

COUNCIL
108th session
Agenda item 15(a)

C 108/15(a)
1 May 2012
Original: ENGLISH

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

(a) Relations with the United Nations and the specialized agencies

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document reports on the outcome of the 2012 first (Spring) session of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), held in Geneva, Switzerland on 13 and 14 April 2012

Strategic direction: 1.1

High-level action: 1.1.2

Planned output: Cooperation with the UN bodies and agencies

Action to be taken: Paragraph 8

Related documents: None

Introduction

1 The 2012 Spring session of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) was held in Geneva, Switzerland, under the chairmanship of Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) and was attended by the Secretary-General.

2 During the first part of the formal session, the Board was briefed by the Chair of the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) (Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme), the Vice-Chair of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) (Ms Jan Beagle, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS) and the Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (Miss Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme) on the work of their respective bodies; these reports were endorsed by CEB. Issues of system-wide concern were then taken up.

3 As usual, the formal session was followed by a private meeting and a retreat.

Formal session

4 In the context of the HLCP report, the Board was informed that final preparations for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, also referred to as "Rio +20") had been at the forefront of the Committee's work. This issue was discussed at CEB under "issues of system-wide concern" and took up most of the formal session's time.

5 The UNCSD's Secretary-General, Mr. Sha Zukang, provided an update in relation to the finalization of a UN document to be submitted to the Conference, covering the green economy, the institutional framework for sustainable development and the so-called "sustainable development goals". Mr. Steiner (UNEP) advised that a high-level CEB side-event was under consideration. A CEB joint statement and a document entitled "The Oceans Compact: Healthy Oceans for Prosperity", which include input provided by IMO, is attached for information in the annex.

6 The CEB was advised that the HLCM's Vice-Chair had chaired its most recent session, as the Chair, Ms. Josette Sheeran, whose mandate as Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme was due to expire shortly, was unable to attend. Mr. Francis Gurry, Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, will take over as HLCM Chair. Change management had been one of the most prominent topics on the HLCM agenda; the Committee had been informed of the IMO Secretary-General's review and reform process and its similarities with the UN's "Change Plan". This topic was further debated at CEB at a breakfast session. The UN Secretary-General announced that the consolidation of the CEB Secretariat in New York, which HLCM had also considered, would be discussed at the CEB's Fall session, later this year.

Retreat

7 The Retreat focused on youth in sustainable development.

Action requested of the Council

8 The Council is invited to note the information provided in this document and its annex, and to comment as it may deem appropriate.

ANNEX



UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CEB

Chief Executives Board
for Coordination
Spring 2012 Regular Session

17 April 2012

CEB Joint Statement to Rio +20

1. We, members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board, are strongly committed to the success of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20). We recognize that sustainable development has been an overarching goal of the international community since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. We urge world leaders who will gather at Rio+20 to renew the political commitment towards this goal so as to reset the world on a sustainable development path.

2. We reaffirm the continuing validity of the UNCED outcomes. Sustainable development, with its interlinked economic, social and environmental pillars, remains a top priority for our organizations.

Progress towards sustainable development

3. In the two decades since the UNCED, the world has undergone tremendous change. We have added nearly one and a half billion people to the planet – around a billion in our cities – and brought hundreds of millions of people out of the worst kind of poverty. Yet more needs to be done. Actions taken today and during the next decades will define our population future.

4. Many people now live longer and healthier lives, child mortality rates have declined substantially. Maternal mortality has fallen, more women have access to reproductive health services, more children and young people – boys and girls alike – are attending and completing school. There has been considerable progress in empowering women and disadvantaged groups. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are broadening people's horizons, improving their education and expanding their choices.

5. We acknowledge the broad progress that has been made in many regions, including in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, despite the gains, we observe massive disparities between and within regions and countries.

New global landscape

6. We have witnessed a redesign of the global political and economic landscape with a new set of pace-setters and change-makers, including dynamic developing countries, and within countries, women and youth in particular.

7. However, the benefits of globalization have not been shared equally. Economic growth has not generated sufficient jobs in the quantity and quality needed. High youth unemployment and gender inequality persist, dimming the aspirations of a generation. The voices of women and youth are still too often not sufficiently taken into account in decision-making.

8. Nearly one billion people go hungry. Some 200 million children suffer stunting. We urge world leaders to redouble efforts to eradicate hunger and realize food and nutrition security for all. We call for scaled-up investments in social protection, safety nets and food assistance programs as well as in sustainable agricultural production, to ensure that nutritious food is available and accessible for all, particularly the most vulnerable people.

International cooperation and action

9. We need to reinvigorate Agenda 21's global partnership for sustainable development and significantly scale up our achievements to date. We have no time to waste.

10. We recognize that addressing long-term threats to human and ecological well-being through international cooperation and action has been difficult. Governments are often pressed to cope with immediate domestic socioeconomic difficulties and the aftermaths of disasters. However, it is equally important to be mindful of inter-generational equity and protecting our planetary home.

11. Countries have reduced fatalities from disasters thanks to growing prosperity and progress in science and technology. Yet many environmental challenges require urgent international cooperation and action to avoid catastrophic damage to the planet we leave to our descendants. A binding agreement to limit greenhouse gases emissions must quickly be reached to prevent mass migration and displacement from climate change impacts.

Revisiting the current economic model

12. The multiple global crises have brought into question our current volatile economic model which has neglected natural resources impacts and social justice. Food and fuel crises have particularly highlighted the risks arising from resource constraints such as energy. A new development model is now needed centered on the planet, its people, and on fairness, with full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

13. We recognize that broad-based economic growth has been and continues to be the most effective contributor to poverty eradication. But meeting the needs of a growing world population requires a more balanced distribution of resources.

14. Growth in the 21st Century must use far less energy and resources, pollute less, generate sufficient decent work, and include all sectors of the population, including women and youth. We see an inclusive green economy, enabled by sufficient institutional and policy space, as a tool that provides such growth.

15. We recognize sustainable consumption and production patterns and trade as enablers of such growth. Policies must avoid trade protectionism and negative impacts especially on the poor and vulnerable groups and on the livelihood potential of future generations.

16. Nations will need to overcome a number of hurdles – financial, technological and institutional – to make the most of the opportunities that a green economy might offer so as to benefit all sectors of society, including the poor and most vulnerable. Capacity-building in the areas of science, technology and innovation in developing countries – enabled through increased support from the international community, and facilitated by ICTs – is needed to smooth the transition to sustainable development.

Goals, accountability, and measuring progress

17. We are heartened that momentum is building for agreeing at Rio+20 to define sustainable development goals (SDGs). These will need to complement and reinforce the MDGs, which have been instrumental in advancing poverty eradication and social development. The SDGs should form part of an integrated, coherent agenda for addressing the critical changes of the post-2015 period.

18. We stress that a key feature of SDGs should be that, while respecting national sovereignty and policy space as well as common but differentiated responsibilities and other UN principles, they would apply to all countries and unite them in common efforts to tackle sustainable development challenges. We strongly emphasize that many developing countries will continue to need financial and technological support in their efforts to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development.

19. Our hope is that Rio +20 will deliver a firm commitment in this regard and identify the critical areas for the further careful elaboration of goals by an agreed deadline.

20. A number of priority issues have emerged which might serve as the basis for identifying sustainable development goals at Rio +20. Among these are: equity, poverty, decent jobs, sustainable agriculture and food security, energy, water, sanitation, climate change, oceans, sustainable cities, sustainable transport, tourism, disaster risk reduction, health including reproductive health, population, education, including for sustainable development, science, culture, youth, access to information, gender equality and women's empowerment and better indicators, accounting frameworks, and analytical tools for progress, based on more and better data, taking into account the needs of people today and in coming generations.

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

21. Rio+20 provides an opportunity to strengthen the institutional framework for effective coordination and support to Member States in achieving sustainable development.

22. We urge world leaders to commit and follow through in integrating the three pillars of sustainable development, accelerating implementation and improving coherence of actions among all actors, including different parts of the UN system and the international financial institutions. We urge that the integration of the pillars be reflected in improved and integrated decision-making at all levels, reflecting the voices and fostering the participation of all major groups of society, including women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, workers and trade unions, business and industry, farmers, local authorities and the scientific and technological communities.

23. We call for putting in place a strengthened institutional framework to advance integration, implementation and coherence and for concrete proposals to make that happen. A number of governments and civil society organizations are calling for a Sustainable Development Council. Others propose a high-profile body for sustainable development. Many advocate strengthening the General Assembly and ECOSOC to guide and promote sustainable development. Many also propose the strengthening of UNEP.

UN system coherence

24. We must better organize expertise within the UN system and the international community to deliver coordinated and coherent policy advice, capacity-building, and finance to governments to assist them with the design and implementation of public policies and strategies for sustainable development.

25. These issues require a coordinated approach by the UN system, stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector, to find joint innovative and lasting solutions to the challenges of sustainable development.

26. Rio +20 should identify a framework of action and seek a substantial increase and allocation of new, additional, predictable, and adequate financial resources, official development assistance (ODA), grants and credits and investment – particularly for social sectors, including women and youth, and for the development of infrastructure and productive capacities--in order to support the implementation of national policies and development strategies in developing countries.

Reviving the spirit of Rio

27. We also reaffirm the importance of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, as well as gender equality and of a commitment to just, equitable and democratic societies for sustainable development. We urge world leaders to achieve ratification of and universal participation in all the treaties and conventions promoting the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, including those relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as workers and migrants rights, rights of refugees, stateless and internally displaced persons, and rights of women, children and youth, as well as to natural resources, international transport, oceans and seas and land use.

28. Rio+20 must provide the roadmap to the future we want – a future with peace, dynamic economic and social development, universal social well-being, and a healthy and equitable environment for present and future generations where women and men, boys and girls equally contribute to and benefit from development.

29. Rio+20 must revive the "spirit of Rio" and be a development implementation conference. It must result in a compelling political document that must be accompanied by actions.

30. Let all states and stakeholders also come to Rio +20 ready to announce and launch new voluntary initiatives for sustainable development that will make a measurable difference to peoples' lives and the welfare of ecosystems.

31. As Chief Executives of the UN System, it is our sincere hope that the outcomes of Rio+20 will rise to these challenges.