

Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator
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Remarks at High Level Workshop - The New Way of Working: Advancing
Implementation

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As delivered

State Secretary, dear colleagues

It is a pleasure to be here among partners and colleagues across the international community, including several governments of the countries we work in, to discuss the critical next steps we each need to take to put the New Way of Working into action - our World Humanitarian Summit commitment of bridging the humanitarian-development divide - by working to collective outcomes.

This meeting is an important milestone in this respect and I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Denmark for hosting it and to the World Bank for co-hosting and the UN colleagues - and with my ERC hat beyond the UN, NGOs - as well as think tanks and academia.

Colleagues, together we have already come quite some way since the WHS in embracing this new approach as part of our day-to-day endeavours. We have offered initial guidance; worked with several Country Teams on rolling it out; and understand better the operational and mechanical opportunities and impediments and how to address them in the field.

I believe it is fair to say that the New Way of Working is now our accepted norm and the Secretary-General on several occasions has explicitly asked us to apply this in practice, most recently in regard to the prospect of four famines; by the end of this year we must make this our “way of working” - the way we do business - by adapting our tools and mechanisms, our ways of programming and financing. We need to move beyond simply better coordination between two families, humanitarian and development, toward joining them up effectively and measurably.

This will require each of us to reflect on and define what this means for our collaboration, organizational structures and coordination, processes and tools and what it asks from us in terms of changing our approaches to achieve measurable outcomes on the ground. That must be our measure of success: better and more sustainable impact for people in need.

How do we articulate collective outcomes and align existing projects with them in a meaningful way?

What kinds of financing mechanisms do we need to finance those outcomes over multiple years, ensuring both humanitarian and more longer-term, structural interventions resourced with predictability?

How do we ensure the New Way of Working promotes national and local participation and ownership, and over the course of a multi-year intervention, strengthening the footprint of local partners whether civil society, private sector, or local authorities?

These challenges are real and concrete: the Secretary-General has asked Helen Clark and me to ensure a joint approach of the UN humanitarian and development systems to famine-threatened north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. The task is clear and so is the direction: ensuring life-saving short-term interventions work toward the achievement of key collective outcomes over the next 2-3 years, to boost resilience against future shocks.

Only by working together to collective outcomes, over multi-year timeframes and with a diversity of partners, will we be able to systematically reduce the risks, needs, and vulnerabilities of those millions of people affected by crises, particularly in protracted contexts. This way, the New Way of Working will be a critical step in successfully delivering on the 2030 Agenda and the transformations called for at the World Humanitarian Summit through the Agenda for Humanity.

But, we also must make sure that the New Way of Working does not simply become another label that everyone interprets in their own way. Practically, this means that in each context, we need to think about how to ensure better alignment, or even integration where appropriate, between UN Development Assistance Frameworks and Humanitarian Response Plans, and between UN Country Teams and Humanitarian Country Teams, while ensuring that this approach includes the important contributions of our NGO colleagues and others, and respect for humanitarian principles. We must translate strategic priorities in UNDAFs into measurable outcomes for people: x number of children with access to primary education over the next 5 years; y number of IDPs integrated, resettled or able to return.

At a minimum, we must integrate our analysis of risks, vulnerabilities and needs as well as existing capacities. And we must have an early and collective understanding of priorities.

Some of these shifts are already in evidence and I welcome them and support and salute the efforts. Humanitarian vulnerability analysis is providing depth and detail to the Common Country Assessment and strategic prioritization exercises in several countries. I am encouraged by the positive examples in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Senegal and beyond.

Progress on all of these fronts does not rest only on better joined-up collaboration of UN and international humanitarian and development actors; it importantly also rests on the

right way of financing - predictably over several years - to achieve an outcome rather than simply delivery of projects. This requires funds and financing instruments to be better aligned, and donors as well as governments to ensure the achievement of an outcome by resourcing it over multiple years.

In some ways it is quite simple: we must finance the outcomes we have set to reduce need and vulnerability, and align our work accordingly so that we can be held accountable to our achievements. If not, we will not achieve these goals and ultimately we won't deliver on what we have collectively agreed - leaving no one behind.

My message to donors and investors therefore is equally simple: we cannot do this without you. Strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus was one of our joint priorities at the World Humanitarian Summit. We now need to support this quest jointly by investing in collective outcomes, rather than fragmented project and activities, and donors have to work hard to incentives this.

And lastly, we must adapt our mechanisms, tools and approaches to achieving these collective outcomes with a diverse set of actors not only from within the international aid community but also beyond. They must be involved in the articulation of these outcomes, predictably defining their contribution and delivery to their respective comparative advantage. It is that advantage that must drive collaboration towards an outcome, not simply mandate or mission statement alone. Each outcome requires a coalition of the willing and capable.

In closing, we have already embraced the paradigm shift that is the New Way of Working. Now it is time to transform our systems and processes to operationalize it. This is not always easy and will require both mindset shifts and adjustments in our programming and delivery practices. And it will require a recognition that there will always be acute, emergency situations - sometimes only within a part of a country - that demands independent, principled humanitarian action, while working on improved conditions for collective multi-year responses.

So I hope we will leave Copenhagen with a clear action agenda that promotes the New Way of Working as our way of doing business now, identifies existing challenges and opportunities at capital, headquarters, or field level. I would like to challenge all of us here today to help articulate the changes in funding behaviour that is required to achieve more measurable and lasting impact on the ground.
