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**United Nations Development Programme/  
United Nations Population Fund**

Executive Board

**Second regular session 2006**

11-15 September 2006

Item 7 of the provisional agenda\*

**United Nations Children's Fund**

Executive Board

**Second regular session 2006**

6-8 September 2006

Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*\*

**Options to further improve and streamline the current harmonized  
country programme approval process**

1. The Executive Boards of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in decisions 2005/9 and 2005/28 respectively, requested a jointly elaborated report on possible options to further improve and streamline the current harmonized country programme approval procedure, so as to decrease the time frame for developing and approving country programmes and to better synchronize them with the length of cycle of the respective national country programme instruments, bearing in mind the need to maintain the institutional integrity and organizational mandate of each agency. The Executive Board of the World Food Programme continues to be interested in considering simplification of the country programming process.

2. Joint informal consultations were subsequently held on the report prepared for the two Executive Boards. During the informal consultations, it became clear that delegations wanted the resulting decision to focus on proposals to improve and streamline the current harmonized country programme approval procedure. Both Boards took oral decisions at their respective annual sessions of 2006 to bring the item before a subsequent session.

3. Accordingly, the present report presents ideas for modifications to the process used by the respective Executive Boards for approving new country programmes. It has

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\* DP/2006/L.3.

\*\* E/ICEF/2006/18.

been elaborated jointly by the agencies of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group and has benefited from discussions with Member States, including during the 2006 annual sessions of the UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA Executive Boards.

4. The ideas presented in this report recognize and reaffirm the principle of national ownership and leadership. They also seek to ensure the continuance of the respective Executive Boards' functions through the process of their review and approval of multi-year cooperation programmes, mainly by focusing on the consistency and coherence of these programmes with the multi-year framework or strategic plan of the particular agency, fund or programme.

5. Regarding the timing of the approval of agency country programmes of cooperation, in order to decrease the time frame and to create more scope for synchronization with the length of national programme cycles, as envisaged in the above-mentioned Executive Board decisions, draft country programmes would normally continue to be presented for discussion at the annual sessions of the respective Boards. The country programmes, with any necessary and agreed revisions, would then be posted on the website of the respective agency no later than six weeks after the discussion, with the provision of a hard copy of the revised document to Board members by the secretariat, and would be approved by the Board at the second regular session, unless at least five members have informed the secretariat in writing before the session of their wish to bring a particular country programme to the Executive Board for further discussion. This measure is intended to speed up preparation for actual implementation of the approved programme at country level, while maintaining the existing approval procedures.

6. It is also envisaged that the submission and approval of country programmes by the respective Executive Boards will continue to use the guidelines for length and content adopted in decision 2002/4 (paragraph 1(b)) and decision 2001/11 (paragraph 7 (b)) of the UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA Executive Boards respectively. In order to improve results-based planning and management, and to strengthen the alignment between the country programme documents and national strategies on the one hand, and the respective medium-term strategic plan/multi-year funding framework as approved by the respective Board on the other, the country programme document should include agency-specific outputs that clearly contribute to the achievement of the outcomes established in the results matrix of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework developed by the respective country. For UNDP and UNFPA, this would require removing the column on country programme outcomes in the country programme documents.

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