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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT; OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Field representation of organizations of the United Nations
system: structure and co-ordination

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Field representation of organizations of the United Nations system: structure and co-ordination" (see A/41/424).

The Secretary-General has no additional comments to make on behalf of the United Nations on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit.

* A/42/50.

ANNEX

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination
on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled
"Field representation of organizations of the United
Nations system: structure and co-ordination"

I. GENERAL

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Field representation of organizations of the United Nations system: structure and co-ordination" (see A/41/424) has in general been favourably received by members of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). While a number of organizations had points of view that differed from those of the Unit on particular aspects of the analysis, most of them were of the view that the report makes a constructive and timely contribution to improving the effectiveness of the United Nations system in the field of operational activities.
2. The organizations of the system are generally of the view that the report provides a broad summary of the nature and structure of the system's field representation. Some organizations regretted, however, that certain factual information provided by them to the Inspectors was not reflected in the report.
3. It was generally felt that the report could have benefited from the incorporation of a more orderly chronological analysis of the evolution of arrangements for field representation in the United Nations system, from their establishment in the early 1950s. It was also felt that some of the underlying assumptions, conclusions and recommendations relating to a more centralized field representation structure were inadequately substantiated.
4. The decentralization of activities to the regional and country levels and the concomitant expansion in field representation have been pursued by several organizations in accordance with the policies established by their respective governing bodies and in consonance with their constitutional mandates. ACC stresses that, as a matter of principle, field representations are established at the specific request of host Governments with a view to their deriving greater benefits from the activities of the organizations concerned.
5. ACC notes that the question of field representation is regularly reviewed by the governing bodies of the organizations concerned. In this regard, it is worth repeating that a logical and coherent approach to the field representation of the organizations of the United Nations system would be facilitated if Governments were to adopt consistent policies in the various intergovernmental forums of the system.
6. Members of ACC engaged in operational activities are particularly aware of the need, in the present circumstances of financial stringency, to ensure that administrative costs are kept to a minimum so that the largest possible share of their resources is directly devoted to programmes and projects that benefit developing countries. It was noted that a number of organizations have undertaken

02 are engaged in undertaking specific measures to review their field establishments. The Secretary-General points out that, at his request, a systematic review of all the field offices of the organizations of the United Nations system under his direct authority will be undertaken, under the aegis of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), in order to determine whether the offices, including the use of common facilities, can be rationalized without diminishing the effectiveness of programme delivery.

II. SPECIFIC COMMENTS

7. In their comments on the report a number of organizations described the particular characteristics of their field representation arrangements that reflect their mandates and purposes and make available and accessible to Governments in an efficient and practical manner all of the services of the organization concerned. ACC wishes to emphasize that support to technical co-operation activities is not the only justification for field offices; field offices also provide support for the normative, research and standard-setting functions of organizations, some of which have regional rather than individual country offices. The way in which the system's field representation has evolved and the differing rationale for and purposes of field offices naturally influence prospects for future arrangements.

8. Several organizations of the United Nations system, both large and small in terms of the volume of technical co-operation activities, have no field representation. Some utilize the resident representative/resident co-ordinator as their representative and rely on the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for administrative support. ACC recognizes that such arrangements are cost effective and are conducive to the promotion of coherence in the system's operational activities at the country level. The use where feasible of common premises, as well as the maximum use of support services provided by the UNDP field office network, is also generally endorsed by the organizations of the system. ACC also notes that UNDP charges organizations for the administrative services rendered in this regard whenever such services involve additional costs to UNDP.

9. ACC is continuing its efforts to enhance the relevance and impact of the operational activities of the system through strengthened co-ordination at the country level. In this regard, ACC accepts the role of the resident co-ordinator. He should act impartially on behalf of the system as a whole and whenever appropriate bring to the Government's attention the mandates, competence and resources of the various organizations of the system.

10. ACC believes that a primary concern is the strengthening of overall resources for operational activities and, in particular, for multilateral institutions, such as UNDP. Ultimately, the current stagnation in resource availability adversely affects all aspects of operational activities. While some organizations conclude that the reduced share of UNDP in total system-wide technical co-operation adversely affects co-ordination arrangements at the country level, other organizations are of the view that the co-ordination role of UNDP is not a function of its financial resources per se, but rather its knowledge of and its comprehensive approach to the country's problems.

11. Several agencies, in noting the emphasis in the report on tighter co-ordination, stated that it failed to take account of the need for flexible approaches determined by the multiple dimensions of the system and by specific country circumstances. It was emphasized that approaches that were too rigid could prove counter-productive.

12. A number of comments were made with regard to the factual information contained in the report and to its interpretation. First some organizations have brought up to date the data regarding the size and growth of their field representation (see appendix).

13. Second, the Inspectors have concluded, after analysing the growth in professional field offices and the decline in the number of long-term experts, that "more Professionals in field offices are serving fewer technical co-operation experts than ten years ago" (see A/41/23, para. 45) and that total "field office staff will soon outnumber project staff" (para. 46). In this regard, ACC notes that the ratio between project staff and field representation posts is not an appropriate measure of the effectiveness of, or the need for, field representation. Field representation fulfils many important functions other than those related to operational activities. Furthermore, the traditional distinction between "field representation staff" and "project staff" is no longer valid since several organizations rely on their field representations for project execution. In addition, the increased complexity of projects, including the greater reliance on short-term consultants and national project personnel, places greater responsibilities on field offices. Projects directly executed by Governments are also on the increase and in many cases require the support of the field office structure.

14. Third, the views expressed in paragraphs 78 and 79 of the Inspector's report regarding relations of UNDP with the agencies require comment. On the one hand, the resident co-ordinator arrangements are based on decisions of Member States and reflect the need for the better co-ordination of operational activities at the country level. On the other hand, problems do arise inasmuch as some organizations regard UNDP as a competitor for the execution of projects.

15. The view is expressed in paragraph 79 of the report that "the fact that the individual now wears two hats does not help: he owes loyalty to the Administrator as resident representative and to the Secretary-General as resident co-ordinator". The Secretary-General wishes to indicate that the alleged dichotomy of loyalty has not generally arisen in practice and that the Administrator of UNDP has co-operated fully in putting into effect the arrangements by which the resident co-ordinator exercises his or her responsibilities.

Comments on specific recommendations

16. The first two recommendations of the report, concerning a reaffirmation of the role of the resident co-ordinator (recommendation 1), a stay on new arrangements for the establishment of field representation until prescribed criteria are met (recommendation 2 (a)) and a testing of the cost-effectiveness of field representation (recommendation 2 (b)), are acceptable in principle to ACC, subject

to other relevant comments in this note. Paragraphs 21 and 22 of the report address the substance of the third recommendation, concerning the establishment of a roster of candidates for the post of resident co-ordinator. The fourth recommendation, dealing with relations between the resident co-ordinators and the directors of the United Nations information centres, is addressed to the United Nations.

17. In the first recommendation of the report, the General Assembly is called upon to "reaffirm its commitment to the coherent development of the United Nations system activities for the benefit of Member States and to the role of the resident co-ordinator as the official best suited to promote these aims" at the country level.

18. ACC accepts this recommendation. The Economic and Social Council, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 1986/74 of 23 July 1986 on the policy review of operational activities for development, invited "the governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system to reaffirm their full support for improved coherence of action by the system at the country level and for the role of the resident co-ordinator in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197".

19. Recommendation 2 (a) is linked to the second part of recommendation 1 in that a stay on new arrangements for the establishment of field representation is recommended until prescribed criteria are met. This recommendation is acceptable in principle to ACC. The criteria identified in paragraph 110 of the report for the establishment or expansion of field representation are utilized by governing bodies.

20. It is recalled that, in paragraph 17 of its resolution 1985/74, the Economic and Social Council requested the governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system to pay particular attention to the need to rationalize field representation of the organizations and, recognizing the necessity to consult with the recipient Governments on such matters, to establish new field offices only if the required services could not be shared with other organizations or provided in any other way.

21. In recommendation 2 (b) it is proposed that governing bodies should test the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of field representation and terminate such field representation that upon review does not appear viable. This recommendation is also generally acceptable, on the understanding that governing bodies will continue to carry out reviews in the light of secretariat assessments. Action already initiated by the Secretary-General is mentioned in paragraph 6 above.

22. Recommendation 3 calls for the establishment by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation of a roster of possible candidates for the post of resident co-ordinator, including suitable candidates from the specialized agencies. Most organizations commented favourably on the proposal, which in their view would offer advantages by involving the system more closely in the process of co-ordination. They wished to emphasize, however, that this should include all organizations and entities of the United Nations system.

23. UNDP observed that the establishment of such a roster could have the effect of removing the appointment of the UNDP resident representatives from the authority of the Administrator. Of the present 115 UNDP resident representatives, 40 have worked in one or more organizations of the system other than UNDP; a further 7 have come from the bilateral aid organizations on leave from their Governments. In these circumstances, UNDP would propose that it receive proposals for candidates for the post of resident representative from the Director-General and from the heads of organizations to enable it to maintain an informal roster of significant and highly qualified candidates from the United Nations system. This broadening of the UNDP roster may meet the concerns expressed in the report.

24. The Director-General and the Administrator of UNDP will keep this matter under continuing review in order to ensure the selection of well-qualified and experienced candidates for the post of resident co-ordinator.

25. In recommendation 4 it is proposed that the Secretary-General should make provision for a single accreditation to Governments which would cover at the same time the work of the resident co-ordinator and that of the director of the United Nations information centre, and that there should be a better rationalization of the work of the directors vis-à-vis that of the resident co-ordinators.

26. The Secretary-General has decided, in agreement with the Administrator of UNDP, to consolidate United Nations information centres with the office of the resident co-ordinator/resident representative wherever this is not already the case and it can be shown that a joint agreement will be at once more cost effective and efficient while at the same time respecting programme delivery requirements. It is understood that such consolidation will not result in additional cost to UNDP.

27. The Secretary-General has also decided, and this applies in particular to the United Nations information centres, that the resident co-ordinator will represent him at the field level in his country of assignment, except in those situations where other arrangements are more appropriate.

APPENDIX

Up-to-date data regarding field representation of organizations
of the United Nations system
World Health Organization

The World Health Organization wishes to provide corrected figures pertaining to its field representation in relation to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Field representation of the organizations of the United Nations system: structure and co-ordination" (JIU/REP/86/1) (see A/41/424):

Page 9, paragraph 30 (a) (ii)

For 400 read 996

Page 12, paragraph 43 (c)

The last sentence should read

WHO's decrease by 4.6 per cent from 505 (1974) to 482 (1983) emphasizes the Organization's regional orientation, a commitment inherited from WHO's Constitution.

Page 13, paragraph 44, text table

The entry for WHO should read

1,095	667	428	39
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Page 42, table 2, part A

In the column headed Professional, the entry for WHO should read

1,288	1,011	848
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In the column headed Local Gs, the entry for WHO should read

890	1,547	1,811
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Page 42, table 2, part B

In the column headed Professional, the entry for WHO should read

107	115	149
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In the column headed local Gs, the entry for WHO should read

188	217	262
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