



# Statements and Speeches

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## OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Statement by Mr. David Lee, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations and Canadian delegate to the Second Committee of the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 22, 1983.

Operational activities for development are among the most significant areas of involvement of the organizations in the United Nations family. Given the scope of the Director-General's [for Development and International Economic Co-operation, Mr. Jean Ripert] report presented to us earlier in Document A/38/258, and the fact that we are participating in a triennial review, this agenda item is especially important this year since it provides the appropriate moment to consider and elaborate major policy guidelines to govern our future efforts in this area.

This question was discussed extensively at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and was also the subject of an important declaration by the Group of 77. Consequently, it is not necessary to review this earlier analysis once again. However, I would like to recall that the comments of the Canadian delegation on that occasion were concerned mainly with the coherence of the system as well as with priority activities, efficiency of management, and the level of resources. In fact, most delegations which intervened at ECOSOC, underlined the importance of coherence, with emphasis being placed on the cohesiveness of the system based on the central role of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

In the light of these discussions, the Director-General provided both written and verbal comments yesterday which we found very pertinent. We wish to express our gratitude for his comments, which we have followed carefully, since we found in them important elements which responded to concerns expressed in July at ECOSOC and which, therefore, help to advance our consideration of operational activities for development.

In my intervention today I will consider first the question of resources, and then deal with several specific points leading to some proposals for action.

### **Resources**

Judging from many of the comments made, the main problem facing the UN development system is one of insufficient financing. My government entirely shares the feeling that too few resources are available.

If one believes in this system and the central role played by UNDP, and this Committee as well as the General Assembly has reaffirmed this belief for many years, the resources necessary to enable the fulfillment of its mandates must be provided. However, the analysis should not stop there for other elements must be considered.

The government of Canada remains a strong supporter of operational activities and its various components. We have been active for some time in attempting to assure the UNDP, among others, of greater support and, during the recent pledging conference, we demonstrated this position once again.

Indeed certain optimistic signs are apparent: a number of increased contributions were announced during or following the pledging conference; certain countries removed the freeze which they had imposed on their pledges; the developing countries demonstrated strong support for the UNDP and operational activities.

However, it is important to note, as described in Table 1 of the statistical addendum to the Report of the Director-General, that the volume of multilateral assistance funds, including the World Bank Group, increased by 37 per cent in 1982 over the 1981 figure. Similarly, according to the OECD, aggregate Official Development Assistance figures for the members of its Development Assistance Committee increased by 9 per cent in the same year. What we see in these figures is an allocation of funds which favours first the World Bank Group and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), whose contributions increased by 71 per cent between 1979 and 1982, as well as direct contributions to the Specialized Agencies and World Food Program, which increased by 37.8 per cent during the same period. During these same years, contributions to the main funds and programs of the United Nations grew by only 15.4 per cent, while UNDP suffered stagnating revenues and therefore a reduction in real terms.

We see therefore, a fundamental problem in this development. The question we must ask, and answer, is why funds for development co-operation are allocated this way and how the situation of the central funds can be improved. It is, therefore, necessary to make the link between the performance of institutions and the resources made available to them. In our opinion there are two principal reasons – one administrative and one political.

On the administrative side, it is essential that the bulk of resources be used effectively for development purposes – in other words with the greatest efficiency possible. We must consider this point which is, of course, not new or unusual – the Canadian International Development Agency must do this for all the programs which it supports and must therefore adopt a similar attitude with respect to international organizations.

On the political side, it is necessary to make available information concerning the system to demonstrate that it does achieve worthwhile results, that it does function well, that it does attain its objectives. Such information is imperative if we are to convince our populations and our parliaments of the necessity to maintain and increase our support for the development activities of the United Nations.

Having dealt with the question of resources and reaffirmed the importance which we attach to a better future for the United Nations development activities, I would like to consider several specific results which might flow from the administrative and political concerns described above.

### **The system**

It would be appropriate to recall the attachment which my government shares with others, to the basic principles of the multilateral system and to reaffirm the voluntary nature of operational activities. At the same time we might emphasize the predominance of central or core resources over extra-budgetary resources.

The United Nations development system is an entity composed of several elements: general funds, United Nations departments, "special" funds and Specialized Agencies. Each has specific characteristics, but they all interact with one another. A systematic approach is therefore required in order to clearly define the relations between them, and especially to gain a greater assurance that they are seeking the same goal, namely development and the promotion of the dignity of man — as the Director-General aptly described it yesterday.

In order to achieve these objectives, the system must be coherent and must function according to principles that will make it possible to derive from it the greatest benefit.

This requires a system of programming that is truly responsive to the needs and priorities of the recipient countries, central bodies that play a key role and have a real capacity for action, executing agencies with recognized expertise which are devoted to a common goal. Finally, the whole system must be effectively and efficiently managed in order to draw on past experience to improve present and future performance.

This is the context in which we place operational activities and we were grateful for the introductory remarks of the Director-General which underlined the key role of the central organs and the inherent influence that they must have within the system. We appreciate his amplifying comments and fully support the approach he has taken. Co-ordination, not dissipation, will provide the real coherence and dynamism that the United Nations development system must have to support the recipient countries' quest for self-reliance.

This view of the system is simply that reflected in numerous resolutions of the General Assembly, especially Resolution 32/197 on restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. Other resolutions adopted subsequently, namely 35/81, 36/199 and 37/226, provided further details on certain aspects or requested specific actions in the same vein. These resolutions are an expression of the will of the assembly, but the question is whether that will is being applied in reality.

### **Co-ordination**

After careful review, we have concluded that the sections of these resolutions that are the responsibility of the funds, programs and organizations administered by the General Assembly are being applied fairly well. We do feel that much remains to be done in those areas under the control of organizations which do not report to the General Assembly. Work has been started in some areas, and we would like to see it continue. We feel therefore that we should take advantage of this forum to encourage our colleagues, especially those who are members of the governing bodies of organizations and agencies involved in operational activities for development, to consider the urgent need for greater co-ordination

of these activities, both in respect to policy development and at the country level. In so doing they should be mindful of the co-ordinating role of the Director-General, and the central role of the UNDP.

In his opening address, the Director-General mentioned some concrete measures which merit consideration, namely the institutionalization of inter-agency co-operation, co-ordinated programming by the UNDP, the United Nations Fund for Population Actions, United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Program, and the preparation of annual reviews by the resident co-ordinators. I also wish to draw the attention of other delegations to the decision of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination that the practice of periodic meetings between the resident co-ordinator and the agency representatives should be encouraged.

Would it not be appropriate to follow the logic and to take a further step in this direction? We must, of course, maintain a margin of flexibility in order to avoid overly formalizing or "bureaucratizing" the process. We must also take into account the particular situation in each country. However, it would certainly be worthwhile to give an official status to these periodic meetings and to formally recognize them as a valuable means of co-ordination by giving them a permanent status perhaps under the title of "committees on co-ordination". These committees should include the local and international personnel already involved and their objective should be to co-ordinate ongoing or planned activities in order to avoid duplication and to improve efficiency.

I believe that it would be very useful, in this context, for all members of this committee to receive, as soon as possible, a copy of the summary of reports received from the resident co-ordinators on this subject, as mentioned in paragraph 61 of the appendix to document A/38/276.

#### **Harmonization**

On the subject of project and program delivery, we again express our support for integration of the field offices and harmonization of procedures in order to reduce administrative costs and produce more effective, coherent action at the country level. As we noted in Geneva at the summer session of ECOSOC, we regret that the policy review did not give more attention to this question, which we consider to be very important. The next annual report on operational activities should, we feel, contain a progress report on this specific question. However, we are pleased to note that the subject is being reviewed, and we support the Director-General in this regard. The main purpose is to ensure that the procedural differences between the agencies do not present an obstacle to the programming process.

#### **Evaluation**

We are pleased to note that the report of the Director-General underscores the need for better systems of evaluation. We support the comments of the Director-General to the effect that such efforts lead to improved use of resources, as well as his description of the role and responsibilities of the decision-making organs. However, we must bear in mind that this approach imposes a greater burden on the UNDP, in view of the large number of organizations and agencies with which it must deal.

We wish to reaffirm our support for the Director-General, and we encourage him to exercise fully his mandate both in terms of the leadership that he must provide for the various components of the UN

system involved in international development and economic co-operation, and the co-ordination that he must bring about within this system. The objective is to achieve an over-all, multidisciplinary approach by promoting effective management of development activities financed by both regular and extra-budgetary resources.

I would like to add a few words in closing on the ultimate purpose of operational activities, namely helping the less favoured countries in their efforts towards socio-economic growth. This basic objective must always be borne in mind when we consider the way in which the UN development system operates. The system must be flexible in order to adapt to the changing needs of the recipient countries. It must open the way for a real transfer of knowledge and skills, give priority to the countries where the needs are greatest, and recognize and implement the advancement of human resources in the over-all development process. The existing system provides a very good basis for this. However, it must be streamlined to achieve maximum performance in these times of economic difficulty while also demonstrating the beneficial results to the many interested parties in my country and elsewhere. This is the direction in which we are working, and we trust that we are part of a common effort.

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