



*executive committee of
the directing council*

**PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

*working party of
the regional committee*

**WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**



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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Resolution 44/211 of the United Nations General Assembly was sent to all the member agencies of the System for their consideration.

The WHO Executive Board will analyze the observations of the Regional Offices and their Governing Bodies in January 1991.

The complete text of the resolution is attached for preliminary information purposes, and to elicit the comments and suggestions of the PAHO Executive Committee.

In December 1989 the United Nations General Assembly approved Resolution 44/211, the text of which was subsequently distributed to all the member agencies of the System on 23 February 1990.

The Director-General of WHO suggested that the Regional Directors report to the Ministers of Health in this regard, calling attention in particular to paragraphs 13 through 26. The resolution will be discussed by the WHO Executive Board in January 1991.

The resolution in question is rather long and complex. The preamble has 27 paragraphs, which emphasize that "national plans and priorities constitute the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of operational activities for development of the United Nations System" (fourth paragraph of the preamble).

The representatives of the Member States that adopted the resolution apparently regarded all the specialized agencies as similarly dependent on the General Assembly, when in fact WHO and the Regional Offices, PAHO in particular, have constitutional mandates that are different from other agencies in the System in terms of their decentralized structure and the provision of direct technical cooperation for the countries. In this regard, national plans and priorities are essential for technical cooperation at the national level, inasmuch as they are based both on programming that has been discussed with each

country individually and on subregional and regional priorities that have been set with the full participation of the Member Countries.

The preamble is followed by 34 operative paragraphs which focus, in general, on the aspects mentioned. Paragraph 17 proposes that an independent study be conducted to improve coordination in the System, and paragraph 29 calls for follow-up of the resolution and the presentation of reports on its application over the next three years.

In conclusion, apparently there is a lack of awareness in the UN of the relatively decentralized structure of WHO (its Regional Offices and Country Representative Offices). In the Region of the Americas important experience is being gained in the programming and evaluation of technical cooperation (AMPES system) and advances have been made in the coordination of efforts among the agencies that operate at the country level.

Annex



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/RES/44/211
23 February 1990

Forty-fourth session
Agenda item 86

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[on the report of the Second Committee (A/44/863)]

44/211. Comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 2688 (XXV) of 11 December 1970, 32/197 of 20 December 1977, 41/171 of 5 December 1986, 42/196 of 11 December 1987 and 43/199 of 20 December 1988,

Taking note of the report prepared by the United Nations Population Fund on the review and assessment of population programme experience, 1/ pursuant to the request contained in resolution 43/199,

Reaffirming the exclusive responsibility of the Government of the recipient country for formulating its national development plan, priorities or objectives, as set out in the consensus of 1970 contained in the annex to its resolution 2688 (XXV), and emphasizing that the integration of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system with national plans and objectives would enhance the impact and relevance of those activities,

Reaffirming also that national plans and priorities constitute the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

1/ A/44/432, annex.

Reaffirming further that the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should be, inter alia, their universality, their voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and multilateralism, and their ability to respond to the needs of the developing countries in a flexible manner, and that the operational activities of the United Nations system are carried out for the benefit of the developing countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development,

Recognizing the different and complex situations and conditions that exist in developing countries and the consequent need for the activities of the United Nations development system to respond effectively to them,

Recognizing also the urgent and specific needs of the least developed countries,

Aware of the acute problems of island and land-locked developing countries and their particular needs for development to overcome their economic difficulties,

Recalling the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, 2/

Recalling also its resolution 42/231 of 12 May 1988 on the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America,

Concerned about the worsening economic and social situation of many developing countries,

Stressing the need for a significant increase in real terms in the overall resources available for development co-operation, taking into account the economic problems of developing countries, the economic capacities of developed countries and recent developments in international relations, which may have an impact on resources available for development, and emphasizing in this respect the need to increase the grant element of development co-operation resources,

Concerned that the resources available for operational activities are insufficient in relation to the requirements of developing countries,

Stressing the consequent need for a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries, and emphasizing the special needs of the least developed countries,

Recalling the role of the United Nations Development Programme as the central funding mechanism for the United Nations system of technical co-operation, the full potential of which has not yet been realized,

2/ Resolution S-13/2, annex.

Recognizing the need to reorient operational activities in order to strengthen and utilize fully national capacities in all aspects of the programme and project cycle,

Stressing that co-ordination in funding arrangements and procedures of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should minimize the administrative and financial burden on recipient Governments in their endeavours effectively to monitor and co-ordinate programmes and projects and should maximize their complementarities and avoid duplication, so as to increase the positive impact of such activities on the development of developing countries,

Stressing also that government/national execution and full utilization of national capacities would contribute to ensuring that programmes and projects are managed in an integrated manner and to promoting their long-term sustainability and wider impact on the development process,

Emphasizing the need to increase and strengthen the promotion and implementation of technical co-operation among developing countries on a priority basis, through the rapid and full implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, 3/ in order to enhance the capacities and collective self-reliance of developing countries,

Emphasizing also the need to further decentralize capacity and authority in the United Nations system to the country level in order to increase responsiveness to the needs of developing countries, enhance coherent and efficient programming and resource utilization, achieve the objectives of programmes and projects, and strengthen and utilize national capacity,

Emphasizing further that the range and quantity of skills and expertise assembled by the United Nations system at the country level, under the team leadership of the resident co-ordinator, should correspond to the multisectoral and sectoral technical backstopping needs and requirements of developing countries and should be within the framework of the respective government programme of co-operation of the United Nations system, rather than to the institutional structure of the United Nations system,

Reaffirming the need to promote the full integration of women in all aspects of the development process in accordance with the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, 4/

3/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, Buenos Aires, 30 August-12 September 1978 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.78.II.A.11 and corrigendum), chap. I.

4/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

Affirming the need to promote the survival, protection and development of children and youth and the full integration of their concerns in the development process of the developing countries,

Recognizing the importance of regional, interregional and global co-operation for solving common problems in the light of current concern for global, regional and subregional problems,

Affirming the responsibility of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation for leadership in promoting the coherence, co-ordination and effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

Welcoming the positive reaction of the governing bodies of the organizations of the United Nations development system to the conclusions and recommendations 5/ contained in the report on the case studies undertaken in 1987 and in General Assembly resolution 42/196 adopted subsequently,

Taking note with appreciation of the decision adopted by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in April 1989, 6/ concerning the role and functioning of the United Nations development system in the 1990s, particularly the unequivocal resolve of its members to continue to adapt, both individually and collectively, to present needs, evolving circumstances and challenges, in the developing countries,

1. Takes note with interest of the report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation on the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 7/ including the report on the integrated country reviews on the functioning of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system; 8/

2. Reaffirms that the recipient Governments have the sole responsibility for the co-ordination of external assistance and the principal responsibility for its design and management and that the exercise of those responsibilities is crucial to the optimal use of external assistance and to the strengthening and utilization of national capacity;

3. Stresses that, in order to attain the goal of self-reliance in the developing countries through the strengthening of national capacities, the operational activities of the United Nations system should emphasize the human

5/ A/42/326/Add.1-E/1987/82/Add.1, annex, sect. VIII.

6/ See A/44/324-E/1989/106, para. 18.

7/ A/44/324-E/1989/106 and Add.1-5.

8/ A/44/324/Add.2-E/1989/106/Add.2.

dimension of development, in particular through education, training and the development of human resources, should emphasize the need to reach the poorest and most vulnerable sections of societies and should have a positive impact on the overall quality of life and development;

4. Reaffirms the need for priority allocation of scarce grant resources to programmes and projects in low-income countries, particularly the least developed countries;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to include in his report on international co-operation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries a section analysing the role that operational activities for development could play in that area;

6. Stresses the need for maximum participation of populations, local communities and organizations, including national non-governmental organizations, in the development process, and encourages, when Governments so request, promotion of participation at the grass-roots level and of the productive sectors in the operational activities of the United Nations system;

7. Reaffirms the importance of the integration of women in United Nations development programmes as participants in all aspects of the development process and calls upon the funding, technical and specialized agencies to intensify efforts to increase the participation of women, particularly those from developing countries;

8. Emphasizes the protection and support of children as integral to the development process, and recognizes the need for education and the promotion of opportunities for youth and the need to reflect the concerns of children and youth in development co-operation programmes of the United Nations system;

9. Calls upon the international community, in particular donor countries, to make a real and significant increase in resources for operational activities for development on a continuous, predictable and assured basis, and urges all countries to increase their voluntary contributions for operational activities for development;

10. Urges developed countries, in particular those countries whose overall performance is not commensurate with their capacity, taking into account established official development assistance targets, and present levels of contribution, to increase their official development assistance substantially, including contributions to operational activities of the United Nations system;

11. Emphasizes the primary importance of funding through core resources in operational activities for development, and, at the same time, recognizes the value of special-purpose grant resources, provided that they are designed as a means to ensure additional resource flows and that their projects are coherently and effectively integrated in the technical co-operation programmes of the United Nations system, in conformity with each country's national development plan and programme and in accordance with the respective mandates of United Nations programmes and organizations;

12. Stresses the value of the concept of central funding of technical co-operation through the United Nations Development Programme in order to promote co-ordination and responsiveness to national priorities through the country programming system, and urges all Governments to channel the maximum possible share of resources available for multilateral technical co-operation through the Programme;

13. Emphasizes the need for full utilization of national capacities in all aspects of the programming processes and project cycles of operational activities;

14. Stresses the need, in this context, to improve the operational activities of the United Nations system, in particular with respect to programming, simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures governing the programming processes and project cycles, decentralization of authority, role of the country office structures and reorientation of execution modalities, in order to enable the recipient Governments to exercise their management and co-ordination responsibilities and strengthen their national capacities;

15. Emphasizes that the United Nations system at the country level should be structured and composed in such a way that it corresponds to ongoing and projected co-operation programmes rather than to the institutional structure of the United Nations system and, to this end, decides:

(a) That the country offices and the resident co-ordinators should effectively provide ongoing multidisciplinary technical advice and support to the Government in its programming and executing responsibilities;

(b) To reinforce the team-leadership capacity of the resident co-ordinator within the United Nations system at the country level for the integration of the sectoral inputs of the system and for the effective and coherent co-ordination of the response of the United Nations system to the national programme framework, through, inter alia:

(i) A clarified and strengthened mandate from the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 32/197, 41/171 and 42/196;

(ii) The effective co-ordination of technical advice and input from the United Nations system;

(iii) Closer co-operation of the field representation of the United Nations system at the country level with the resident co-ordinator;

(c) To request the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to include in his annual report on operational activities for development, in 1991, an analysis of possible ways and means of providing multidisciplinary technical advice from the United Nations system at the country level, including the concept of multidisciplinary teams and their ability to provide effective and flexible assistance, taking into account the need to maximize

the utilization of the capacities of the country offices and field representations of the United Nations system and the varied situations and needs of the developing countries;

(d) To request all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to make, without delay, the necessary arrangements, in co-operation with host Governments and without additional cost to developing countries, to establish common premises at the country level, and to request the Director-General to include in his annual reports on operational activities information on progress made in that area;

16. Recognizes the urgent need to improve the field representation of the United Nations system in accordance with the functions set out in the present resolution, and requests the Director-General to present a report containing comprehensive information, drawing on all relevant reports on the field representation of the United Nations system, and to make specific recommendations for improvement and increased effectiveness in line with the objectives of the present resolution to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, and requests the executive heads of all the organizations concerned to co-operate fully in the preparation of that report by providing the relevant information;

17. Calls for more integrated and co-ordinated programming of United Nations system co-operation, in which programming processes would be based on an overall national programme framework for operational activities for development to be prepared by the recipient Government, with a view to submitting it to the organizations of the United Nations system for their support and funding, whose response would be co-ordinated by the resident co-ordinator, and decides that:

(a) Governments should formulate, in accordance with their own development plans and priorities, integrated national programme frameworks setting out co-operation requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system, which would enable the system to support more effectively the development priorities of developing countries and to be more country-focused and would facilitate the development of a programme approach, through the clear definition of national objectives and systematic analysis of development problems and constraints;

(b) The organizations of the United Nations system should adapt their programming processes to base them upon those national programme frameworks and the needs and practices of recipient Governments;

(c) Programme cycles of all funding agencies of the United Nations system should be harmonized with and adapted to the planning periods of national Governments, and further consideration should be given to the introduction of budgetary cycles on a rolling-cycle basis;

(d) The need for a shift from a project approach to a programme approach implies that all relevant governing bodies, in particular the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme, should develop more programme-oriented mechanisms for the provision of technical co-operation, with a view to allowing more flexible and effective support of national programmes;

(e) Non-emergency food aid channelled through the organizations of the United Nations system should be programmed coherently so as to ensure its full integration with the development programmes of the Government;

(f) Organizations participating in programming should be invited to increase their efforts directed towards integrated programming under the leadership of Governments;

(g) The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should be requested to conduct an independent study aimed at developing, among other possible ways to improve the co-ordination of the United Nations system, at the country level, the concept of a document containing the integrated operational response of the United Nations system at the country level to the national programme framework of the recipient Government for operational activities for development, which would give greater coherence to existing programming instruments, and to submit this study to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, through the Economic and Social Council, including an analysis containing his views on the impact of this approach, in particular on the role of the resident co-ordinator, on the leadership role of the United Nations Development Programme, and on the relationship and relevance of such an approach to the existing co-ordinating mechanisms of the organizations of the United Nations system at the country level, such as National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programmes, round tables and consultative groups, and possible ways to implement the relevant elements contained therein;

18. Decides that, in order fully to enable Governments to assume the execution of programmes and projects funded by the United Nations system for development, the following changes should be undertaken:

(a) The present rules and procedures for government/national execution should be adapted, as appropriate, to promote and maximize the utilization and strengthening of national capacities, while enabling Governments to make effective use of the expertise available within the United Nations system in the implementation of programmes and projects;

(b) Procedures pertaining to programme and project formulation, design, appraisal, implementation, procurement, reporting, monitoring and evaluation should be simplified and harmonized, taking into account costs involved for recipient Governments and the United Nations system, at both the country and headquarters levels, and on the basis of consultation with recipient Governments;

(c) Governing bodies should review existing budget, audit and other relevant practices, with a view to taking specific decisions on measures designed to promote and maximize the utilization of national capacities through government/national execution, a more programme-oriented approach and the improved provision of technical advice and backstopping;

19. Considers that, in the context of the application of the system of government/national execution of programmes and projects, as set out in paragraph 18 of the present resolution, the participation of specialized agencies

and technical entities of the United Nations system in operational activities should be redefined towards, in particular, the provision of technical support to Governments on a multisectoral and sectoral basis, as well as a supportive technical role in the project cycle, as requested by Governments;

20. Requests all organs and organizations of the United Nations system to improve their ability to provide Governments at the country level with information on the capacities and needs of other developing countries, in the required detail, so as to enable greater integration in programme and project formulation and implementation of technical co-operation among developing countries, with a view to strengthening the capacities of developing countries;

21. Stresses the need to attach high priority to substantially increasing procurement from developing countries, in order to promote collective self-reliance, while paying due respect to the principles of international competitive bidding, and, in this regard, emphasizes the importance for all parts of the United Nations system of setting specific goals for increasing procurement from developing countries;

22. Acknowledges the commitment to procurement from under-utilized major donor countries and recommends the implementation of the relevant proposals of the Director-General 9/ in accordance with the principles of international competitive bidding;

23. Recommends, within the framework of a more decentralized and strengthened capacity of the United Nations system at the country level, the delegation of authority from the headquarters to the country level by the organs and organizations of the United Nations system in order to develop a country-focused approach and to ensure maximum utilization and strengthening of national capacities and, in this regard, calls upon those organs and organizations to introduce the following changes:

(a) Within the broad multi-year programmes and projects approved by governing bodies, approval authority for specific programmes and projects should, to the maximum extent possible, be delegated to the country level, in support of improvement of programme and project appraisal capacity, and field offices should fully exercise that approval authority with a view to improving speed, quality and efficiency of implementation;

(b) During implementation of the overall programmes approved by governing bodies, country offices should have the flexibility to make budgetary revisions of projects during implementation;

24. Reaffirms the established principles of accountability within the operational activities for development and, while maintaining the ultimate accountability of the executive heads of the funding organizations, stresses the

9/ See A/44/324/Add.3-E/1989/106/Add.3.

need to redefine and adapt working mechanisms for ensuring full accountability, in the light of the reorientation of the United Nations development system towards, in particular, government/national project execution, decentralization, delegation of authority and adoption of a more programme-oriented approach, as noted in paragraphs 15, 17, 18 and 23 of the present resolution, and for this purpose recommends the following:

(a) The executive heads of the funding organizations of the United Nations system should make specific proposals to their governing bodies on ways and means of ensuring accountability through rationalizing and streamlining their existing systems, in the context of harmonization and simplification of procedures, including the possibility of conferring on the country offices a greater role in ensuring accountability;

(b) Recipient Governments should take the necessary steps to improve their capacity to satisfy the accountability requirements of their executing role, including financial reporting and the audit function, for operational activities for development and, in this regard, the funding organizations should provide appropriate technical support;

(c) All specialized and technical agencies, in the context of the review of their budget, audit and other relevant practices referred to in paragraph 18 (c) of the present resolution, should take specific measures to achieve a greater degree of accountability and transparency in the use of funds for operational activities;

(d) Governing bodies of the relevant organizations should improve their working mechanisms so that they may exercise their overview function more effectively;

25. Encourages the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme to continue to consider the question of successor arrangements for agency support costs from the standpoint of how best to meet the needs of developing countries and to foster co-ordination and coherence within the United Nations system, taking into account the need to ensure maximum utilization of national capacity through, in particular, government/national execution of projects, a more programme-oriented approach and regular and timely provision of technical advice and backstopping by agencies at the country level, as stated in paragraphs 17, 18 and 19 of the present resolution;

26. Requests the executive heads of the United Nations funding and technical agencies to re-examine their organizational structures and staff deployment in support of the requirements of decentralization to the country offices, with a view in particular to redeploying personnel and effecting economies at headquarters;

27. Stresses the vital importance of the full, co-ordinated and timely implementation of all modifications required of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, as mentioned in the present resolution;

28. Decides that the implementation of the present resolution by the United Nations system in all the areas mentioned in the resolution should be accomplished as early as possible, and requests the Director-General to submit a proposed three-year schedule for the implementation of the resolution by all the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1990 and to draw attention to recommendations on which he considers additional guidance is required, particularly those facilitating the full implementation of the present resolution, and make available his report containing recommendations for the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; 9/

29. Requests the Director-General to submit, for the next three years, annual reports on the implementation of the present resolution, on a consolidated system-wide basis, to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session;

30. Calls upon States members of the governing bodies of all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system consistently to ensure full implementation of the provisions contained in the present resolution;

31. Also calls upon the governing bodies of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to make the adjustments required to implement the provisions of paragraphs 15, 17, 18 and 20 through 24 of the present resolution and to prepare information on the measures taken, to be included, starting in 1991, in the annual reports of the Director-General submitted through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly;

32. Requests the executive heads of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to co-operate fully with the Director-General in the implementation of the present resolution, including, in particular, the preparation and implementation of the schedule referred to in paragraph 28 of the resolution;

33. Reaffirms the provision contained in General Assembly resolution 32/197 concerning the representation of developing countries at the executive management and other central decision-making levels of secretariat structures in the area of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and requests the Director-General to include, in his annual report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1990, a section on the implementation of this provision;

34. Requests the Director-General to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, in the context of the triennial policy review, a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the present resolution and to make appropriate recommendations.

85th plenary meeting
22 December 1989