS entities at the country and regional levels and at the level of the entities themselves (Funds and Programs);
- Organize the country presence in a single office provided there are no security restraints, incorporating experts and other staff delegated from UNDS entities and working under a single, consolidated authority, under the UN identity and one logo.
- Scale up the DaO initiative, encouraging participating UNDS entities to function under one UN logo to further integrate their efforts and minimize costly competition for resources at the country level.

xvi. Mutual Assessment and Learning to Support the 2030 Agenda

It is essential to start a process of periodic review of efforts and experiences, exchange of lessons and mutual learning, paired with forward looking strategic planning, in order to assess progress and develop plans toward the SDGs at global, regional and national levels. All countries, North and South, should be encouraged to undertake, and participate on a voluntary basis in Mutual Assessment and Learning (MAL) concerning their efforts to promote and attain the SDGs. These assessments – organized at the country level – should aim to incorporate a diversity of perspectives of citizens and stakeholders within a country, as well as interested peers and partners, civil society, and relevant experts. They can become a means of ensuring greater national ownership, evidence-based understanding of development strategies, as well as coherence between medium-term planning frameworks employed by the Bretton Woods Institutions, other UN entities, and government. As a stocktaking exercise, they can provide a better picture of what is required for addressing challenges requiring collective action for the attainment of the SDGs and duly inform the inter-governmentally agreed review process, such as the HLPF, including through the identification of gaps in resources and necessary actions. As such, the assessments provide a reference point for the SDB and the ECOSOC in their deliberations about whether the world is on track to achieve the SDGs and if not what more must be done.

IV. A Roadmap for implementing the proposals

The ITA believes that the re-positioning of the UNDS should begin as soon as possible and be guided by an ambitious timeline. At the same time, it should be an open process which allows for learning, reconsidering and adjusting the individual measures as the system moves forward. The UNDS would be well advised to continuously assess the need for change and, if necessary, adapt to new challenges in the global development landscape.

A forceful and result-focused implementation of the recommendations requires strong leadership from Member States, in the context of the General Assembly and of ECOSOC. While ITA has found that leaders and staff of the UNDS entities proved in the past that they are remarkably open to bold changes, the entities will look for that leadership to endorse their own efforts to better align themselves with the 2030 Agenda.

Change at this scale is linked with high expectations and commitment but also with a certain degree of hesitancy or even reluctance. The transition process can be successful only if guided by prudent change management at the top with integration of all staff and other stakeholders. This should include clarity of objectives and criteria, transparency in decision-making, as well as good communication with the organizational environment, including civil society and media. The transformation from an existing structure to a new one should involve and build on the commitment and capacities of the staff. The majority of UN staff is exceptionally motivated and committed to the values of the UN, and to its best possible performance. This is perhaps the greatest asset in the change process, and it should be fully valued. Likewise, the ITA proposes making best use of experience and advice already available in UNDG.

The ITA has benefitted greatly from interaction with ECOSOC during the various workshops and retreats which have made members better understand the perspectives, concerns and priorities of the member states. Despite the obvious plurality of views, the ITA has proposed the changes as a coherent whole, affecting almost all parts of the system, but guided by a compelling logic. It is preferable that they be endorsed together and implemented in the appropriate sequence, but they are not a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. If member states find particular elements difficult to resolve, as may well be expected given the scope of the recommendations, this should not stop other elements from being moved forward.

The implementation of the ITA proposals should be paced and sequenced appropriately to realize their full potential. It should be completed in a three-year period.

Immediate

The longer-term re-positioning should begin with a strengthened ECOSOC leadership and the designation of the new DSG-SD.

The DSG-SD, under the authority of the Secretary General, should be mandated and charged to lead the process of longer term positioning of the UNDS.

- She/he has to decide on a transition team for this structural change;
- As the starting point, DSG-SD should develop a roadmap and clear timeline for implementing the ITA recommendations;
- Staffing the office of DSG-SD quickly and adequately should be a priority; this should be done by redeploying staff from UNDOCO and other entities;
- The reporting line of the RCs should shift to the DSG-SD;
- The DSG-SD should determine the functional groups of UNDS entities for consideration of the SDB, with a view to determining the composition of SET.
- The DSG-SD should also follow-up on the implementation of the QCPR resolution.
- The DSG-SD should be the focal point for the relationship of Regional Commissions with UN Headquarters,

Near-term (six months-1 year)

The DSG-SD should then initiate the process for establishing the SDB through a decision of ECOSOC.

- The DSG-SD should propose the structure and composition of the SDB its mandate, rules of procedures and calendar of activities for approval of the ECOSOC and organize a first exploratory meeting;
- The DSG-SD should initiate work on the GSF;
- The DSG-SD should begin work towards a consolidated budget; in this context, he will review funding modalities, including negotiated pledges, and recommend system-wide measures for making financial resources more flexible and predictable for the UNDS;
- The DSG-SD should undertake a mapping of UNDS staff capacities, followed by an assessment in the light of the 2030 Agenda imperatives.
- The SDB should decide on the modalities and a timetable for gradual merger of existing governing bodies of UN funds and programs. It should do its part to develop structures and procedures for a consolidated budget of the UNDS and for the review of funding modalities.
- The SDB should undertake an External Independent Participatory Review of mandates of all UNDS entities.

Medium-term (1-2 years)

- The DSG-SD should organize a full review of the mandates of the UNDS entities and their field presence and should recommend necessary measures for consideration of the SDB. The SDB will have the full power to reconsider and revamp the field presence of UNDS entities, while ECOSOC will determine the merger of UNDS entities should that be recommended by the SDB;
- The DSG-SD should roll out a medium-term strategy for strengthening internal and external inter-linkages within the context of a dynamic GSF. This would require the DSG-SD to identify and recommend concrete measures for strengthening the inter-linkages among the humanitarian, peace and development pillars of the UN;
- The DSG-SD should roll out the Partnership Delivery Support, drawing on the partnership expertise and resources of UNDS entities.
- The DSG-SD should establish an architecture for the governance of the process of periodic Mutual Assessment and Learning involving the regional commissions, and RCs, appropriate as an essential input for the periodic revision of the GSF and for the consideration of the SDB as to what gaps in actions and resources exist and what correctives must be taken.