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**Enhancing Coordination and Synergy
between the RCM and RDT in Africa**

1. Introduction

a. Background

1. There is an ever-increasing premium placed on the goal of improved coordination among UN agencies as a means of enhancing UN coherence and getting the highest possible value on the ground from limited resources. The SG's High Level Panel on system-wide coherence¹ highlighted the fragmented and weak nature of UN's work on development and environment. Moreover the Panel noted that "even when mandates intersect UN entities tend to operate alone with little synergy and coordination between them", and this "loss of cohesion prevents the UN from being more than the sum of its parts." It is therefore believed that 'Delivering as One', and overcoming systemic fragmentation, could deliver better focus on performance, efficiency, accountability and results within the UN system and enhance the role and voice of developing countries. Indeed, this is the very essence of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and the Concept of "One UN" at the country level.
2. The premium on greater coherence is not only true for interagency coherence but it is also true for the linkages between coordination mechanism such as RCMs and RDTs where there is significant potential for wasteful overlap and duplication in scope. In this regard, the Secretary General of the UN had this to say in Bangkok in December 2007: "I would like to see greater alignment of this RCM with the RDT of the UNDG EXCOM agencies, and I also encourage you to begin discussions on integrating the work of non-resident and regional agencies in national processes."
3. Against this background, this short paper summarizes the findings of a study² commissioned by the Executive Secretaries of Regional Commissions on strengthening coherence at the regional level. Although the paper highlights the recommendations of the study it is primarily designed to stimulate further discussion on how to improve coordination and synergy between the RCM and RDT.

b. Current situation

4. The natural question to ask in trying to find ways of improving coordination and synergy between the RCM and RDT is: What is the current situation? The answer is that in light of the short formal existence of the RDTs, collaboration between the RCMs and RDTs is an "emerging" issue that currently varies across regions. To summarize the relationship between the RDT and RCM varies across regions and there is no formal linkage between the two mechanisms.

¹ United Nations (2006), "Delivering as one": Report of the UN Secretary-General's high-level panel on UN system-wide coherence. November 2006.

² A study on "UN coherence at the regional level: synergies and complementarities between the Regional Coordination Mechanism and Regional Directors' Team" by Mr. Anil Sood, Consultant (July 2008).

5. The Latin America and Caribbean RDT was the first to include ECLAC as part of its membership. The region has also “pioneered” the format of “back-to-back” annual meetings of the RDT and RCM over the past two years. Aside from this Latin American and Caribbean example, there is no consistent, regular linkage between the RCMs and the RDTs and hence no opportunity to discuss and maximize synergies in their respective workplans and explicitly avoid duplication/overlaps.

2. Recommendation of the Study

6. In July 2008 the five UN regional commissions carried out a study that would identify potential synergies and complementarities, and propose a division of labour between the two UN system mechanisms for regional coordination, with the aim of improving system-wide coherence of the United Nations development work at the regional level. Before summarizing the recommendations of the study on which this paper is based, we need to identify some of the basic principles upon which coherence between the RCM and RDT should be based.

a. Guiding Principles

7. The fundamental principles that should be kept in mind when considering the coordination/synergy between the RDTs and RCMs include:
 - Coordination is intended for a specific objective—avoiding overlap, maximizing synergy and thus ensuring the highest combined value-added from limited resources;
 - Processes for coordination should be “light” and not, in any way, add to existing Bureaucracy;
 - Coordination is a mutual responsibility between the RCMs and RDTs and should be based on stronger, 2-way collaborative interaction;
 - The relative positioning and division of labor between the RCMs and RDTs should be based on clear, distinct roles deriving from their respective mandates; it is particularly important to avoid issues with respect to the RCMs’ clear regional and policy mandate on the one hand, and the RDTs’ clear Resident Coordinator/UNCT oversight mandate on the other.
8. Finally, it should be noted that coordination is a UN-wide objective undertaken in the interest of all agencies, and is thus a responsibility that must be shared among the RCM, RDT and their respective members.

b. Existing Modalities for RCM-RDT Linkages

9. The key to a structured and effective co-habitation and coordination between the RCM and RDT lies in the collaboration between the Regional Commissions (ECA in the case of Africa) and UNDP in light of their critical roles in the RCMs and RDTs respectively and in the UN system more generally. In light of this, effective collaboration between ECA and the UNDP can significantly enhance coordination at the regional level. However, the relationship between the Regional Commissions and the corresponding Regional Bureau of UNDP varies across the regions.
10. In 2006, the High-level Panel on system-wide Coherence called for UN regional setting to be reorganized around the catalytic role to be played by the Regional Commissions and UNDP. The Regional Commissions and UNDP reconfirmed their commitment to collaboration through an Umbrella Agreement signed in October 2007 (which superseded the Strategic Compact signed between them in 2000). The agreement specifically calls among other things for:
 - The Regional Commissions to continue to organize annual RCMs in consultation with UNDP, which is to participate in the meetings at senior level;
 - The Regional Commissions to participate as observers in relevant segments of UN Resident Coordinator/resident representative meetings and for UNDP to facilitate Regional Commission contributions to UNDG regional structures (importantly, the RDTs which are emerging as the key UNDG “regional structure”);
 - The Regional Commissions and UNDP to hold annual consultations at the global and regional levels, the former at the level of Executive Heads.
11. Hence, the Umbrella Agreement already provides fully for the means and mechanisms for effective collaboration between the Regional Commissions and UNDP as well as for effective communication and coordination between RCMs and RDTs. The challenge then is to fully operationalize this agreement—consistently in all regions.
12. The Agreement has a broad scope and specifically recognizes “support to regional coordination mechanisms with the aim of maximizing the complementarities between the Regional Commissions and UNDP”, as well as cooperation at country, regional and global levels. This umbrella agreement provides a solid platform for the relationship between the Regional Commissions and UNDP, which, in turn should form the foundation for a solid relationship between the RCM and RDT.

c. Proposed recommendations

13. Based on the aforementioned principles and agreements, to strengthen the linkage between RCM and RDTs it is recommended that:
 - Both sides ensure a clear “division of labor” between the RCM and the RDT as reflected in Table 1. The recommended division of labor can be broadly summarized as:

- On geography RDTs focus on country and RCMs on the regional/subregional agenda, including its linkage to, and integration into, country level development work;
- On function—RDTs focus on operations and RCMs on policy, normative and analytical work;
- On the country theme matrix—RDTs focus on countries and RCMs on themes.

Table 1: Proposed Division of Labour

Dimension	RCMs	RDTs
Geographical	Region/Sub-region Should link to and integrate into country-level development work	Country
Functional	Policy, Normative and Analytical work	Operations
Focus	Thematic	Country

14. It is clearly understood that there necessarily will be “grey” areas around this delineation in Table 1 as things are not as clear cut in reality as they appear in theory. The operationalization of regional and trans-boundary programmes at the country-level would fall within the scope of RCMs. Support through the Regional Economic Communities in Africa toward regional integration is an example of such a regional programme.

- RCMs should seek to coordinate their workplans to ensure highest combined value added (and to address any grey areas) on an ongoing basis, with those of the RDTs. The back-to-back annual meetings of the RDT and RCM pioneered in the Latin America and Caribbean region, together with crossparticipation in other meetings, could provide the means for such a linkage, as could regular attendance of the Regional Commissions (also representing the RCM) at the RDTs.
- Regional Commissions (ECA) should build and maintain an effective, close and reciprocal relationship with UNDP in light of their respective leadership roles in the RCMs and RDTs; they should also seek to strengthen relations with the regional arms of other agencies.
- Regional Commissions (ECA) should consult with UNDP in the preparation of the Annual meeting of the RCMs.
- UNDP (and UNDG) should confirm the shared understanding of the respective roles of the RCM and RDT.

- RDTs should enhance potential synergy and avoid duplication and overlap and adapt the measures to the specific context of each region (Africa).
- Finally, actions with respect to synergy with RDTs that have been outlined would benefit from support from UN leadership, starting with the DSG (as chair of the RCM) and the UNDG Chair.

3. Next Steps

- Discussion to take place between the Executive Secretaries (as coordinators of the RCMs) and the RDT chairs with regards to establishing a formal linkage and agree on the actions related to improving synergy/coordination between the two mechanisms.
- Regional Commissions (ECA) and other RCM members should help disseminate knowledge of the potential contribution of the RCM, particularly to UNCTs and the CEB machinery.
- Members of the RCM should also consider the following course of action.
 - Discuss the RCM model/approach and recommended actions with the DSG and with the UNDG Chair.
 - Pursue through RCNYO ongoing efforts for integration of the RCM into the CEB Architecture.