

5 March 2010

Dear Resident Co-ordinators and UN Country Team members,

To confront today's global crises, the multilateral system needs to deliver to the world's poor and vulnerable more effectively than ever before. UN Member States have sent a clear message on what they expect of the UN system, as mapped out in the TCPR (Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review) and the principles of development effectiveness. It is our responsibility to respond to this call.

In the next three years some 90 countries will establish new UNDAFs – this year alone 46 country teams begin a new programming cycle. More than a document, the UNDAF embodies the essence of the UN presence at the country level. It therefore must be of highest quality – in form, content and strategy.

As stated in my letter of 21 October 2009, UNDG is relying on you – Resident Co-ordinators and Country Teams – to make a step change in the relevance and quality of the next generation of UNDAFs and ensure that the right capacities are in place to deliver, especially with regard to the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

With this in mind, I am pleased to introduce the new package of UNDAF guidance developed by the UNDG. It consists of: (i) the UNDAF Guidelines and Technical Guidance; (ii) the UNDAF Action Plan; (iii) the UNDAF Progress Report. The package offers greater flexibility, in recognition of the one-size-does-not-fit-all principle. You can now more readily adapt your programming processes to national realities and expectations – while enhancing programme coherence and accountability for results among all partners.

The package of UNDAF guidance emanates from a highly consultative process, reflecting inputs from country and regional teams and the UNDG. These contributions have greatly contributed to the preparation and the quality of the guidance. I am pleased to highlight some of the key features:

The UNDAF Guidelines and Technical Guidance - The new simplified UNDAF guidelines are comprised of two important elements. The first outlines the basic approach on how to prepare an UNDAF. It responds to requests from national partners and UNCTs that the UNDAF be more closely aligned with national programmes and cycles, more flexible in adapting to the national context and circumstances, and simple to prepare in order to focus on substance and implementation. The second part provides technical and substantive guidance to help UNCTs develop the substance of the UNDAFs in line with national development priorities. Both elements are of equal importance.

The UNDAF Action Plan - We have learned from Delivering-as-One pilots, and other countries, that there is great benefit to a common UN operational plan. UNCTs invest much time

in developing UNDAFs but not enough effort on how to implement them. The UNDAF Action Plan is designed to achieve more coherence at the operational level. The UNDAF Action Plan is optional; where applied, it replaces the Country Programme Action Plan documents of the Funds and Programmes in order to simplify and harmonize the programming process.

The UNDAF Progress Reporting - The guidelines encourage alignment of the UNDAF annual review process with the national review process. The new reporting format sets the minimum standard for country teams to report on progress and supports stronger accountability.

This guidance package comes at an opportune time for countries rolling out their UNDAFs in 2010. It should serve to position the interventions of the UN family to ensure a strategic and well co-ordinated support to programme countries. I appeal to each of you to dedicate sufficient staff time and put in place the necessary performance benchmarks and incentives for developing and implementing high-quality UNDAFs.

Your experience and lessons are vital for the UNDG as it continues to support your work. I encourage you to provide feedback through DOCO to john.apruzzese@undg.org.

This is a huge opportunity for the UN to continue to make a difference. I thank you for making it possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Clark
Chair
United Nations Development Group