



International Chamber of Commerce

The world business organization

Department of Policy and Business Practices

ICC comment on “Delivering as one”: Report of the UN Secretary-General’s high-level panel on UN system-wide coherence

Prepared by the Commission on Environment & Energy

A strong, efficient and effective United Nations (UN) in the areas of sustainable economic and social development and environmental management is central to the interests of business.

Sustainable economic growth is vital for all countries and is a major contribution to the eradication of poverty. The UN has a critical role in promoting international cooperation and actions as steps to solving global challenges of economic, social and environmental sustainability, and moving towards prosperity and progress. All concerned actors should be involved in the attainment of these objectives and it should be recognized that business has a particular role to play in terms of policy implementation.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) therefore strongly supports the need for better coordination and efficiency within the UN in the areas of sustainable economic and social development, and environmental management. The need for coherence and efficiency through elimination of fragmentation and duplication of effort was one of the principal points made in the world business message on the role of the UN in the 21st century, submitted to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the occasion of the UN Millennium Assembly.

Further, ICC generally welcomes the recommendations of the high-level panel on UN system-wide coherence looking to the consolidation of UN programme activities at the country level in line with own national priorities; and the establishment of a UN Sustainable Development Board at headquarters to provide oversight of the consolidated country programmes, system-wide coherence, and monitoring of the UN's global activities.

It is with concern that we note the omission of reference to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). This is especially important to mention as the UN CSD was enhanced through Agenda 21 and validated at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development to oversee, encourage and facilitate the activities of national governments, NGO constituencies and major groups, and partnerships to promote sustainable development. Of further concern is the lack of discussion on the relationship between UN CSD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the policymaking area.

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We respectfully submit the following comments with regard to three specific recommendations in the Report:

- *“UNEP to be upgraded with real authority as the environmental policy pillar...”*

We have followed with interest the ongoing building of capacity within UNEP in technical and scientific capacities, and would support its continuation. We have also been aware of UNEP’s efforts to expand their role into areas outside of the environment. This appears to create redundancies with other organizations as well as to divert resources from UNEP’s core mandate. We would also observe that existing environmental treaties already encompass the most influential and authoritative sources of policy for the areas which they cover. In our view the mandate of UNEP should explicitly include the understanding that UNEP would work in concert with these independent and authoritative legal frameworks.

- *“Efficiencies and substantive coordination should be pursued by diverse treaty bodies to support effective implementation of major multilateral environmental agreements.”*

Such efficiencies and substantive coordination are desirable, provided that the independent “sovereignty” of respective treaties is preserved.

We agree that as the major financial mechanism for the global environment, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) should be strengthened to help developing countries build their capacity. This should also be in conjunction with simplified procedures for accessing GEF funding to encourage developing countries to take up such opportunities.

- *“The Secretary General should commission an independent assessment of the current UN system of international environmental governance.”*

It is not clear against which benchmarks or criteria this assessment would be undertaken. To be meaningful, an assessment should also consider the context in which implementation occurs – national circumstances, other regulatory frameworks and the degree to which they enable or disable effective implementation, and the role of non-governmental stakeholders, including business. Moreover, the question at hand should not be limited to efficiency, but also to effectiveness in terms of results and cost. We would call for the avoidance as far as possible of new institutional mechanisms and governance structures, believing that restructuring within the current mechanism will yield excellent results.

In enhancing the principle of “delivering as one” within the UN system, it is crucial to consider the relationship between UN bodies and other multilateral bodies in order to improve coherence and avoid conflicting overlaps.

