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Statement by HE Karen Pierce
Charge d'Affaires, United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations
on the occasion of the briefing by the Co-Chairs for
System-Wide Coherence
13 March, 2009

Excellencies,

I would like to make a few additional comments to those delivered by the EU Presidency.

First, I would like to extend my congratulations to both of you on your appointment as Co-Chairs. You have an important task ahead of you. I can assure you of the full support of my government in your efforts. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement. The current economic crisis will have a profound effect on our efforts to attain the MDGs unless we take co-ordinated action across the international system. Your continued leadership on development system reforms during this crisis is much appreciated and needed.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the previous Co-Chairs, the Permanent Representatives of Ireland and Tanzania for their work last year. Their efforts to include views from the country-level provided us with a vivid illustration of the challenges our partners face. Last year's consensus marked an important step forward. We need to continue to build on this momentum while respecting the views of partner countries.

Excellencies,

We collectively need a strong UN development system that is responsive to partner countries' needs. We need to continue to improve the way it operates. We have seen positive change – for example, in the pilot countries - but much remains to be done. Evidence will be critical. Getting the evaluation of the pilots underway must be a priority.

We now have an opportunity to make progress on three critical issues: gender, funding and governance, the core areas of the system-wide coherence reforms.

We recognise that there are strong views on funding and governance reforms. Reforms need to address the legitimate concerns of partner countries. We hope that the forthcoming discussions will build trust among the membership so that we can move forward together. The papers being produced by the Secretariat will stimulate discussion between us, and help to bridge some of the divides that have polarised the debate to date.

Together we need to find the best options for a stronger United Nations development system that is capable of responding to the magnitude of the global economic crisis we now collectively face. The UK recognises that we need to improve the quality of our funding to the UN. We want to provide increased levels of core funding to the UN during the coming years. But we all have a responsibility to ensure that aid is managed in the most effective way so that there is more funding available at the country level to help deliver the MDGs. We know that the UN's governance architecture can be further improved. We want to work with all the membership to ensure that our forthcoming discussions are fruitful. Change must be our imperative, not further division.

On gender, we agree that this year is an historic opportunity to make progress on strengthening the UN's approach to gender. We would like to encourage other member states to proactively engage in dialogue on these reforms. We have collectively made much progress on improving the lives of the world's women and making progress towards achieving the MDGs. We need to build on this, but also to ensure progress already made is not reversed. We hope to work closely with member states and UN bodies in the coming months to build consensus around a desirable outcome. A vital part of these reforms will be the appointment of a strong UN champion at the centre. This person will need to lead the new entity, but also be a strong public voice defending the needs and rights of women everywhere. Ideally, this person should be appointed at Under-Secretary General level.

Finally, can I reassure you, again, that you have the full support of my government in your efforts to deliver this agenda over the coming months.

Thank you.