

Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 on “Repositioning of the UN Development System”

Information Note

Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS – First Regular Session 2020

I. Introduction

1. UNOPS is pleased to provide its Executive Board with an update on its engagement in the repositioning of the UN Development System, supplementing earlier Information Notes presented to the Executive Board in 2019. UNOPS continues to engage in the reform process, providing contributions and inputs, and supporting implementation. It does so in close coordination with the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, and with the support of the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO).

II. Supporting the United Nations Resident Coordinator system

2. Management and Accountability Framework (MAF): Initial reports are that the country-level MAF has been well received overall, in particular the widened United Nations Country Team (UNCT) membership that is inclusive of UNOPS' efficient operating model as a non-resident UN entity. The regional- and global-level components of the MAF are still in the design phase, pending completion of the Regional Review process. UNOPS is looking forward to the continued consistent application of the MAF by all Resident Coordinators (RCs).
3. The generic job profile for UNOPS directors, both of country offices and multi-country offices, reflects accountability to the RC and participation in the UNCT. As per the standard performance management process, UNOPS performance appraisal requires input from primary supervisors, who in turn are obliged to consult with other feedback sources, including peers and partners or clients, as well as secondary supervisors, where applicable. UNOPS is part of a pilot to work with the Development Coordination Office on a new UN-wide approach to encourage more consistency and that the standardization of practice of mutual performance feedback at country level works also vis-à-vis the RC function, as envisaged by the MAF.
4. Funding, levy implementation, and cost sharing: As a project-based organization, UNOPS does not receive core funding from Member States and is paid for services rendered. As of January 2020, UNOPS has not signed agreements or received contributions that are subject to the 1% coordination levy in accordance with the operational guidance and its financial regulations and rules adopted by Executive Board decision 2012/5. As part of UNOPS' commitment to a repositioned United Nations development system, the double cost sharing contribution for 2020 has been paid in full.
5. Support to RC Pool: As of January 2020, one female UNOPS staff member left to serve the whole system as a Resident Coordinator. One UNOPS staff member remains in the pool of Resident

Coordinators. UNOPS is actively encouraging UNOPS staff to pursue RC roles as part of their career development, and supports their application to the RC pool.

III. Advancing system-wide support to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda at the country level


6. Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning and reporting through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs): As a demand-driven, self-financed organization with a non-programmatic implementation mandate, UNOPS does not frame its activities and contributions to helping countries achieve the SDGs through country programmes. UNOPS supports the Cooperation Frameworks via implementation. UNOPS country representatives engage directly with other UNCT members for the purpose of supporting the respective programmatic priorities and implement activities in areas of comparative advantage.
7. The organization has made available an analytic capacity for infrastructure assessment to inform the UNSDCF priorities via the Common Country Analysis (CCA). In order to improve UNOPS' analysis contribution for the Cooperation Framework, UNOPS has developed a Capacity Assessment Tool for Infrastructure (CAT-I) to help countries facilitate better infrastructure development. CAT-I is designed to help governments develop sustainable, resilient, human-centred and inclusive infrastructure by identifying gaps in their capacities to plan, deliver and manage their infrastructure systems. The availability of this tool is referenced in the CCA companion piece to the Cooperation Framework guidance.
8. UNOPS supported the preparation of the companion pieces to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance. UNOPS personnel at country level have also been actively involved in the field testing of all companion pieces to ensure that these 'how to' guides are 'go to' guides, which are practical and grounded in country level practice.
9. Tracking system-wide results at country level: UNOPS supports the development and roll-out of the data standards for system-wide reporting of financial data – 'The UN's future data cube'. For 2018, UNOPS reported segregated financial data in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
10. Improving SDG-related data and its analysis: With its implementation mandate, UNOPS can make direct and indirect contributions towards the achievement of all the SDGs. The steady demand for UNOPS to expand implementation capacity in relation to specific goals is indicative of areas where UNOPS has expertise and comparative advantage that can be leveraged by new and existing partners. In 2019, in partnership with the University of Oxford-led Infrastructure Transition Research Consortium (ITRC), UNOPS launched the SustainABLE tool (sustainable.unops.org), an online platform aiming to support the achievement of the SDGs through sustainable and inclusive projects. It showcases UNOPS' approaches and invites other UN entities to also share their best practices. The tool currently aims to look at two project types: infrastructure and procurement. The initial scope contains SDG5 on women's empowerment. Additional goals and sectors may be added going forward. The SustainABLE tool has four main objectives:
 - To provide explanations of the range and magnitude of influence that infrastructure and procurement projects can have on the different targets of the SDGs;

- To provide a range of project practitioners with recommended actions through the infrastructure project and procurement cycle to ensure that these support the achievement of all SDG targets related to a determined theme.
- To inform the international community on the relation that exists between critical development themes, such as women's empowerment, environmental protection, and disaster risk reduction, and the targets of the SDGs.
- To provide a platform for knowledge sharing with case studies and good practices in project development to support the achievement of the SDGs as part of the Agenda 2030.

11. Capacity development of staff: In a recent example of capacity development of personnel, UNOPS hosted an internal workshop to determine how we can best contribute to the new UNSDCF's focusing on the role of the Common Country Analysis. The aim of the workshop was to practically train colleagues on the UNOPS CAT-I concept and determine how we can improve and refine tools to better meet the demands of Member States and the UN system with respect to meeting the Decade of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
12. UNOPS has two personnel trained as Trainers of Trainers for the UNSDCF. As further training takes place, we hope to expand and roll out further capacity development especially for the regional workshops.

IV. Advancing business operations and common premises

13. Efficiencies from the Business Operations Strategy (BOS): Following a comprehensive review of UNOPS' governance, risk and compliance framework in 2017, the organization established, among others, a Shared Services Centre. This brought together existing business units focused on integrated policy advice and support on the one hand and transactional support services on the other hand. By end-2018, this new function was well established, providing services to UNOPS country offices and, for select service lines such as personnel administration and management, also to UNOPS partners globally. To best deliver large-scale and high volume services on behalf of partners, UNOPS utilizes standardized and unified systems and processes to ensure the highest quality of services and cost-effectiveness. As part of the Marketplace Survey, conducted by the Business Innovations Group (BIG) to explore consolidation of location-independent business operations into a network of shared service centres, UNOPS conducted a high-level review of the services the organization would be able to offer to other parts of the UN system if requested. UNOPS stands ready to provide support to location-independent business operation processes through its Shared Services Centre in Bangkok.
14. In November 2019, the BOS Task Team under the BIG was established to oversee the BOS roll-out at the country-level and provide guidance to UNCTs. UNOPS has a focal point assigned to the BOS Task Team and is in the process of preparing guidance for engagement in country-level BOS development and implementation.
15. Moving toward common premises: UNOPS is part of the Task Team on Common Premises and Facilities Management and is promoting co-location of its facilities with other entities of the United Nations system at capital and subnational level where feasible. UNOPS shares a significant proportion of common premises in its office locations. UNOPS' Peace and Security Cluster which supports and implements United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) programmes and projects, and UNOPS' Sustainable

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Development Cluster which provides, among others, grant management services, share common premises in over 80 per cent of their office locations.

V. Ensuring fit-for-purpose country and regional presence

16. UNOPS has a demand-driven business model and status as a self-financed non-programmatic service-oriented entity. UNOPS does not have country programmes and is commonly a non-resident agency. The organization's hub structure allows starting up and closing down operations with agility – a scalable concept that is critical for efficiency and effectiveness.

VI. Conclusion

17. UNOPS' continued commitment to the UN development system reform is demonstrated through our active participation at the working level in the various results groups, including being the only organisation other than the co-chairs of WFP and UNHCR who is represented by our Executive Director for the Business Innovation Group.
18. UNOPS continues to speak to efficiency, effectiveness and quality. We remain firm in the belief that our comparative advantage is in demonstrating that the way the UN operated traditionally can change and must. UNOPS has found that permanent physical country presence is often counterproductive to efficiency. Embracing technology and innovation has allowed UNOPS to be flexible and have scalability when needed to respond to partners' needs. We remain confident that the most valuable role we can play in reform is by enabling others in the UN system to be more efficient with available resources, and therefore effective in the impact of work and all underpinned by quality.
19. UNOPS looks forward to engagement with the Executive Board on all aspects of UNDS reform implementation throughout the year ahead, building on good discussions in 2019.