

“The UN system should take necessary steps to become fit for purpose. This includes better and effective delivery of results, agility in responding to the changing development landscape and openness for cooperation with new actors.”

- *Address of the UN Deputy Secretary General to the General Assembly on 1 May 2014*

The High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) have identified Human Rights as one of five interlinked elements that are critical to make the UN “fit for purpose” in achieving the post-2015 development agenda: universality, integration, equality, human rights and the data revolution.

A number of factors have prompted the UN to critically assess its readiness to meet the challenges and opportunities of the post 2015 period. These include the emergence of a set of universal sustainable development goals (SDGs) replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); a fast-changing development context, financing landscape, new actors, and a departure from the traditional divides between North and South.

Successful transformation of the UN development system will require Member States to support the required, predictable financing of the UN development system; overcome the inherent political hesitancy to deep institutional reform; remove the limits to concerted system-wide action posed by our complex governance structures; and drive the primacy of the longer term sustainable development agenda, including the international norms and standards embedded therein.

“The world has changed dramatically since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. But we are only beginning to grasp the far-reaching implications of the new global landscape for development cooperation and for the role of the UN development system. [...]



These changing needs raise important questions about the response of the Organization in the post-2015 era. How can the UN system strengthen its catalytic role? How can our respective strengths be used collectively to respond to the needs of developing countries?

Our response needs to include greater emphasis on strengthening the link between the normative and operational role of the UN system. We will need new business models, less fragmentation, renewed partnerships, as well as new accountability frameworks and monitoring mechanisms. [...] Important progress has been made in recent years in enhancing policy integration, programme coherence and harmonizing operational practices. It is now time to take the next steps.

The UN system should, in the words of our Deputy Secretary General be fully equipped to draw on the strengths of individual entities to support programme countries in developing an **integrated approach to poverty eradication and sustainable development**. We simply have to become “fit for purpose” in the post-2015 era.”

- The Deputy Secretary General addressing ECOSOC on 24 February 2014

Concerning Human Rights, making the UN “fit for purpose” in achieving the post-2015 development agenda means:

Enable systematic interface between development and human rights systems. To achieve this, it is necessary to strengthen internal support structures, operational guidance on human rights, and to enable a more systemic interface between the UN Development System and the UN human rights system in order to ensure that the UN’s normative work is fully integrated into its development, humanitarian, peace and security operations. This includes strengthening the quality and availability of human rights policy advice in United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), as well as improved training of all staff to better integrate human rights and gender into all aspects of their work both in terms of pursuing human rights goals and applying a human rights-based approach, built on the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and an explicit basis in human rights norms and standards in how they are pursued. Such policy advice must also be anchored in strong human rights leadership, including among RCs and UNCT members who must possess the requisite commitment and capacities and be supported politically to promote the common norms and values of the UN system. This should be supported by building on successful examples of joint work in mainstreaming human rights such as highlighted in “Mainstreaming Human Rights in Development: Stories From the Field”.



Operationalize Human Rights Up Front. Another critical step is to fully operationalize “Human Rights Up Front” including the strengthening of analysis and early warning and rapid and effective escalation of response to serious rights abuses, enabling a more empowered UN country presence to deal immediately with emerging issues. This will also help ensure **country teams are better aware of serious human rights risk factors and can take appropriate action with national authorities.**

Support UNCTs with rule of law and human rights capacity enhancements. The rule of law, human rights and the development agenda are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Coordinated, coherent support to RCs and UN Country Teams on human rights and the rule of law is needed across agencies. Support and capacities must be made available and leveraged from regional and headquarter levels to utilize the full breadth of the UN system’s mandates to tackle challenging human rights situations which cannot be addressed by UNCTs alone. **The UN needs to effectively leverage its human rights system, including treaty bodies and their concluding comments, visits of Special Rapporteurs and the Universal Periodic Review process.**

