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Items 63 (a) and 137 of the provisional agenda\*

### **New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support**

#### **Joint Inspection Unit**

## **Towards a more coherent United Nations system support to Africa**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Towards a more coherent United Nations system support to Africa" (JIU/REP/2009/5).

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\* A/65/150.



*Summary*

The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report entitled “Towards more coherent United Nations system support to Africa” (JIU/REP/2009/5) evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing system-wide cooperation framework, drawing on and sharing lessons learned, as well as identifying best coordination practices and methods of collaboration, with regard to United Nations system support to Africa.

The present note presents the consolidated views of the United Nations system entities on the recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. The United Nations system entities welcomed the report and generally supported its main recommendations, including the need for the better alignment of United Nations programmes and planning with national priorities and enhanced coordination between international and national development partners, as well as among United Nations agencies themselves. They noted the observation in the report that the growing number of agencies operating in Africa and the multiplicity of coordinating, steering and working committees and groups were posing serious challenges in terms of the ability of the United Nations system to carry out its work in Africa with enhanced coordination, efficiency and clarity.

## I. Introduction

1. The United Nations system Joint Inspection Unit report entitled “Towards More Coherent United Nations System to Africa” (JIU/REP/2009/5) seeks to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing system-wide cooperation framework in the area of United Nations system support to Africa, with a focus on development issues. The report reviews the mandates and activities of the existing coordinating bodies that play a role in supporting African development and, through its recommendations, propose measures to enhance coordination and coherence at the regional, subregional and country levels.

## II. General comments

2. The United Nations system entities welcomed the report and in general agreed with the key issues identified and the recommendations set out in it. They stressed the importance of avoiding a proliferation of coordination mechanisms that add little value. They agreed that clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various mechanisms, ensuring adequate communication among them and harmonizing results-based management practices across the United Nations system were all important components of coherent and coordinated United Nations system support for Africa. They also recognized the need to strengthen and use existing mechanisms to promote coherence.

3. The United Nations system entities considered that the need for programme country Governments to engage closely with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes would be critical for national ownership of United Nations support. They were also of the view that there was a need for more joint programming in the context of the Frameworks. Furthermore, they drew attention to the challenge represented by the coordination of the efforts of various United Nations agencies, each of which reported to its own governing body.

4. The members of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination noted that the report recognized the fact that the current situation concerning the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) had prevailed for several years. However, they also noted with interest that the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency had been established early in 2010 as the institutional vehicle for implementing the African Union’s development agenda. They further noted that NEPAD was now fully integrated into the African Union and that, for the first time, an African regional initiative had been institutionalized in the form of a development agency within the African Union family.

5. A number of methodological issues that could affect the findings and thus the utility of the report were identified by United Nations system entities. It was noted that the methodology outlined in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report could benefit from further clarification to justify many of the report’s recommendations. In that regard, it was underscored that it was essential that an assessment based mainly on interviews highlight the kind of data collected, the sources used, how the sources had been identified and how the data had been validated. Such information would also be helpful in identifying the limitations of the study. Furthermore, the view was expressed that the findings should be clearly linked to evidence and that the recommendations should draw on such findings.

6. Agencies pointed out that some of the comments that they had provided on an earlier, draft version of the report had not been taken into account by the Joint Inspection Unit in drafting of the final report. Key issues in this regard included: (a) the difficulties envisaged in implementing some of the recommendations contained in the report, given the governance system of the specialized agencies (the final report did not suggest practical means to address those constraints); (b) the fact that the report was completely silent on the role of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis established by the Secretary-General to tackle the impact of soaring food prices; (c) the fact that the report did not recognize the existence of other coordinating mechanisms aimed at delivering synergetic support to the food and agriculture agenda of NEPAD and the African Union by all development partners, including the relevant United Nations agencies (against that background, caution was expressed with regard to the establishment of other coordination mechanisms); and (d) the fact that, while the report made a strong case for strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with a view to permitting it to effectively play its coordinating role within the Regional Coordination Mechanism, it barely touched on the need to strengthen the capacities of the coordinators of the clusters. It was pointed out that the coordinating capacity of ECA would not be sufficient to ensure strong and coordinated delivery of support to the African Union and NEPAD in the various relevant domains unless the capacities of the cluster coordinators were also significantly improved in terms of financial and human resources.

7. The United Nations system suggested that in future, the Joint Inspection Unit, when considering the issues explored in the report, consider making a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council in view of its Charter mandate regarding the coordination of the United Nations system on economic, social, environmental and humanitarian issues. This was seen as particularly relevant, given the history of the engagement of the Council with development and peacebuilding in Africa, including its role in reviewing the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa. In this regard, it was emphasized that the 1995 and 2001 high-level segments of the Council had focused on Africa, as had the 1999 coordination segment.

### **III. Specific comments on recommendations**

#### **A. Enhancing coherence at the global level**

##### **Recommendation 1**

**The General Assembly and the legislative bodies of the corresponding United Nations system organizations should invite the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations to undertake a review of their respective mandates pertaining to United Nations system support to Africa, in order to assess the status of implementation and evaluate resource, monitoring and reporting requirements, and to better clarify the division of labour and responsibilities within the United Nations system and between its different organs, offices and departments.**

8. While agencies expressed some support for this recommendation, it was also pointed out that the mandates relating to United Nations system organization

support for Africa had already been extensively reviewed and that the most important issues now related to the implementation of the recommendations that had emerged from the various evaluations, boards and panels on United Nations reform. It was noted that there was a tendency to systematically question similarities in organizations' mandates. However, given that the mandates of all United Nations agencies were quite broad, it was not surprising that some overlap existed. It was suggested that the most important issue related to the clarification of responsibilities within those broad mandates. When the division of labour and responsibilities was clear, little duplication or overlap of work was observed in practice.

9. United Nations system entities noted that the mandates of United Nations organizations emanated from Member States and intergovernmental bodies, not from the secretariats of the United Nations system, and they suggested that if another mandate review was to be undertaken, it would be important to ensure that clear guidance was received from Member States and that the review was carried out under the auspices of the United Nations system Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should strengthen, within the existing institutional frameworks, communication and sharing of information and best practices among the different United Nations system organizations regarding their support to the African Union and its NEPAD programme, in order to prevent and minimize duplication of work, overlap and inefficient use of resources, as well as to facilitate synergies.**

10. This recommendation was supported by the members of CEB. At the same time it was pointed out that communication and information-sharing on United Nations system support to the African Union and NEPAD was already taking place under the Regional Coordination Mechanism, led by the Deputy Secretary-General and supported by ECA and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Africa, which was chaired by the Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, also facilitated communication and information-sharing among the various United Nations organizations, entities and departments with a major stake in terms of support for Africa. In addition, meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the regional teams of the United Nations Development Group had resulted in a series of recommendations for greater complementarities and better coordination.<sup>1</sup> United Nations system entities also highlighted the efforts of the United Nations Development Group, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the Senior Management Group.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the report of the tenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism of United Nations agencies and organizations working in Africa in support of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, held in Addis Ababa on 5 and 6 November 2009 (available from <http://uneca.org/nepad/rcm10.html>).

## **B. Enhancing coherence at the regional and subregional levels: strengthening the Regional Coordination Mechanism**

11. In a general comment relating to section III of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, it was noted that, in examining the efficiency and effectiveness of the system-wide coordination mechanisms, the report had focused mainly on the Regional Coordination Mechanism. This approach was seen as contradicting one of the messages of the report, which pointed to the fact that the plethora of coordinating, steering and working committees and groups was posing serious challenges to the ability of the United Nations system to carry out its work in Africa with enhanced coordination, efficiency and clarity. While there might be a strong case for the focus on the Regional Coordination Mechanism, clear arguments had not been presented to justify that focus or to justify why other regional and subregional mechanisms alluded to in the report had been excluded.

12. It was further recalled that the tenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism of United Nations agencies and organizations working in Africa in support of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, held in Addis Ababa on 5 and 6 November 2009, had highlighted the importance of implementing a "Delivering as One" approach at the subregional level, had recalled the platforms of cooperation offered by the African subregional organizations and, in that regard, had recommended that the experience of United Nations agencies in the area of subregional cooperation be taken into account. In order to develop such a regional approach, it was suggested that ECA, through its subregional offices, establish in the five subregions of Africa a subregional coordination structure within which all the United Nations agencies would coordinate their efforts in support of the regional economic communities.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should ensure that the proposed high-level steering committee for overseeing the activities of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, providing guidance and following up on decisions and recommendations pertinent to the Mechanism, is established and fully operational by 2010.**

13. While some support was expressed for this recommendation by United Nations system entities, it was also pointed out that the creation of a high-level steering committee to oversee the activities of the Regional Coordination Mechanism would create an additional level of bureaucracy. Agencies indicated that there was a need for additional evidence that another high-level committee would add value, given that there were already many layers of coordinated support for Africa.

14. With regard to the constraints and challenges facing the Regional Coordination Mechanism process, including that of leadership, it was noted that the Deputy Secretary-General herself had chaired recent sessions of the Mechanism, thereby providing the top-level strategic leadership for the meetings.

**Recommendation 4**

**The General Assembly should reiterate its support for strengthening the capacities of the Economic Commission for Africa and invite the Secretary-General to take further measures by allocating adequate resources to ECA, including, as appropriate, the redeployment of resources, to enable it to effectively fulfil its strategic coordinating role with regard to the Regional Coordination Mechanism in support of the African Union and its NEPAD programme.**

15. Agencies agreed with this recommendation.

**Recommendation 5**

**The Secretary-General should ensure that the Regional Coordination Mechanism and its cluster system are well aligned to the needs and priorities of the African Union and its NEPAD programme, taking into account the leadership role of the African Union Commission and the evolving character of the Ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, with specific regard to the development and implementation needs of this programme, and should report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.**

16. United Nations system entities pointed out that the alignment of Regional Coordination Mechanism priorities with those of the African Union and NEPAD was increasing, with closer collaboration between the African Union, ECA, the African Development Bank and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. The ten-year capacity-building programme for the African Union was also being reviewed with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the programme, taking into consideration the priority areas of the African Union and its NEPAD programme.

**Recommendation 6**

**The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should ensure that the organizations participating in the Regional Coordination Mechanism align their planning, programming and budget cycles, work programmes and plans and priorities, as appropriate, with those of the Mechanism and its clusters in order to facilitate joint planning and programming, as well as the establishment of an evaluation and monitoring framework.**

17. As with the previous recommendation, it was pointed out that the alignment of the Regional Coordination Mechanism with the needs and priorities of the African Union and NEPAD was already in progress. There was, however, widespread recognition of the need for those efforts to be enhanced.

**Recommendation 7**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should assign senior focal points for interaction with the Regional Coordination Mechanism secretariat and other participants, including the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities, in order to enhance communication and information-sharing within the Mechanism.**

18. This recommendation was generally supported, and it was pointed out that it had already been implemented by several CEB member organizations.

**Recommendation 8**

**The Secretary-General and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should ensure that the “umbrella agreement” between the regional commissions and UNDP, signed in October 2007, is fully implemented and operationalized in order to facilitate and enhance communication, coordination and cooperation between ECA and the Regional Coordination Mechanism on one side, and UNDP and the regional directors’ teams on the other.**

19. CEB members did not comment on this recommendation, noting that the “umbrella agreement” was between UNDP and the regional commissions.

**Recommendation 9**

**The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should call on all United Nations system organizations to participate in the Regional Coordination Mechanism and to attend, at the highest level, its annual meetings in order to further leverage the technical expertise of the Mechanism and create further synergies within United Nations system support to Africa.**

20. Agencies supported this recommendation. However, some noted that direct recognition and support for the work of the United Nations Development Group Africa (Eastern-Southern),<sup>2</sup> rather than the Regional Coordination Mechanism, might be of greater importance, as the United Nations agencies were more operational in their work through the United Nations Development Group regional teams. In addition, they noted that the United Nations Development Group regional team (Eastern-Southern) already participated in the Regional Coordination Mechanism. Furthermore, agencies recognized the spirit of cooperation and collaboration during the tenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, at which both mechanisms had been called on to work together and create synergies.

**Recommendation 10**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should closely involve the regional economic communities in Africa in the work and activities of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and its cluster system so as to have the needs and priorities of the regional economic communities coherently reflected within the Regional Coordination Mechanism framework.**

21. While agencies generally supported the recommendation, they also stressed the need to strengthen the relationship between the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group-Africa. Agencies further suggested that it would be very confusing for the regional economic communities to have to relate both to the Regional Coordination Mechanism and its technical clusters and that the United Nations Development Group regional teams in Africa (Eastern-Southern and Western-Central) and their technical clusters. In addition, it was pointed out that some United Nations agencies had already signed agreements with some of the regional economic communities. Nevertheless, the system recognized that those mechanisms could create opportunities, synergies and complementarities for working together, especially considering that the Regional Coordination Mechanism operated at the regional level, the Subregional Coordination Mechanism at the subregional level and the regional teams at the national level.

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<sup>2</sup> Formerly the Regional Directors’ Team for Eastern and Southern Africa.



**Recommendation 11**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should encourage all United Nations system organizations, as appropriate and in consultation with the United Nations Development Group and the regional directors teams, to be accredited through their regional/subregional offices to the regional economic communities in Africa, with a view to facilitating interaction, coordination and cooperation between the United Nations system and the regional economic communities.**

22. The responses received from United Nations system entities were in agreement with this recommendation, although there was a sense that it could be refocused to encourage all United Nations system organizations to work closely in the context of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism with a view to facilitating interaction, coordination and cooperation between the United Nations system and the regional economic communities.

**C. Enhancing coherence at country level**

23. In providing general comments on section IV of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, and with respect to the issue of coherence and national ownership of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, United Nations system entities were of the view that it would have been useful to have a sense of the proportion of countries in the region that had such frameworks, as well as to have a sense of the reasons why some countries did not have them. It was pointed out that even if countries did not have United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, United Nations support could be provided in the context of poverty reduction strategy papers. The United Nations system entities were of the view that the report could have commented on the coherence of United Nations support in that respect and how the United Nations system could promote national ownership of poverty reduction strategies.

**Recommendation 12**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should ensure that the African beneficiary Governments are always closely engaged in the development, implementation and monitoring of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, in order to foster national ownership and leadership and to enable their organizations to address the specific needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries, including the strengthening of their national institutional capacities.**

24. While expressing support for this recommendation, agencies suggested that it could have been strengthened through the inclusion of more substantial evidence in the report. In particular, agencies noted that although interviews had been conducted with only three countries in Africa (Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia), paragraph 102 of the report stated that “while the beneficiary authorities in most countries are more or less involved in the development and implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, this is not the case in all African countries”. Agencies also noted that the substance of the recommendation was already part of

the United Nations Development Assistance Framework Guidelines<sup>3</sup> and ingrained in the common country programming processes in the United Nations Development Group Africa (Eastern-Southern) and that the United Nations Development Group Africa (Western-Central) already had a systematic mechanism to support United Nations country teams with technical support and quality assurance during the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

### **Recommendation 13**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should further strengthen the capacities and resources of the two regional directors teams in Africa, including, as appropriate, through the redeployment of resources, to ensure their effective functioning in the context of the extensive ongoing reform processes aimed at enhancing system-wide coherence and coordination at the country levels.**

25. This recommendation was generally supported.

### **Recommendation 14**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should ensure that the planning, programming and budget cycles of their country programmes in Africa under the respective United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks are better aligned in order to allow for more extensive joint programming and the establishment of joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks, as well as simplified reporting arrangements at the country level.**

26. Agencies noted that this recommendation was already in the process of being implemented under the leadership of resident coordinators and the United Nations country teams with support from United Nations Development Group regional teams. Over the past few years, significant efforts had been under way in country teams to align the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and country programming processes with national cycles.

### **Recommendation 15**

**The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the other United Nations system organizations should ensure that the planning, programming and budget cycles of the country programmes in Africa are aligned with those of the regional and subregional programmes, in order to achieve increased coordination and coherence.**

27. While agencies generally supported this recommendation, many emphasized that country programmes needed to be aligned with national planning and budgeting cycles, rather than with regional programming. However, it was also recognized that, in the light of the ideals and vision of the African Union and its NEPAD programme, all United Nations support should be geared towards continental integration. Accordingly, it made sense that national priorities should be aligned to regional or subregional programmes with a view to the achievement of regional integration in Africa.

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Assistance Framework Guidelines, part I (see for example, pp. 3, 5, 8 and 9) and part II (see for example pp. 15, 20, 21, 25 and 30), issued in January 2010, available from <http://www.undg.org>.

**Recommendation 16**

**The General Assembly and the legislative bodies of the corresponding United Nations system organizations should reaffirm their commitment to results-based management and request the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations to harmonize their results-based management practices to achieve a common results-based management approach at the country level for implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in Africa.**

28. While this recommendation was generally supported by agencies, they noted that the results-based management task team of the United Nations Development Group Working Group on Programming Issues was already working on developing a results-based management reference manual for Development Group member organizations, as well as related training materials. It was expected that they would be available by October 2010. It was further underscored that care should be taken in recommending that results-based management practices be harmonized among all United Nations system organizations, as the technical specificities among United Nations specialized agencies, in terms of programme delivery and management, needed to be recognized. Work on the harmonization of business practices was also under way within the context of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination High-level Committee for Management and the United Nations Development Group, including the planned implementation of the recommendations of the joint high-level missions of the Group and the Committee, aimed at addressing country-level bottlenecks in business practices, undertaken in March and April 2010.

**Recommendation 17**

**The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should initiate through CEB a comprehensive review on resource mobilization, funding mechanisms and modalities within the United Nations system for ensuring the financial sustainability of the United Nations system support to Africa within the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, including the strategic involvement of the African private sector, as well as coordinated partnership with the African and international financial institutions.**

29. This recommendation was supported by United Nations system entities.