

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

100th meeting

Geneva, 21 September 2018

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Please check against delivery

UNECE and the regional review of the UN Development System

Presentation by Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary

Slide 1.

21 Septembre 2018 | Geneva



100th meeting of the Executive Committee of the ECE

Item 5: UNECE and the regional review of the UN Development System

Ms. Olga Algayerova
Executive Secretary

State of the UNDS reform and next steps



- **The repositioning of the UNDS envisages a revamping of regional structures (RECs and AFPs), recognising the specificities of each region**
- **A gradual approach: 1.immediate measures to be implemented now 2. longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of regional assets**
- **A review of RECs and AFPs providing options for phase 2 will be conducted starting in November 2018**
- **A SG report to be presented in the spring of 2019 and discussed at ECOSOC (May 2019)**

2

The General Assembly Resolution on *Repositioning the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development* adopted last May underlined the need to revamp the regional structures of the UNDS.

The aim is to address gaps and overlaps at the regional level in order to deliver more effective and consistent assistance to Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This revamping concerns not only the Regional Economic Commissions but also UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes operating at the regional level, i.e. the regional level as a whole will be considered.

The revamping has some key features:

- First, the specificities of each region are recognised;
- Second, the revamping will follow a phased approach.

In the first phase, a number of measures for immediate action have been identified to optimize functions and enhance collaboration at the regional and subregional levels. The implementation of these measures will be monitored over the coming months, as communicated to us by the head of the UNDS Transition Team. These mostly concern cooperation in the regional UN system. I will come back to it later.

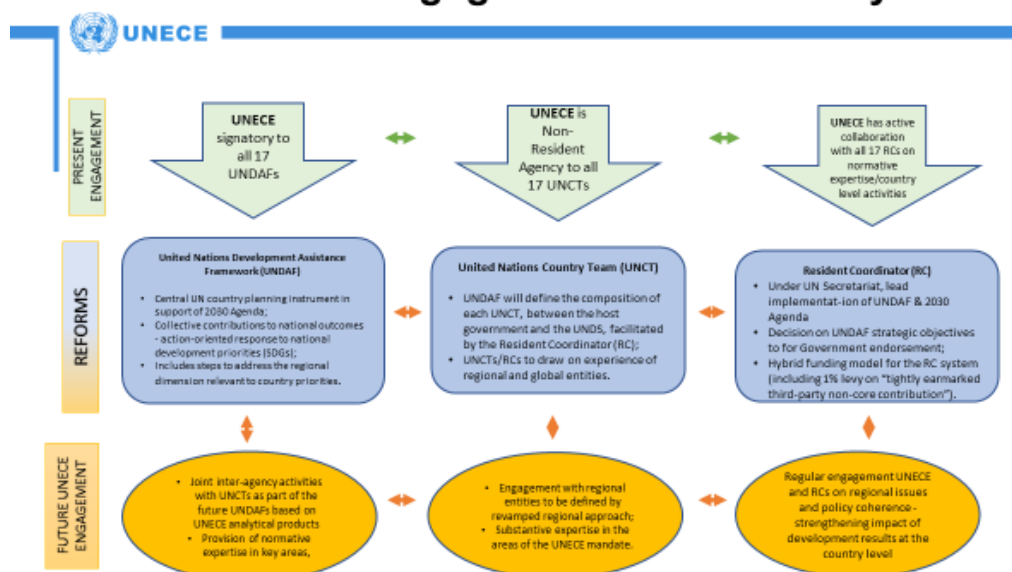
In the second phase, options for longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of the regional assets of the United Nations will be considered, on a region-by-region basis. This will not be

a one-size-fits-all exercise. The objective of this exercise is to provide more integrated policy advice from the regional level to the new Resident Coordinator system and to strengthen the cross-border and sub-regional work.

In order to identify and evaluate these options, a Task Team, with the help of a consultant, will be conducting a regional review of Regional Economic Commissions and Agencies, Funds and Programmes. Full details on this review are not yet available but the latest information indicated that the review will start in November 2018.

The report on the regional review will feed into the Secretary-General's report on *the longer-term reprofiling and restructuring of the regional assets of the United Nations* to be presented to Member States in the Spring of 2019 and formally discussed at ECOSOC in May 2019.

UNECE engagement at the Country-Level



The UNDS reform proposes three significant changes to UN operations at the national level; namely, the re-configuration of the UN Country Teams, a strengthened role of the UN Resident Coordinator, and a more strategic approach to the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).

UNECE has been a positive contributor to the work of the **UN Country Teams** at the national level, in line with the decision of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence (A/61/583). UNECE is signatory to all 17 UNDAFs in our region, and is the only regional commission which has made our engagement at the regional level directly tangible in the work of the UN Country Teams, and through the UNDAFs.

The present UNDS reform envisages a **strategic change to the composition of the UNCTs**. UNECE will continue to provide analytical and expertise to the UNCTs and the Resident Coordinators, with a particular focus on tackling transboundary issues, and ensuring policy coherence at all levels of the UNDS. For example, UNECE has both led, and participated in Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support (MAPS) missions, which provide an in-depth analysis for each country on potential accelerators for SDG achievement, and targeted solutions for addressing obstacles and bottlenecks.

UNECE has developed solid **relationships with the Resident Coordinators** in our region, which are the result of consistent and timely information sharing, communicating UNECE priorities as well as expertise available to the UNCT, and engagement through MAPs and other advisory missions. This will continue unchanged with the reforms.

UNECE has developed a positive reputation in the region for **working jointly with UNDP at the regional level**, connecting the intergovernmental platform with analytical and normative expertise, with the operational capacity of UNDP in the 17 programme countries. By way of example, a joint substantive report on progress on SDG achievement in the Western Balkans by UNECE and UNDP, together with UNRISD, will soon be published. Further, support to sub-regional activities including most recently enabling countries of the Western Balkans to share experiences and lessons learned on preparing VNRs, financing the 2030 Agenda, and designing effective government architecture for SDG coordination in Belgrade on 13-14 September, are the result of complementarity and cooperation between UNDP and UNECE. We believe that our efforts will be positively enhanced by the UNDS reforms.

UNECE assets and the revamping of the regional approach



UNECE

- Regional commissions perform three functions: think-tank (including normative work!), convening and operational
- UNECE has a varied membership, including both programme and non-programme countries
 - Operational work is particularly important for programme countries -but it is closely **linked** to UNECE normative activities
- Transboundary/regional dimensions are present across different strands of work

→ Strong potential for integration across functions, areas of work and countries

4

Regional Commissions, including UNECE, perform three core functions that contribute in different ways to the UNDS:

1. the think-tank function: generating different types of knowledge products and statistics to support the formulation of evidence-based public policies and developing norms, standards and conventions on the basis of this evidence;
2. the convening function: providing regional intergovernmental platforms to discuss transboundary regional and subregional issues and issues of common concern;
3. the operational function: providing policy advice through direct support to countries, upon request, on areas related to Regional Commissions' mandates; and implementing capacity development activities at regional, subregional and country levels, including through UNDAFs.

These three core functions are interconnected and have a diverse significance in each region, depending on the needs of member States and the relative strengths of the Regional Commissions.

UNECE membership is varied, including both programme and non-programme countries. UNECE members include 56 countries, of which 17 are programme countries with full-fledged UN presence, led by a UN Resident Coordinator together with a UN Country Team.

The significance of these three functions for each group of countries is also varied.

The core area of work of the UNECE, i.e. the development of norms and standards, concerns all its member States. Normative products, including our conventions, are developed drawing

on the collective intellectual resources and experiences of the broad UNECE membership. They are the ultimate result of the convening power of the UNECE, which reaches out well beyond programme countries. This convening power is also deployed to facilitate a policy dialogue and the monitoring of international commitments on different areas that concern all UNECE members.

Operational work and capacity-building activities are particularly significant for programme countries.

A critical feature of this operational work should be underlined: the existence of a close link with our normative activities. Capacity-building activities in programme countries seek generally to support the implementation of our normative products.

Another important characteristic of our work is the ability to directly target or include transboundary considerations in our activities.

Overall, we can say that UNECE has a strong integration potential across different dimensions – functions, sectors and countries



UNECE unique strengths

- **Functions** – ensuring close links between normative, convening and operational functions
- **Areas of work** – a varied portfolio that creates the basis for cross-sectoral activities (the nexus approach)
- **Countries and the region** – Working with countries with different needs while providing a transboundary/regional context

5

This potential for integration defined some UNECE unique strengths across three areas:

- Functions – ensuring close links between normative, convening and operational functions;
- Areas of work – its varied portfolio puts the organisation in a good position to carry out cross-sectoral activities. As I informed you in a previous session of EXCOM, we intend to exploit further cross-sectoral synergies through the nexus approach;
- Countries – we work with countries with different needs but we are also able to provide a regional/transboundary context for this work.

The optimization of regional coordination structures



UNECE

- **Two coordination mechanisms: Regional Coordination Mechanism and Regional UN Sustainable Development Group**
- **Most integrated form of collaboration takes place in the UNECE region:**
 - **joint meetings**
 - **issue-based coalitions**
 - **participation in RFSD of UN entities**
 - **partnerships and structured collaboration**
- **UNECE intergovernmental processes provide ground for synergies and complementarities**



A good starting point for reinforced policy coherence and stronger engagement with RC

6

I must start by saying that this is an area where we are well advanced.

At the regional level there are currently two coordination mechanisms for the UNDS:

- The Regional Coordination Mechanism established by the ECOSOC, which seeks to promote policy coherence of the United Nations at the regional level;
- The Regional UN Sustainable Development Group (R-UNSDG), which provides technical backstopping to the Resident Coordinator System and the UN Country Teams (UNCT), undertakes peer reviews of UNDAFs, enhances UNCT coordination and troubleshooting when necessary, and provides the annual performance review of the RCs and UNCTs.

Currently, Regional Commissions convene the RCM with various degrees of collaboration and coordination with the UNSDG. The UNECE region has the most integrated form of collaboration, as there are joint meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the Regional UN Sustainable Development Group. These meetings involve Regional Directors and equivalents of more than 20 UN entities in the region. They meet twice a year to coordinate cross-cutting activities, advocacy and country support with a focus on SDG implementation.

The existing practice of joint meetings has been acknowledged as a good model also for other regions:

Multi-partner Issue-based Coalitions that involve all relevant UN agencies but also reach out to non-UN partners have been created for improved collaboration and enhanced impact. Such coalitions have been established so far in the areas of health, social protection, gender, youth, migration and data.

Entities from the regional UN system are closely involved in the preparation of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region.

Overall, the status of collaboration among UN regional entities is positive and it has been marked by the absence of conflicts and a rather fluid and regular communication. The practice of joint meetings is an expression of the good history of collaboration, resulting in joint publications and advocacy documents for the 2030 Agenda and active participation in the Regional Forum by regional UN system entities and some RCs.

From a thematic point of view, the potential for overlap between the work of the UNECE and other UN entities is limited. In areas such as transport, environmental conventions or methodological work on statistics, for example, UNECE is the dominant or only regional actor. In addition, partnerships with other regional organizations avoid overlaps and play to the different strengths of the various partners involved. A paramount example is the long-standing collaboration with FAO, resulting in a Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Section located in Geneva. A close cooperation exists with UN Environment regarding our work on environment, which is enshrined in a memorandum of understanding.

An important structural feature is the fact that the work of UNECE is underpinned by intergovernmental processes that are lacking in other entities, which provides fertile ground for synergies and complementarities rather than conflict.

Overall, the institutional collaboration achieved so far and the relative pattern of specialization of the UNECE vis-à-vis other UN agencies in the region provides a good starting point for reinforced policy coherence and stronger engagement with Resident Coordinators to support their work in assisting member States in advancing the 2030 Agenda.

Some proposals for improved collaboration



- **More systematic knowledge exchange with RCs**
- **Develop a more integrated view of UNECE activities with each member State to be shared with Regional Directors and RCs**
- **RCs meeting back-to-back with the meetings of the regional coordination structure**
- **Opening of the RCM to DESA, as envisaged**
- **More systematic use of UNECE expertise (including its networks) by UNCTs**

7

Knowledge exchange with RCs should become more systematic, building on the current positive experiences. UNECE should develop a more integrated view of its activities with each of its member States and share this information with the Regional Directors and the RCs. All RCs of the region will be invited to participate in the Regional Forum. RCs could also hold a back-to-back meeting with the joint RCM-R-UNSDG meetings - or the meetings of a future single regional coordination structure - once a year, and should generally be more involved in these meetings. Opening the regional coordination meetings to the participation of DESA, as envisaged, would also improve the coordination and coherence between the global, national and regional levels. We will regularly inform member States about the outcomes of these meetings.

UNECE expertise in all its areas of work, including the huge network of technical experts, should be used more systematically by the UNCTs.

UNECE role and cooperation at the global level



UNECE

- **UNECE activities have a relevance beyond the regional level**
- **Cutting-edge normative work is a pacemaker for innovation and transformation for SDG implementation**
- **UNECE collaborates with the global level through various coordination structures (UN Water, UN Energy...)**
- **UNECE provides regional inputs to the global level (HLPF, gender and others)**

→ UNECE is a valuable part of the overall UNDS with distinctive expertise

8

We are a critical regional actor that can engage at the country level effectively. But let me share with you some reflections on UNECE's role at the global level.

Some of our activities have a relevance beyond the regional level. Just to mention a few examples. Countries outside the region are parties to some of our transport and environmental and conventions. Our statistical work is being developed with the help of non-UNECE countries and has a significance beyond the region. In trade and energy, normative products related to agricultural standards or resource classifications are used by non-UNECE actors.

We carry out cutting-edge normative work that is a pacemaker for innovation and transformation for SDG implementation.

And we are a worthy contributor to the coordination structures that exist at the global level, such as UN Water and UN Energy, based on the strength of our sectoral work.

We also deeply engaged in global mechanisms, including by providing regional inputs to the High-level Political Forum and monitoring progress in the implementation of global conferences by, for example, carrying out Regional reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Overall, I think we can conclude that the UNECE is a valuable part of the overall UNDS, contributing distinctive expertise in its mandated areas and effectively connecting the global, regional and national levels.

Some proposals to make UNECE expertise more widely used



UNECE

- **Sectoral committees to develop multisectoral initiatives (nexus) and other ways to increase impact of our products**
- **Deepening of partnerships for stronger uptake of UNECE instruments by beneficiaries**
- **Closer collaboration with academia**
- **More systematic sectoral briefings at UN headquarters to showcase our expertise and raise general awareness**

9

The regional review may present some opportunities to make UNECE expertise more widely known and used. To this end, some proposals could be explored, including:

- Sectoral committees could be tasked to devise concrete proposals for multisectoral initiatives, developing our nexus approach, and other ways to deepen the impact and reach of our products;
- Deepening of partnerships for stronger uptake of UNECE instruments by beneficiaries;
- Closer collaboration with academia, including through centres of excellence networks and partnerships with academic institutions;
- More systematic sectoral briefings at UN headquarters to showcase our expertise and raise general awareness.

Questions for discussion with member States



- **How does your delegation see UNECE's role in the revamped UNDS - at all levels (global, regional and national)? What does your delegation consider to be key assets of UNECE that provide special value added?**
- **How can UNECE's policy and technical expertise be harnessed even more effectively and more systematically in support of the new Resident Coordinator System and revamped UNDAFs at the country and subregional levels?**

10

The aim of this agenda item is to hear your views on the future revamping of the UNDS at the regional level. More specifically, I would like to pose these questions to start the discussion:

- How does your delegation see UNECE's role in the revamped UNDS- at all levels (global, regional and national)?
- What does your delegation consider to be key assets of UNECE that provide special value added?
- How can UNECE's policy and technical expertise be harnessed even more effectively and more systematically in support of the new Resident Coordinator System and revamped UNDAFs at the country and subregional levels?