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**Informal Meeting of
United Nations Member States on**

System-wide Coherence

New York, Thursday 7 February, 2008

Opening Statement of the Co-Chairs delivered by:

H.E. Ambassador Dr. Augustine Mahiga

**Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania
to the United Nations**

Mr President,

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of my colleague as Co-Chair, Ambassador Kavanagh, let me at the outset thank the President of the General Assembly for having placed confidence in us and in our respective countries, the United Republic of Tanzania and Ireland, by inviting us to take on this important and challenging assignment. The President's very pertinent opening remarks have helped to set the scene for the work ahead and I am certain that delegations will wish to reflect well on what he has said.
2. Before proceeding any further, I would like to acknowledge the great endeavour deployed during the Sixty First Session of the Assembly by our distinguished predecessors as Co-Chairs, Ambassador Hackett of Barbados and Ambassador Hoscheit of Luxembourg. The Assembly is in their debt. Through the nine structured discussions in the Assembly and the myriad other consultations which they undertook, our two colleagues have thoroughly mapped the ground for necessary follow-up to the 2006 Report of the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence. They have helped us all to understand better where divergences of view remain and also perhaps where there is some meeting of minds in this complex area. Had Ambassadors Hackett and Hoscheit not accomplished this essential stage in our work, we should have been obliged to undertake it now. We have all just heard their further wise observations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. As you know, the President of the Assembly has some time ago shared with the membership his letter dated 11 January 2008 by which he launched our endeavours in the current Session. The President gave the Co-Chairs a general guideline for how to approach our task. He wrote as follows:

‘Through the consultations the Co-Chairs should work towards an agreement on the modalities for implementing greater coherence across the United Nations development activities system. This will necessitate a thorough assessment of progress made so far, in particular, the implementation of the ‘One United Nations’ pilot projects, as well as obstacles encountered and opportunities for further implementation.’

4. Delegations will also have seen the letter which Ambassador Kavanagh and I have addressed to them on 5 February 2008, in which we give a clear undertaking that in our approach we will be open and transparent, pragmatic and empirical. This, we believe, is the kind of approach that the membership would fully expect of Tanzania and Ireland. We ask for your trust as well as your support.

Dear Colleagues,

5. Your Co-Chairs believe that in our renewed endeavour we now need to move forward together, towards an agreement on the modalities for implementing greater coherence across the development activities system. We should not repeat work already accomplished work of last year. Our approach henceforth needs to reflect the fact that we are seeking to move ahead. Truly it is in the interests of all of us, and above all the interests of the United Nations itself, to emerge at the end of the current Session having made significant progress in this endeavour.
6. We are encouraged by the fact that the membership agreed the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review by consensus, as recently as 17 December last. This agreed document embodies the Assembly's overall policy guidelines for the development system of the United Nations for the next three years. It addresses many of the issues which have been taken up in the context of System-wide Coherence. The fact that the TCPR was agreed by consensus demonstrates that even the most difficult issues are amenable to decisive progress, given political will on the part of the member States and a willingness to compromise in the interest of reaching agreement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. We are aware also that progress is being registered in at least two significant areas which are of crucial importance to promoting coherence. We should all be encouraged by this.
8. First, there are the undoubted advances in implementing the Delivering as One approach in a number of developing countries, including those which have sought the designation of 'pilot'. Secondly, positive steps forward are being taken by the Secretary General and his colleagues in the Chief Executive's Board (CEB) towards eliminating internal administrative and related blockages to greater coherence in delivery. This relates not least to harmonisation of business practices. The Secretary-General and his colleagues are seeking to make similar progress on the programmatic front.
9. Turning first to Delivering as One, we are now one year on from when the first pilots embraced this approach. Their experience has been accumulating. It will be 2009 before we have any definitive evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach in delivering development assistance. Nevertheless, important lessons are already being learned and interim evaluations – including by the developing countries themselves - are in progress.

10. Many of us will have heard the most interesting statements made by several pilot countries recently in the UNDP Board and in the Joint meeting of the four Boards. It is increasingly evident that their experience so far with Delivering as One, has been preponderantly positive, even as they pointed to a number of outstanding challenges. Those who heard the pilots speak will have been particularly struck, as your Co-Chairs were, by their affirmations that Delivering as One is respecting two cardinal principles: first national ownership and leadership; and second, there is no, and there cannot be any, ‘one-size-fits-all’.

11. Your Co-Chairs suggest that it will be valuable for the membership as a whole, here in the General Assembly, to hear further from developing countries and their partners in question about their ongoing experience. Our understanding is that to this end, the President of the Assembly will arrange for at least one full day of discussion in the present format in mid-March. We hope that this will facilitate a full and open exchange. We should hear about progress achieved and problems encountered and, not least we should also gain a better understanding of the challenges that lie ahead, both at country level and at headquarters level.

12. In the meantime, your Co-Chairs will visit four of the pilot countries, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Tanzania and Vietnam. We are grateful to the governments of each of these countries for these most thoughtful arrangements that they are making, so that we may receive a comprehensive picture of developments on the ground. The Government of Pakistan has also very kindly indicated that it

too will be pleased for us to undertake a similar visit to that country at a mutually convenient time. We are grateful for that.

13. Let me make clear that as a result of our upcoming working visits, Ambassador Kavanagh and I will not purport to reach definitive conclusions in our own minds as to how 'Delivering as One' is proceeding. However, we will draw on the impressions which we gather there at the present stage to help inform the subsequent open discussion in the Assembly, in which all States will have an opportunity to participate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. As for the advances which are being pursued in the framework of the Chief Executives Board (CEB) under the chairmanship of His Excellency the Secretary General, I mentioned that these relate in considerable measure, though far from exclusively, to Harmonisation of Business Practices across the entire System. All of the Specialised Agencies are involved in this endeavour.

15. Your Co-Chairs have been in touch with the office of the Secretary-General and we are informed that the Secretariat, at senior-most levels, will provide an extensive briefing on these matters to member States in the present format in or about April. There will, on that occasion be ample opportunity for delegations to express their views and to engage in an inter-active dialogue in this context.

16.I should mention that your Co-Chairs have accepted an invitation from the Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), Mr Kandeh Yumkella to attend a conference in Vienna on 4 and 5 March 2008. This meeting will bring together the Specialised Agencies of the United Nations for an in-depth discussion of the progress they are making in achieving greater coherence.

Ladies and Gentlemen

17.It will be clear from the foregoing that your Co-Chairs are keen to bring to the attention of delegations developments which are, as we speak, taking place elsewhere in regard to important aspects of System-wide Coherence. Our aim is threefold: First, to enrich the discussion among States here through the provision of latest empirical data; secondly, to take stock of progress achieved to date and thirdly to help throw light on the challenges which certainly remain to be addressed.

18.I said earlier that Tanzania and Ireland would be open and transparent in their approach to this Co-Chairmanship. My colleague Ambassador Kavanagh and I mean what we say in this regard. There will be no attempted faits accomplis on our watch.

19.We have as you know been mandated by the President of the Assembly to report to him in June, and in the meantime to work towards an agreement in the Assembly on the modalities for

implementing greater coherence across the United Nations development activities system.

20. Your Co-Chairs have been taking soundings with a wide range of member States and with interested parties in the System, including the Deputy Secretary-General who has particular responsibility in this area. We have met at length with the President and with our predecessors. We have reviewed the work of the last year.

21. In light of this activity and taking account of the variety of interests and priorities among the membership; being ever mindful of the interest of the United Nations as a whole, and; above all, with a constant eye to those people in developing countries who most need effective delivery of development assistance through the United Nations System – your Co-Chairs are strongly of the view that a pragmatic approach is the best, indeed it is the only feasible way to try to move ahead in our work.

22. We believe that as a practical proposition, it would be extremely difficult to seek to move ahead on all aspects of the High Level Panel Report at the same time. The breadth, depth and not least the great numbers of recommendations contained in that report lead us to this view. A fair reading of the discussions that have taken place in the Assembly to date would appear to sustain this impression.

23. At the same time, we understand entirely the reluctance of many member States to proceed on a selective basis, if the selection in question were to respond exclusively, or even preponderantly to

priorities that have been voiced in just one part of the membership. We believe that a successful Co-Chairmanship will be able to proceed effectively only if all parts of the membership can have confidence that the manner of addressing issues will be balanced and fair.

24. We have noted the great divergence of views among the membership in last year's discussions, both concerning substance and procedure. In a sense, various sections of the membership constructed negotiating lines and defended these stoutly. The Co-Chairs cannot be expected to join one side or another behind its line.

25. Looking therefore to the future, your Co-Chairs will continue, over the coming months, to conduct consultations, in plenary, group and bilateral formats.

26. We will listen very carefully to the views that delegations will express today, in the current more positive environment that we have described. Subsequently, and in light of what we hear, we will try to bring forward a more detailed orientation or an initial programme of work.

27. It is clear to us for example that further along we will need to take up a number of demanding topics. We have heard mention for example of funding and governance – related aspects.

28. By the same token, we will need to weigh how we are to dispose of cross-cutting issues. The gender issue not least has been underlined to us by some members. In this connection, once again we need to be pragmatic. Some of these issues are being actively addressed elsewhere. Some are the subject of very deep divisions and will not easily yield an agreed approach in the near term. Some may be amenable to progress after a little time during the current Session, but provided the approach taken last year is modified substantially with the acceptance of all concerned.

29. Your Co-Chairs will now be keen to hear the views of member States. We acknowledge the fact that delegations have strongly-held positions on many of the issues in question and that these have been comprehensively set out already. We would appeal, however, that delegations try to help the Co-Chairs foresee where the middle ground may lie on such issues. Only in the middle ground is agreement to be found. We ask that delegations indicate that they are willing to see their positions evolve in the pursuit of a fair and balanced outcome. We believe that there is something to gain for everyone and for all groups. Our common aim is to deliver development more effectively through the United Nations, especially for those most in need of it.

Thank you Mr President.