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**Informal meeting of the plenary
on the United Nations System-wide Coherence
Governance**

Statement by

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on behalf of the European Union

New York, 17 April 2008

Distinguished Co-chairs,

I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

The UN development system has a broad pallet of knowledge, skills and resources. In addition to that, the MDGs offer an unprecedented consensus on a common framework for the future. Both of the above are a sound basis and a large potential from which Member States can benefit. The key to ensuring such an outcome is an inclusive approach both at headquarters as well as at the country level, with the aim of fostering a coherent UN.

The complex challenges to reach the MDGs cannot be addressed from the top. To obtain development results, there is a need to ensure a participatory decision-making process, the alignment of development strategies to local needs, or in other words – country ownership and consideration of development from a local perspective. The evidence we have heard several times until today from the pilot countries and states that are adopting similar approaches to enhance their development, has led us to believe that the UN Country Teams are more effectively interacting with the governments, paying close attention to national priorities and working in ways that best respond to those priorities.

There has been a positive change witnessed on the ground in several areas. One of them is the increasing recognition of the value added of the Resident Coordinator as the leader of the UN Country team, the second one a clearer division of labour, roles and responsibilities between the UN bodies, both leading to better use of comparative advantages and a more effective interaction with Governments.

Bottom-up efforts must however be supported by sound institutional arrangements and policies, thus improving the impact of cooperation measures, and assuring a better sustainability of development interventions. This means that the procedures and regulations, under which the UN headquarters and agencies function and had been developed in a different set of circumstances, should adapt to the new reality. As the "Delivering as One" programme is moving forward, it is encountering constraints and limitations. In other words, further progress at the country level cannot alone advance operational activities. In order to deliver decisive results, UN headquarters must also step up their efforts.

In this regard, greater accountability of the RC and the UN Country team, as well as a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities, need to be ensured. The profile of the RC has to be strengthened further with the aim to provide him/her with adequate authority in order to provide leadership in strategic priority setting, ensuring strategic positioning of the UN system in supporting the countries' development objectives.

This stronger RC role needs, however, to be balanced by a well defined accountability system. In the very complex UN development system, greater authority does not come only from new roles and functions, but needs to be supported by trust of the UN bodies

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

of the function of the RC. In order to achieve this, the management of the RC system and the UNDP functions have to be separated, both at headquarters' level, as in the field.

The absence of an empowered RC complicates efforts to harmonise the work of UN agencies on the ground. A strong RC alone cannot, however, be the key to success. Further decentralisation of authority from headquarters to the country offices is also needed. Only a combination of the above will enable a change in the current pattern of behaviour, where individual UN bodies are still operating under regulations from their respective headquarters.

It is important to distinguish between decentralisation and lack of guidance, more inter-agency coordination and a faster response to the challenges facing the UN Country teams. It is vital for headquarters to align themselves to better support the new realities in the field, as requested by national governments. A clear signal must come from the headquarters in order to ensure a high degree of commitment of participating agencies at all levels.

The EU considers effective governance to be at the core of coherence. In order and to make the "One UN" a reality at all three levels, national, regional and global, the UN system has to ensure flexibility, coherence and consolidation, as well as responsiveness to the needs of pilot countries and other countries following a similar approach.

While coherence is increasing at the country level, it is less visible at the regional and headquarters level. Experiences from the pilot countries should guide us in further discussion on how to ensure effective oversight and accountability of the new approach, promote policy coherence and bring to a reduction of transaction costs. One of the main prerequisites for effective and efficient governance at all levels of the UN system are rationalisation and strengthening of existing structures for better policy coordination and coherence. The creation of new structures for the sake of reforming old ones may only add to overall complexity. At the same time, the assessment of implementation of decisions on the reform of ECOSOC needs to be taken into account.

In the longer run, appropriately adapted governance structures at various levels are one aspect of system-wide coherence which needs to be pursued with the aim of securing transparency, accountability and most importantly efficiency of the operational activities of the UN. In the meantime, joint meetings of governing boards could be used to discuss progress in the pilot countries and support coherent UN programming in general.

Changes may entail considerable adjustments for all actors: the UN, developing countries and donors alike. The UN Headquarters will have to ensure high flexibility and synergy with the field. UN Agencies will have to increase close coordination and collaboration with the rest of the UN system and the donors will need to change the funding to further align themselves with the principles of multilateralism. These alterations are indispensable if we are to improve the result-oriented management and effective delivery of the "One UN".

Thank you.