System-wide Coherence at the Regional Level

Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and Regional Directors’ Teams (RDTs): Functions and Complementarities

I. The Regional Dimension of Development and UN System-wide Coherence

1. The importance of the regional dimension of development is increasingly recognized through the broadening of various regional integration processes and the many forms of inter-country cooperation addressing an ever-growing number of transboundary issues. Within the UN system, regional cooperation is also recognized as essential for promoting region-wide awareness of the UN global values, norms, standards and commitments in the development field and for backstopping their effective implementation at the country level. As a result, an average of some 30 UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies, in addition to the Regional Commissions, are operating at the regional level. Each region also has a significant number of non-UN regional and subregional organizations of a political/security or economic nature, including the regional development banks, as well as research institutions and civil society organizations.

2. While this rich UN regional presence brings many assets and much expertise to the regions and their respective members, the multiplicity of organizations at the regional level calls for strong institutional arrangements which would ensure effective complementarities and build a genuine culture of cooperation among UN organizations active in each region as well as between the latter and non-UN regional entities.

3. In 2006, the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence called for UN entities at the regional level to be reconfigured and for the UN regional setting to be reorganized around two inter-related sets of functions: one focusing on the analytical and normative work as well as activities of a trans-boundary nature, for which the Regional Commissions would act as a catalyst using, inter alia, their convening power at both the intergovernmental and secretariat levels; and another focusing on coordinating the services of the UN country teams, for which UNDP, as Manager of the Resident Coordinator system, would be the catalyst.

4. In its Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the UN system (TCPR resolution 62/208 of 19 December 2007), the UN General Assembly further recognized the importance of the regional dimension in support of country development work. It requested the F&P, specialized agencies and the Regional Commissions to further strengthen cooperation and coordination among each other at the regional level and called upon them to adopt more collaborative approaches to support country-level development initiatives including by improving mechanisms for access to the technical capacities of the UN system at

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1 As reaffirmed in GA resolution 62/208 on TCPR, member States legitimately expect improved collaboration and coordination among the UN organizations, including at the regional level, in support of country-level development initiatives. This paper is prepared by the UN Regional Commissions, Convenors of RCMs, as a contribution to the ongoing UN system efforts in meeting these expectations.

2 TCPR resolution 62/208, paras 106 to 111.
the regional and subregional levels. Member States particularly requested the Regional Commissions to further develop their analytical capacities to support country-level development initiatives and to support measures for more intensive inter-agency collaboration at the regional and subregional levels.

II. RCM and RDTs: Background and Evolution

5. Well before the system-wide coherence process, ECOSOC, through its resolution 1998/46, had mandated the Regional Commissions to hold regular inter-agency meetings in each region, to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary General, with a view to improving coordination among the organizations of the UN system in that region. Consequently, meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) have been convened by the Commissions since 1999, focusing on policy and programming issues of regional nature and guided by regional priorities. The experience and evolution of the RCMs varied among the regions, but the RCMs largely benefited recently from a renewed momentum under the sponsorship of the Deputy-Secretary-General.

6. On its side, the United Nations Development Group Executive Committee (UNDGExCom) initiated its own operational regional coordination mechanisms in the various regions. As with the RCM, the experience and evolution of the UNDG-ExCom Regional Directors Teams (RDT) varied considerably between the regions. In view of the move by the UN system to deliver as one at the global, regional and country levels, the broader UNDG membership called for an opening of the RDT membership beyond the UNDGExCom. In 2008, the global UNDG machinery moved to enhance its linkages and interaction with the RDTs, including through the adopted “Management and Accountability Framework” (see below). UNDOCO also moved to increase significantly its capacity and budgetary support to the RDTs.

7. In early 2008, the Regional Commissions sponsored an independent study entitled “UN coherence at the regional level: synergies and complementarities between the regional coordination mechanism and regional directors’ team”. The study was sponsored by the Regional Commissions as a contribution to the ongoing discussion and reflection within the United Nations system on improving coherence and programme delivery by the United Nations system at the regional level. It advocated better synergies and complementarities between the two main inter-agency mechanisms working at that level, namely the Economic and Social Council mandated Regional Coordination Mechanism convened by the Regional Commissions, on one hand, and the Regional Directors’ Teams acting within the United Nations Development Group machinery, on the other hand.

8. In this context, the study called for clearer complementarities through an improved focus by the Regional Coordination Mechanism on the policy, normative-support and analytical work at the regional and subregional levels, including through a thematic focus and linkage to and integration into country-level development work, while Regional Directors’ Teams would continue their operational focus of providing coherent and timely support to United Nations country teams. This division of labour and complementarities between the roles and functions of RCM and RDTs were subsequently agreed upon between the UNDG Chair and the Executive Secretaries of
the Regional Commissions, as Convenors of RCM, and adopted by the CEB in October 2008.  

9. In line with this division of labour, the operationally-oriented functions of RDTs were clearly identified through the UNDG adopted M&A Framework (see functions below). Similarly, the CEB endorsed in April 2009 a linkage between its High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the RCM in the regions as a means to enhance policy coherence between the global and regional levels allowing therefore the work of the HLCP on certain global issues with important regional dimensions to be addressed in a coherent manner at the regional level through the Regional Coordination Mechanism.  

10. More recently, the UNDG strategic priorities for 2010-2011 recognized the critical role of the regional level in improving UN system capacity to deploy knowledge and know how, including by translating global knowledge to regional, subregional and country contexts. A proactive action was encouraged in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Regional UNDGs and RCMs, in line with the M&A Framework and other CEB agreements, for providing useful knowledge and advice to UNCTs.

III. RCMs and RDTs: Delineated Functions

11. The functions of the RCMs can be delineated as follows:

(1) Providing a high-level policy forum to exchanging views on major strategic developments and challenges faced by the regions and its subregions, and interaction of the regions with the global level (implemented through strategic dialogue involving the DSG, the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions, other UN agency Principals and senior officials, and other senior non-UN officials from regional organizations and other partners, and through reporting to ECOSOC via the SG Report on Regional Cooperation and the Annual Dialogue of the Executive Secretaries with ECOSOC);

(2) Promoting UN system policy coherence in response to identified regional priorities and initiatives (RCM thematic clusters and working groups identified);

(3) Devising coherent regional policy responses to selected global priorities, and providing regional perspectives to the global level on such issues (namely: achieving the IADG, including the MDGs; addressing climate change challenges; promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and; response to the financial and economic crisis);

(4) Providing the forum for exchange of best practices and lessons learned and for inter-agency analysis and elaboration of interagency normative and analytical frameworks in response to the identified focus and priority issues above (e.g.: inter-agency regional assessments on MDGs; regional action plans on gender;

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3 CEB/2008/2
4 CEB/2009/1
5 The RDTs labeling changed from Regional Managers Team (RMT) to RDTs. Most recently, they have been labeled as UNDG/regions, but they are still widely referred to at the UNDG global machinery as RDTs.
promotion of green growth agenda; possible regionalization of selected CEB initiatives in response to the financial and economic crisis; etc)

(5) Promoting joint programming on issues where regional normative and analytical work involves several agencies (e.g. “Regional Roadmap for achieving the MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region” and ESCAP’s mapping of regional agency programming in Asia-Pacific, as well as ESCWA’s planned similar mapping, and the policy recommendations emanating from the annual inter-agency reports on Progress Towards Achieving the MDGs in the LAC region);

(6) Promoting UN system interaction with non-UN regional and sub-regional organizations (e.g. RCM/Africa with AU and NEPAD; RCM/AP with ASEAN; RCM/ESCWA with LAS, RCM/LAC with OAS, etc);

(7) Promoting policy coherence and joint programming in support of regional and sub-regional integration efforts and initiatives (e.g. RCM/Africa in support of NEPAD; RCM/Africa/Subregions in support of RECs; RCM/AP in support of ASEAN agenda; RCM/LAC Unity Summit, etc).

12. The functions of RDTs are identified through the M&A Framework with detailed actions to implement them through its Implementation Plan (see deliverables below). They are delineated as follows:

(1) Provision of coherent technical support to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs);
(2) Quality assurance of UNDAF/UN programme;
(3) Performance management and;
(4) "Trouble shooting" in difficult country situations, dispute resolution etc.

IV. Deliverables

13. In-line with the delineated functions above, possible deliverables by RCM include:

- monitoring of trends and joint analyses relating to major regional issues and challenges;
- policy frameworks/regional action plans on transboundary issues and other relevant issues to be addressed at the regional level;
- joint regional publications on a selected number of issues of high relevance to the UN development agenda, based on the analytical and policy work made by participating UN agencies, individually and collectively;
- regional policy guidelines on cross-sectoral issues;
- regional inputs to global conferences;
- regional mapping of expertise and programmes;
- joint inter-agency regional and subregional programmes in support of regional initiatives and regional integration efforts.

[7] The operationally-focused functions of RDTs in support of UNCTs are currently under active elaboration within the UNDG machinery as part of the roles and responsibilities in implementing the UNDG strategic priorities for 2010-2011. This paper and its annex could be updated accordingly subject to further agreements within UNDG.
14. The expected deliverables by RDTs are elaborated in the M&A Implementation plan adopted by the UNDG in January 2009 (see annex 1 for expected actions by RDTs).  

V. Interaction and Complementarities between RCMs and RDTs

15. RCMs and RDTs can support and strengthen each other’s work through a two-way interaction:

**RCM towards RDT:** On one hand, the regional issues addressed at RCM meetings can feed discussion at RDT meetings. In particular, the RCM can convey the outcome of its work on policy coherence (conclusions of substantive debates, regional action plans, policy directions and recommendations, etc.) to the RDTs for their debate on country policies. It can also work with RDTs to facilitate the integration of respective elements of regional and subregional programmes into the country UNDAFs in support of the country development agenda.

**RDT towards RCM:** On the other hand, the RDTs can bring national policy experiences (in terms of best practices or challenges faced) to the RCM in order to draw lessons from these experiences at a regional level. Such lessons can thus be shared more broadly, feed new analytical/normative work and eventually lead to strengthening policy convergence at the regional level.

Such interaction would be facilitated by measures such as:

1. Ensuring a strict adherence to and compliance with the functions and scope of work of each other as delineated;
2. An enhanced implementation of the signed Cooperation Framework between the Regional Commissions and the UNDP which identified, among other areas, regional coordination as a priority focus area for collaboration through mutual support to regional coordination mechanisms with the aim of maximizing the complementarities of both parties;  
3. Holding back-to-back, as far as possible, RDT and RCM meetings (at least once or twice a year);
4. Appropriate planning and exchange of work plans with a view to identify potential areas of synergies and complementarities;
5. Active participation of the Regional Commissions, as convenors of the RCM, in the RDT meetings and participation of the RDT chairs in the RCM meetings;
6. Ongoing mutual communication between the RDT chairs and the Regional Commissions, as convenors of the RCM.

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8 Ibid.
Annex 1. The Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System including the “functional Firewall for the RC System (RDTs extracts)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is Accountable for</th>
<th>To whom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMTs</td>
<td>UNDG Chair/AG supported by UNDG ASG and DOCO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreed roles for RMTs (Oslo):</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Provision of coherent technical support to RCs and UNCTs</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Quality assurance of UNDAF/UN programme</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3. Performance management</td>
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<td>4. &quot;Trouble shooting&quot; in difficult country situations, dispute resolution etc.</td>
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**Agreed Road Map and Next Steps**

**Regional Managers Team**

1. RMT membership will expand over time to be representative of Agencies working at country level
2. TOR for Chair and members of RMT, including time allocations
3. Performance appraisal system
4. Reporting of RMT and assessment of performance: report to UNDG Chair, supported by UNDG ASG who collates RMT annual performance data against agreed benchmarks and presents this for discussion by AG before submission to UNDG Chair for action
5. Need to determine minimum level of support to RMT and funding of support. Ref. Oslo Meeting

**Outcome (based on Accountabilities)**

<p>| UNDAF/UN Programme implemented by UNCT under RC leadership and coordination, and in full compliance with the Guidance note on the RC/UNCT Working Relations; results reported to the national government | - Timely quality feedback provided to RCs/UNCTs on workplans and RCARs, Q1 –Q3 ’09 |
| - First line ‘Trouble shooting’ support provided, - Appraisal of RCs/UNCTs, including mid-year reviews, for RCs/UNCTs that are underperforming, ensured by Q3 ’09 | |
| - Continuous quality and timely technical support mobilized and performed through the Peer Support Group for CCA/UNDAF processes, 2009. | - Members of Peer Support Group able to dedicate time to quality support and assurance role given recognition by RDT, 2009. |
| Revisions of JDs of Resident members and definition of framework for Non-resident members of UNCTs to explicitly recognize the role of the RC in strategically positioning the UN in each country. | - RDTs to review success factors in team cohesion and team effectiveness and refer good practices to DOCO for dissemination, as appropriate, ongoing. |
| Ensure inclusion of NRAs in country operations. | - RC efforts for effective inclusion of NRAs continues to be considered in RC appraisals, ’09 and... |</p>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Outcome (based on Accountabilities)</strong></th>
<th><strong>RDTs</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>UNCT results achieved through effective leadership of responsible UNCT members, and in full compliance with the Guidance note on RC/UNCT Working relations</td>
<td>- Support provided to UNCT members in better defining UNCT substantive results, ’09 and onwards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective and impartial management, including fiduciary management of and reporting on UNDG MDTFs according to UNDG agreed rules and procedures of MDTFs ensured</td>
<td>RDTs to provide support and advice in case of disputes, ’09 and onwards</td>
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| Provision of timely technical support and quality assurance in programming work ensured. Performance management and trouble shooting support provided. | - Capabilities for strategic planning and RBM at country and regional level built, Q1 ’09 – onwards (RDTs/Funds, Programmes and SAs with DOCO)  
- Agency inclusion in RDTs by matching own regional structures undertaken, including common understanding on concept of ongoing alignment of regional support structures and regional bureau established, ‘09  
- Based on the TORs of RDT/RDT Chair, work plans established by each RDT and progress reports shared with AG/ASGs (RDTs and DOCO), Q1 ’09 |
| The membership of RDTs should be progressively inclusive, while maintain commitment to the effective provision of support to RC/UNCTs. (agreed function for RDT from Oslo) |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Effective guidance to UNDG Chair on progress with UN coherence, management of RCS and monitoring of MDTFs and DOCO performance ensured | - 2009 workplan and end-year progress report submitted to the UNDG chair following review by the AG, Q1, Q4 ’09                                                                                                                                                     |
| UNDG workplan implemented and required policy recommendations in support of UN coherence at country level provided | - Provide input for priority-setting of UNDG Working Groups; Q1 and onwards.  
- Participate as appropriate in UNDG WG discussions; ’09 and onwards.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Management of dispute resolution mechanism | - Facilitate introduction and implementation of the Dispute Resolution mechanism throughout the UN system facilitated, Q1 ’09 (RDTs and UNDG agencies)                                                                 |