Analysis of basic framework, and streamlining, of UN activities for enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency

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I.   Background and objectives of this report

In the face of numerous global challenges existing in the world today, it has come to be increasingly important for the United Nations to carry out, effectively and efficiently, its mission objectives, as stated expressly in the UN Charter or, in practice, eight priorities as decided by the UN General Assembly.

In this context, during the course of the last few decades, there have actually been a number of positive developments, including the adoption of GA resolutions 32/197 and 41/213 (the latter of which covered consideration of the "Group of 18" report), adoption of PPBME ("Regulations and Rules governing Programme Planning, the programme aspects of the Budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of Evaluation"), as well as the introduction of "Results-based budgeting"/"Results-based management". These developments are, however, still rather marginal compared with the huge tasks to be carried out For instance, "programme-budget implications" (PBI) to be submitted by the Secretariat pursuant to PPBME Regulation 5.9 have been, de facto, limited to "financial implications" in accordance with Rule 153 of the "Rules of procedure of the GA", and generally no substantive information relating to the programme aspect has been provided, mainly because no substantive review of mandated activities has been

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conducted which would have otherwise facilitated the preparation of more substantive programme implications as part of PBI, as expected in the PPBME.

Against their background, the "2005 World Summit Outcome" document (A/60/L.1) requested the General Assembly and other relevant organs to "review all mandates older than five years originating from resolutions of the GA and other organs, ------", but the related exercise by the GA has been at a standstill for various reasons, except the submission by the [former] Secretary-General of his report (A/60/733) as well as preparation of an electronic inventory of mandates ("Mandate Registry") by the Secretariat.

In the light of the above, the objectives and consequently the structure of this report are firstly to present the basic framework of the UN activities from the point of enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency, together with the analysis of the respective roles of, and interrelationship among, the main actors, i.e., Member States (intergovernmental bodies), Secretariat, and oversight mechanisms, followed by identification of the problems, as we see it, at each stage (process) of the activities, as well as the presentation of a number of recommendations including one to conduct a comprehensive review and streamlining of mandated activities.

II.   Basic framework of the UN activities

The basic framework of the UN activities could be described as a process beginning with setting policy directives (establishing mandates), together with authorization (appropriation) of resources by Member States (intergovernmental bodies), followed by implementation/management by the Secretariat, of the programme activities, as well as evaluation of the activities, and ending with feedback of the evaluation findings, with a view to improving subsequent policy formulations and directives, programme design and implementation etc.

II-1 (1st stage):   Decision-making on policies (Establishing mandates)

Establishing policies and mandates is a major prerogative of Member States (intergovernmental bodies). Inseparably related to this function is, however, the oversight responsibility of intergovernmental bodies ("legislative oversight"), which

is considered to be a key element of the overall governance in ensuring that the human, financial and other resources made available are efficiently applied, in the management by the Secretariat, to carry out the policy directives and mandated activities.

II-2 (2nd stage):   Authorizing resources for mandated activities

Authorization (appropriation) of resources is also a prerogative of Member States (intergovernmental bodies).   However, the Secretariat also plays an important role in terms of preparation of draft programme budgets and budgetary implementation. In this context, it could be said that the provision of the "limited budgetary discretion" contained in the GA resolution 60/283 (Part III) has actually granted some discretion on the part of the Secretariat on the use of resources even if on a limited scale, and that a commonly known practice of inserting the phrase of implementing resolutions and decisions "within existing resources" might also be inducing the Secretariat to, *de facto,* broaden a room for discretion.

II-3 (3rd stage):   Implementing mandated activities and related management

The Secretariat has a primary responsibility for carrying out mandated programme activities and managing related human, financial and other resources, as well as for implementing recommendations presented by oversight mechanisms.

II-4 (4th stage):   Evaluating mandated activities

Evaluation of mandated activities is supposed to cover two aspects;   namely, effectiveness in terms of degree of contribution towards programme objective(s)/"expected accomplishments", and efficiency at the phase of programme implementation and related management.
In the case of the United Nations, evaluation is conducted mainly by (a) each department (i.e., "self-evaluation" based on PPBME, Article VII), (b) OIOS ("in-depth evaluation" based on PPBME, Rule 107.2), and (c) JIU (according to the "Statute").

II-5 (5th stage):   Feedback based on review of evaluation findings/reports

Evaluation reports (including recommendations) by the external oversight mechanisms (JIU in particular) are submitted to the intergovernmental bodies for their review and possible feedback to the decision-making process on the future policies and mandates, as well as other processes of mandated activities.

In the case of the UN, OIOS (,which is an internal oversight mechanism) is also authorized, as required, to report, in effect, directly to the UN General Assembly on the basis of resolution 48/218 B which established OIOS.

Apart from reporting to the intergovernmental bodies, external oversight mechanisms (Board of Auditors, JIU) cover also the function of an internal oversight mechanism by providing, in their reports, recommendations requiring attention by the Secretariat.

As it is clear from the above, Member States (intergovernmental bodies), Secretariat, and oversight mechanisms are closely inter-linked functionally. Accordingly, in the context of improving effectiveness and efficiency of UN activities, these three groups of actors should each fulfill its own function to the maximum extent possible throughout the entire process of UN activities, so that, at the same time, a synergy, as an ensemble, is enhanced.   In other words, strengthening of effectiveness and efficiency of mandated activities is a collective responsibility of Member States, Secretariat and oversight mechanisms, and all of them should be conscious of the responsibility in fulfilling their respective functions.

III.   Problems associated with UN activities at each stage of the framework identified in II above

III-1(1st stage):   Problems associated with establishing mandates, or, in practical terms, problems associated with the stage of examining a new draft resolution or decision containing potential mandate(s) include the following:

(1) Whereas some considerations have been given, in practice, to the financial aspect (i.e., "financial implications", in traditional terms, as stipulated in Rule 153 of the "Rules of procedure of the General Assembly") of the draft in question, no substantive programme implications (,which are supposed to contain information such as on duplication, on potential contributions, concerning effectiveness, in relation to attaining programme objectives etc.) have been

submitted by the Secretariat to facilitate consideration of the implications of a new resolution/decision on the programme side, which has been in turn inhibiting also intergovernmental bodies from examining the financial implications in a very meaningful manner. In other words, information concerning the implications on the programme aspect such as the one stipulated in PPBME, Rule 105.8 has been rather scant in the "programme-budget implications"(PBI).

Some of the fundamental reasons for the inadequate content of information on the programme side in the context of PBI are considered to be the lack of a comprehensive exercise, which is now overdue, for reviewing and streamlining accumulated mandates (mandated activities) over the years, in addition to a non-availability of a solid management information system at the UN.

In connection with the above, let us examine here the state of affairs regarding the accumulated mandates (mandated activities):
As shown in the table below, the so-called "active" mandates, in the eight priority areas, adopted by the UN General Assembly have now reached as many as 5,300.

<u>Accumulated number of "active" mandates</u>
<u>adopted by the UN General Assembly</u>
(by eight priority area for 2006-2007)

Maintenance of international peace and Security	709
Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development	2,018
Development of Africa	70
Promotion of human rights	939
Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance	373
Promotion of justice and international law	336
Disarmament	652
Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism	235
	5,332

(Prepared on the basis of "Mandate Registry", www.un.org/mandatereview)

It should be noted here, however, that only a fraction of the "active" mandates shown above are identified as the so-called "legislative mandates" (according to the terminology used by the Secretariat) which are supposed to constitute, as a matter of principle, the very basis of the "Programme of Work" ("Programmes" and "Subprogrammes") for the period 2006-2007.   For instance, in the case of Programme 7 – Subprogramme 4 ("sustainable development") for 2006-2007, only 18 mandates are listed as "legislative mandates" as far as we judge from the document A/59/6/Rev.1 ("Biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2006-2007"), whereas the corresponding number of "active" mandates are considered much, much bigger (close to 2,000 ?) , as shown in the table above.

In other words, it appears that there do exist, outside the official framework of the "Programme of Work", a large number of mandates or so-called mandated activities which are very informal to say the least or could possibly be 'hidden' in nature.   This situation can be a problem even from the point of legitimacy of UN activities.

(2) Despite such a state of affairs as elaborated in (1) above, it has been difficult, due to divergence of opinions (positions) among Member States, to ensure even a minimum discipline by injecting, for example, a provision of periodical review clause of mandated activities in adopting new resolutions or decisions.

III-2 (2nd stage):   Problems associated with authorizing resources for mandated activities include the following

(1) The practice of inserting the phrase of "within existing resources" for carrying out mandated activities could be regarded as deterrent to increase in resources. As referred to earlier, the basic problem here, however, is also a limited supply of information on the programme aspect in the PBI, which could be resulting in an unnecessary increase in required resources.

(2) The structure of the "programme budget" document does not fully correspond to that of the "biennial programme plan" which is supposed to be the basis for "programme budget". This is rather awkward in the context of facilitating budgetary considerations for the mandated programmes and activities.

(3) It appears that not enough consideration has been given to the effective use of extrabudgetary resources despite their increasing significance.

III-3 (3rd stage): Problems on implementing mandated activities and management

Efficient execution of mandated activities is linked closely with the degree of the progress of various managerial reforms at the Secretariat, which encompass human resources management, results-based budgeting/results-based management, information and communications management, knowledge management etc. In reality, however, progress on these managerial reforms is rather limited, except a few areas such as results-based budgeting, meaning that there is much room for improvement with respect to efficient implementation of mandated activities.

III-4 (4th stage): Problems associated with evaluation of mandated activities are:

(1) PPBME, Article VII contains useful Regulations and Rules as regards the purpose, methodologies etc. of "self-evaluation" by programme managers. However, these provisions have not been applied in a satisfactory manner to the actual evaluation exercises, due to a number of factors including insufficient recognition about the importance of evaluation, weak evaluation capacities of programme managers, coupled with a lack of [qualified] staff. Furthermore, the objectivity of evaluation findings through self-evaluation could sometimes be questionable since no "validation" exercise by the third party is conducted on the findings of evaluation.

(2) Pursuant to PPBME, Rule 107.2, or more specifically, at the request of intergovernmental bodies (usually CPC), OIOS conducts an "in-depth evaluation of selected programme areas or topics". The in-depth evaluation is, however, rather ad-hoc, and far from a comprehensive and systematic evaluation (which we need) covering all programme areas and activities. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the results of self-evaluation are actually taken into account in determining an in-depth evaluation as stipulated in Rule 107.2 (c).

(3) In principle, JIU, as an external [system-wide] oversight mechanism and as stipulated in the PPBME, should be in a position to conduct evaluation

extensively, although they have produced a good number of evaluation-related reports.   In practice, however, there would be a limitation for JIU to take over the function of comprehensive and systematic evaluation in the light, in particular, of the resource constraints of JIU.

(4) In the context of enhancing evaluation capacities, one of the bottlenecks is difficult accessibility, to the basic data such as the status of "outputs" relating to each mandate.

III-5 (5th stage):   Problems concerning feedback of the evaluation findings on the policy-directives/programme activities in the subsequent years

One could cite some examples where, for instance, JIU, through its reports and recommendations, have had a certain impact in terms of feedback.   Generally speaking, however, evaluation findings have not been used in such a manner as to provide impact on, or facilitate, "the reconsideration of existing mandates, policies, strategies and objectives, the substantive content of programme and its utility to the users" as stipulated in PPBME, Rule 107.1 (c).

IV   Recommendations

 A. Basic framework and principles for enhancing effectiveness and efficiency of UN activities

1. In dealing with the question of enhancing effectiveness and efficiency of UN activities, a comprehensive examination and analysis should be conducted covering the entire process of the activities,   namely,   (1) decision-making on policy directives (mandates), (2) authorization (appropriation) of resources for the implementation of mandated activities, (3) execution and management of mandated activities, (4) evaluation of mandated activities, and (5) feedback of the evaluation findings to the future policy directives and mandates.

2. Member States (intergovernmental bodies), Secretariat, and oversight mechanisms have a collective responsibility for strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of the UN activities.   Being conscious of this principle, all of them

should act (behave) in such a manner as to fulfill their respective functions to the maximum extent possible as well as to enhance a synergy as an ensemble.

B. Decision-making on policy directives (mandates)

3. "Programme-budget implications" (PBI), provided by the Secretariat at the time when new draft resolutions or decisions containing potential mandates are on the table, have generally been very poor in substance with respect to implications on the programme aspect.

In the light of this, and coupled with measures to be taken for streamlining existing mandates (mandated activities) as well as for improving management information systems (see Recommendations 4 and 5 below), utmost efforts should now be made by the Secretariat so that PBI in the future contain more substantive and comprehensive information ("implications") on the programme aspect (in addition to financial aspect), including a range of information as indicated below:

(1) Information on overlaps; i.e., identification of possibly overlapped on-going activities (with those envisaged in the resolutions/decisions on the table), modalities of overlap etc.;

(2) Information on effectiveness (in terms of meeting with programme objectives/"expected accomplishments") anticipated from activities under the potential mandates;

(3) Relating to (2) above, in the cases where potential activities are considered to be effective, additional information should be provided encompassing:

　　a) possibility of the new activities being covered by the on-going activities, through modification of, or in addition to, their programme contents, and in circumstances where there are no such possibilities, then information on complementarity of the new activities to the on-going ones, or information on added values expected from the additional activities.

　　b) also for reference purposes, details of activities of similar nature, if any, in the past, including information on implementation and evaluation findings with regards to the extent to which the activities concerned contributed to their programme objectives.

(4) Additional information to be provided in accordance with PPBME, Rule

105.8.

4. In order to facilitate, however, the preparation of such a comprehensive PBI as in Recommendation 3 above, it would be necessary to improve management information systems at the Secretariat by introducing, as appropriate, systems such as ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), and the Member States should support, in principle, this direction on the condition that a number of prior requirements (such as streamlining existing working processes, rationalization of management structures, ensuring compatibility of requirements with ERP functionality etc.) are met.

5. As detailed in Recommendation 3, PBI in the future should contain more substantive and comprehensive information. However, there is a precondition for such information to be truly meaningful; namely, all the existing mandates (mandated activities), which are behind the potentially new mandates, are to be placed in order, based on the outcomes from serious reviewing. In this sense, it is highly desirable that an exercise for reviewing mandates (mandated activities) be resumed as soon as possible.

In resuming such an exercise, (1) 'effectiveness' (in terms of a degree of contribution to objectives/"expected accomplishments") should be used as the basic criterion, and (2) the major objective or focus of the exercise could be on streamlining a large number of so-called "active" mandates which do not constitute the basis for the official "Programme of Work", with the aim of consolidating them, as far as they are still useful and valid, into the "Programme of Work" (Please refer to III-1).

6. Furthermore, in adopting new resolutions/decisions containing potential mandates, intergovernmental bodies should also consider seriously of a possible inclusion of provisions such as periodic review of mandates (mandated activities) by taking into account the experiences and practices of the Security Council etc., in addition to a re-confirmation of a number of relevant provisions contained in PPBME (e.g., Rules 107.1 (a) and 107.2 (b), both of which refer to "time-limited objectives" of programme activities).

C. Decision-making on financing mandated activities

7. The basic financial structure of the UN is comprised of assessed regular budget resources, extrabudgetary resources, and PKO-related assessed contributions, which are distinct from each other in nature. However, for an effective use of the limited UN resources as a whole, consideration should be given to a more coordinated utilization of those resources in particular with respect to assessed regular budget resources and extrabudgetary resources.

8. To facilitate an easier understanding of the inter-relationship between programme and budget in the examination of financing mandated activities, consideration should be given to consolidating some of the programme-related "sections" in the "programme budget" document (by introducing sub-sections, as required), in order to make its structure and "section" number correspond ,respectively, to the structure and "programme" number of the "biennial programme plan" which is supposed to be the basis for the "programme budget".

9. In view of the changing UN tasks as a reflection of rapidly changing environment, and in light of a long process required for preparation of budget for a specific biennium, consideration should be given to adopting measures and mechanisms for (1) an appropriate discretion in budgetary implementation (which would include better utilization of the provision specified in the General Assembly resolution 60/283, Part III), as well as (2) the encouragement of budgetary savings, coupled with provisions for incentives such as an introduction of an award system in case where implementation of a certain mandated activity is managed with less resources than provided in the budget.

   D. Execution and management of mandated activities

10. For the purpose of enhancing efficiency in executing and managing mandated activities, management reform covering financial, human, procurement, and information resources should be enhanced in a systematic and continuous manner. In this context, and based on leadership and commitment by the Secretary-General and senior managers, it is necessary to take a number of measures including the establishment of a small central unit in charge of UN reform, as well as providing, on the Secretary-General website, information on the progress made. Additionally, any specific on-going reform exercises should

not be discontinued as far as they are deemed to be useful, irrespective of a change of the Secretary-General.

11. In pursuing management reform, distinction should be made between (1) efficient and proper execution of mandates in each field of programme activity, and (2) across-the-board management of the various administrative resources (i.e., financial, human, information, and other resources) irrespective of the field of activity. In the latter context, if management for procurement resources is taken as an example, what is required will be a quick and efficient procurement action (such as systems contract and cooperation between UN organizations), enhancement of transparency, as well as strengthening of the office in charge of procurement (possibly strengthening or clarifying the role of the Department of Management of the UN Secretariat with respect to procurement).

12. Furthermore, in view of a possible change of mandates or priority changes over a span of time, it is desirable to maintain a flexible management system particularly for human resources, in terms of placement or reassignment as far as practically feasible. In this sense, it is deemed to be reasonable that the function of managing "mandates" has recently been transferred to the Department of Management which is supposed to be in charge of managing various administrative resources including human resources.

E. Evaluation of mandated activities

13. For strengthening the evaluation capacity at the Secretariat, it may be most realistic to enhance "self-evaluation" capacities of programme managers/staff. In this connection, it should be encouraged that findings from self-evaluation be linked, as inputs, to the "in-depth evaluation" by OIOS. At the same time, evaluation capacities of oversight mechanisms such as JIU and OIOS should also be strengthened.

14. Relevant provisions in PPBME should be re-confirmed as a guideline for evaluation exercises and be complied with as such.

15. Furthermore, in the context of strengthening evaluation capacity, it is indispensable, as a precondition, for necessary basic/detailed data or

information such as "outputs", progress on mandated activities etc. to be easily accessible depending upon purposes. To facilitate this, it is necessary to improve management information systems referred to in Recommendation 4, with a full utilization of the "Mandate Registry" recently produced by the Secretariat.

F. Review of evaluation findings and feedback

16. It is critical to ensure the use of evaluation findings for an effective feedback in terms of improving future policy directives (mandates), programme contents and delivery etc. In this context, in addition to better utilization of evaluation findings (reports) presented by oversight mechanisms, introduction of a procedure comprised of the following steps (elements) should be considered pursuant to the principle stipulated in PPBME, Rule 107.4:

    (1) intergovernmental (expert) bodies directly concerned with each programme development should review evaluation findings (reports) and formulate recommendations concerning future policy directives, mandates, programme contents etc.;

    (2) reports (including recommendations) prepared by each intergovernmental (expert) body in (1) above should be sent to the relevant Main Committee(s) of the General Assembly; and

    (3) upon receipt of such report, the Committee concerned should take an appropriate decision (such as an endorsement of recommendations in its entirety or a partial endorsement of the recommendations contained in the report submitted by the concerned intergovernmental or expert body), with a view to ensuring an effective feedback.

17. In addition to the points in Recommendation 16, a review of evaluation findings should also provide an opportunity for a number of general and important issues to be discussed, such as relationships between programme formulation and priorities, budgetary provision, methods of implementing mandates, management of human resources, reorganization, as well as collaboration and partnership with non-UN actors, with a view to enhancing feedback for the purpose of strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of UN activities.

G. Some general issues of relevance

18. Strengthening of accountability:

In the context of improving effectiveness and efficiency of UN activities, a growing demand has been placed, in recent years, on enhancing accountability of the UN organizations. To meet such a demand, accountability should be strengthened in a broad sense; namely, instead of limiting to strengthen narrowly defined "internal" accountability called "managerial accountability", accountability involving, in addition to States, a direct or indirect participation of non-state actors (including "We the Peoples of the United Nations") in the policy (mandates) making processes, as well as accountability for the results of the mandated activities to all the stakeholders should be strengthened.

19. Streamlining and rationalization of the UN structures, methods of work etc.:

It is a reality that the complexity and fragmentation as well as a lack of coherence of the UN system organizations with respect to governance structure, funding arrangement, management methods etc. have become not only the bottlenecks for effective and efficient execution of mandated activities but also the root causes for bringing about overlaps, unnecessary competitions etc. In this view, a renewed attention should be paid to issues such as streamlining and rationalization of the structures, methods of work etc. of the UN organizations.

20. Partnership between multiple actors and the UN's role:

In reflection of the changing environment surrounding the UN organizations, tasks to be dealt with by the UN have become diversified and the relative importance between various tasks (priorities) has been changing constantly. In the light of this situation, not only the States (governments) and international organizations such as UN (composed of States) but also the roles of entities such as civil society, private sector and local authority have come to be increasingly important. Accordingly, and bearing also in mind the question of legitimacy of UN, it is desirable to aim at establishing a proper partnership between UN (as the facilitator) and other actors, thus realizing a synergy among multiple actors to cope with formidable global challenges.