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Mission permanente de la Suisse
auprès des Nations Unies à New York

Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the
United Nations in New York

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62ème session de l'Assemblée générale

Consultations officieuses sur la cohérence à l'échelle du système des Nations Unies

**Déclaration
de
M. Thomas Gass**

**Mission permanente de la Suisse
auprès des Nations Unies à New York**

New York, le 28 mars 2008

Check against delivery

62nd session of the General Assembly

**Informal Meeting
System Wide Coherence**

**Statement by
Mr. Thomas Gass**

**Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations**

New York, March 28th 2008

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

The present statement builds on the one we made on 7th February, of which we have made available a few copies at the back of the room, for ease of reference.

Since 2005 the UN system and particularly the ExCom Agencies have made important steps towards a more coherent and better-performing United Nations country presence. The General Assembly has recently shown further commitment to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations Development system by endorsing in resolution 62/208 the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and its results matrix as the common programming tool, by recognizing the central role of the Resident Coordinator (RC) in making coordination possible and in reporting to National Authorities on progress made against the UNDAF, by reaffirming UNDP's role as manager of the RC system and by instructing the Administrator to establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the budgetary and substantive separation between the coordination and the programmatic function of UNDP, including through the appointment of Country Directors in the field.

Furthermore, the General Assembly noted the voluntary efforts undertaken to improve coherence, coordination and harmonisation of the UN Development System, including at the request of "pilot countries".

In regard to the initial commitments in the WSOD of 2005, we see three implementation gaps and two policy gaps that remain to be addressed.

The **first** implementation gap relates to the need to meet our leaders' mandate to "strengthen the senior resident official (..), including through appropriate authority, resources and accountability". We view this issue primarily as a management related question and would like to make the following points.

1. "Leadership" is a fundamental requirement to any efficient organization, both in terms of exercising guidance as well as being accountable for the performance of an entity. UN Country Teams cannot be an exception to this principle. "Leadership" is also a skill and we expect all Resident Coordinators to have it in order to be able to contribute to the enhanced effectiveness of the UN system at country level. This

implies appropriate and objective selection processes for RCs, as well as substantial training.

2. It cannot be overemphasized that all agencies should support the Resident Coordinator and give him the space to coordinate effectively. This implies a readiness by all headquarters to delegate relevant authority to the Resident Coordinator. To address the different concerns of specialized agencies, these should consider establishing Memoranda of Understanding with UNDP. Furthermore, given the wide range of functions performed by UNDP on behalf of the system, it may be useful to consider creating within UNDP an Assistant Administrator position, solely dedicated to overseeing these functions. In terms of assessing the performance of the Resident Coordinator, our view is that the existing procedures, particularly the 180° appraisal of the Resident Coordinator, provide sufficient and rather stringent conditions of mutual accountability.
3. UNDP should also demonstrate more visibly its commitment to withdrawing from the domains of expertise where the latter is readily available with specialized agencies, and to facilitating access of governments to the expertise of the wider UN system. However, this should not imply that non-resident specialized agencies have an automatic entitlement to expand their field presence at high cost.
4. Specialized agencies should take very seriously both the need to withdraw from their project approach and the importance of equipping their field representatives with the necessary tools to participate efficiently and meaningfully in the national planning processes – including appropriate delegation of power, adequate programming and budgeting approaches, and hosting arrangements with resident organization.

The aforementioned issues are well known to the General Assembly and we look forward to the annual report of the Secretary General to the forthcoming ECOSOC on these matters.

Creating a coherent, efficient and effective system also entails further efforts towards the lowering of transaction costs. There is still room for substantial progress and we echo the call made by member states in requesting the United Nations system to step up its efforts in this regard, such as through the conducting of joint missions, the use of national public and private systems for support services, including procurement, the reducing of parallel project implementation units etc.

Against this background, we see a **second** implementation gap related to the need to simplify and harmonize business practices among funds, programmes and specialized agencies at global, regional and country levels. If the United Nations are to be coherent and effective it is of prime importance to apply conducive practices, such as a unified accounting system, a standardized audit definition and rating, a harmonized approach to cash transfers, human resource management etc. We recognise that the HLCM of the CEB is pursuing these matters and hope that this process can be accelerated further.

This gap has been recognized by the General Assembly, not only through its call in 62/208 to continue the efforts in this regard, but also by asking funds, programmes and specialized agencies to annually report back on progress made to the ECOSOC at its substantive session.

The **third** implementation gap has to do with determining which resident and non-resident United Nations organization is best positioned to respond to specific needs and priorities of individual countries. The debate on this issue is fuelled by the dependency of specialized agencies on non-core funding and the fierce competition that results at country level. In our view, the fact that an agency has a “mandate” does not provide for its automatic qualification to delivering technical cooperation in this domain. Indeed, other factors count – such as the objective capacity of the agency to deliver, as well as the possible availability of such services from non-UN entities. However, we do have a political framework which clearly states that the lead in this decision should be in the hands of the recipient Government, based in particular on the priorities defined in the UNDAF and its results matrix. The UN development system needs to follow the guidance of the General Assembly in this regard and utilize the opportunities brought by this common programming tool for joint initiatives, including joint programming and hosting agreements.

In terms of policy, we see two specific gaps that should be addressed:

The **first** one relates to what our Leaders in 2005 called “a better coordination of our respective representation on the governing boards of the various development and humanitarian agencies”. While some steps have been undertaken to further strengthen governance and oversight of the UN operational system for development, this issue must be addressed if we want to assure a coherent policy in assigning mandates and allocating resources throughout the system. This may entail some

changes in the way we do business within the boards, to better support initiatives led by developing countries to increase the coherence of the UNCT at the country level.

The **second** one relates to the strengthening of the UN institutional gender architecture. Intergovernmental discussions showed that it is widely acknowledged that the existing architecture for gender equality and women's empowerment is fragmented, under-funded and, therefore, inadequate to effectively address General Assembly mandates on gender and women's issues. Switzerland welcomes the efforts undertaken by the UN Secretariat in providing member states with a concept note which includes a first analysis of possible options to strengthen the UN architecture for gender equality and the empowerment of women. This note is a good basis for further elaboration on this question, with a view to creating a new UN gender entity. We would call for additional analysis, paying particular attention to three issues: a) the need for a thorough analysis of existing duplications and possible synergies; b) the clarification of the question of accountability and responsibility of the head of such a new entity towards the other UN agencies, especially those with a strong gender mandate; c) the strengthening of the field level capacities of the UN system to more effectively reach the development objectives related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Distinguished Co-Chairs, we have attempted to show that the three key implementation gaps we referred to actually have very practical solutions, as well as an existing conducive political framework, and a review process which will allow a close follow-up of their implementation.

For the two policy gaps we highlighted, we suggest two separate consultation tracks which could, but do not necessarily have to, lead to the preparation of draft resolutions for submission to the General Assembly.

To conclude, we wish to reiterate our full support to the process you are leading and reiterate our confidence that you are guiding us in the right direction, in line with the commitments made by our Leaders in 2005, building on the existing political frameworks we have all agreed to and finding practical solutions to making the system more coherent, efficient and effective.

Thank you.