**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS TO THE 2025 ECOSOC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT SEGMENT**

**New York, 20 May 2025**

**[all-English]**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for taking part in this important forum in an important year.

We’re celebrating the 80th anniversary of the United Nations.

But this milestone is tempered by a stark, undeniable reality that resonates on every page of the report I am presenting today.

With less than five years to go to the 2030 deadline, we are facing nothing short of a development emergency.

The Sustainable Development Goals are alarmingly off-track.

And some of the hard-won gains made in recent years are getting derailed.

Progress is too slow in the fight against poverty, hunger, inequality, the climate crisis, decaying infrastructure, and under-resourced education, health and social protection systems.

We must never forget that a development emergency is, at its root, a human emergency.

The lives and futures of millions of people hang in the balance.

This development emergency is also a funding emergency.

Resources are shrinking across the board — and have been for some time.

For example, as detailed in my report, total financial contributions to the UN development system dropped by $9 billion— or 16 per cent — in 2023 from the year before.

We can imagine the number of 2024 taking into account what we have witnessed in the recent decisions.

Our organization is increasingly asked to do more with less — a trend that will continue for the foreseeable future.

This year, donors are pulling the plug on aid commitments and delivery at historic speed and scale.

But the report we’re discussing today also carries an important message of hope.

Hope found in the progress we’ve achieved together to reform and reposition the UN development system, making it more efficient and cost-effective.

Hope in the UN80 initiative to build on these reforms, and drive more of the change we need across the system for a more impactful, cohesive and efficient organization.

Hope in your continued strong support of, and engagement with, our Resident Coordinators and Country Teams.

And hope that lies in the potential of the Pact for the Future to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals — a Pact that secured consensus at the Summit of the Future.

Let me be clear.

While the context has shifted since the Pact’s adoption, its commitments are more important than ever.

This includes its bold calls for action on all the elements required to boost progress on sustainable development — including financing for development, the provision of debt relief, and strengthening the international financial architecture.

We cannot allow headwinds to blow these commitments off course.

We will continue working closely with all Member States and partners to keep our agenda on track, deepen our ongoing transformation, and to do so in the context of the UN80 initiative to drive progress across the system.

And we will ensure we can fully deliver and maximize the benefits of every single mandate of the landmark General Assembly resolution 72/279 that ushered in the reforms of the UN development system.

Excellencies,

In this spirit, and guided by the report under discussion today, I’d like to highlight four areas where we are making progress, where more is needed, and how Member States can support this work.

First — we must hold fast to our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is a critical year for development.

But across the board, we face a crisis in the means of implementation — from financing to trade, governance and institutional capacity to accelerate progress.

Acceleration means Member States keeping alive the bold commitments they made in adopting the Goals in 2015, as well as through the Pact for the Future.

These include easing the debt burden on developing countries, scaling innovative sources of finance, and pushing forward on reforms to the international financial architecture.

The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla will be a key moment in driving the change we need.

Acceleration requires bold transformations.

We must continue traveling the clear pathways to progress outlined in the report — key areas where we can spur progress across all the Goals, such as food systems, energy access, digital connectivity, and supporting economic growth through trade.

Now is the time to build more political will and institutional capacity to support these essential shifts and drive progress.

Second — we will continue tailoring our operations to the needs and priorities of host countries.

We know we’re on the right track.

In the last year alone, Resident Coordinators supported over 160 countries.

Our work across the system and with governments is becoming more integrated and coordinated every year.

87 per cent of host governments — and 83 per cent of donor country governments — agreed that UN entities are working more collaboratively than before the reform.

And 98 per cent of host governments agreed that UN activities, as articulated in our Cooperation Frameworks, are closely or very closely aligned to national priorities.

The evidence is clear.

The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system we have built together is fast-becoming a launchpad for providing deeper development impact for people and planet alike:

By gathering partners together to shape policy and financing solutions to accelerate development…

By supporting countries’ efforts on financing, data-collection, trade and sustainable economic growth…

And by constantly striving to find efficiencies and innovations, and drive accountability and results across our work together.

We are rightly proud of our work, and we will protect and build on this as we move forward.

We know we can do better. And we will.

Despite high levels of support, the report shows worrying gaps between the priorities of our Cooperation Frameworks and the operational, governance and financial tools to bring them to life.

Moreover, the Management Accountability Framework established to ensure greater accountability in collective UN efforts is not being applied evenly across the system.

Our newly established evaluation office for the development system is now preparing its first independent report to this body this year to continue driving accountability and results, and ensure greater alignment of UN configuration and programming with country needs.

I ask all Member States to support this important work.

Third — funding.

I am deeply concerned about the system’s funding situation.

Core contributions to development agencies are insufficient, plunging to 16.5 per cent of total funding, with these contributions declining to 12 per cent for some agencies.

This is a far cry from the 30 per cent target countries committed to in the Funding Compact.

In December, the General Assembly agreed to my proposal to secure $53 million from the regular budget for the Resident Coordinator system — a much-needed boost at a critical time.

To be entirely frank, I have to say that the proposal was much higher but at least this compromise was found.

But this minimum level of support is insufficient to reach the maximum ambition we need.

Our ability to drive development and deliver support in a sustained way is at risk — at a moment when countries need us most.

For our part, we will continue working closely with you to close funding gaps, and ensure joint programming is well-funded and directed to the most vulnerable people and communities.

But more than ever, we need flexible, sustainable, predictable and innovative sources of funding.

I urge Member States to implement the new Funding Compact, without delay.

In the current context of shrinking resources, the Funding Compact becomes even more fundamental — in particular, its emphasis on pooled funds that allow for more strategic resource allocation depending on actual needs and priorities on the ground.

And fourth — we will continue pushing for efficiencies that maximize the use of development resources.

The report demonstrates that our reforms are achieving results — with over $592 million in efficiencies in 2024, well above our initial target of $310 million.

These savings were achieved through individual agency efforts to streamline services and supply chains, as well as through the increased use of shared services across entities — including travel, conference and administrative functions, and other key efficiencies.

But we can and must do more.

From the very beginning of my mandate, we embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to strengthen not only how we work and deliver — but how we leave no stone unturned in finding cost-savings and efficiencies.

The UN80 initiative is an important opportunity to carry this work forward.

By rapidly identifying efficiencies and improvements in the way we work.

By ensuring that a greater share of our resources are allocated for development programmes rather than administrative costs.

By thoroughly reviewing the implementation of all mandates given to us by Member States, which have significantly increased in recent years.

And through a strategic review of deeper, more structural changes and programme realignment in the UN System.

UN80 is not about responding to global cuts.

It’s about responding to global needs.

The needs of people around the world.

The need to ensure that we support them in the right way, with the right programmes and country configurations.

And the need to be as efficient, streamlined and impactful as we can be.

Again, the support of all Member States will be critical as we strive to become more cost-effective in our operations.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we continue travelling this road to reform and renewal, we must keep our focus where it belongs:

On the people around the world who are counting on us to get this right.

The report we are discussing today is not just about numbers.

It’s about the services and support we provide to some of the most vulnerable and underserved people and communities on earth.

It’s about hardworking taxpayers around the world who underwrite our important work.

It’s about responding more effectively to the expectations of Member States and aligning with national priorities.

And it’s about our constant pursuit of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, while staying true to values that have driven our mission from the very start.

Let’s continue working as one, in solidarity, to build an even stronger and more effective United Nations — one that is ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

One that is fit for purpose and ready to serve.

We count on the full support of Member States as we move forward.

Thank you.

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