

Introductory letter

Introduction

Development and political events, national context

1. On 2 March 2009, Raul Castro (President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers since 24 February 2008,) announced a major cabinet reshuffle. This led to the merger of four ministries (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Ministry of Investment and Economic Cooperation - the main counterpart for all development assistance in Cuba; Ministry of Food Industry and Ministry of Fishing Industry) and the replacement of 11 high ranking government officials (including Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet Secretary, Minister of Finance and Prices, and Minister of Economy and Planning). This is the largest cabinet reorganization in recent history.
2. In March 2009, Costa Rica and El Salvador, the only Central American countries then maintaining diplomatic freeze with Cuba, announced the intentions to re-establish relations with Havana. In a resolution met on 3 June 2009, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) lifted without conditions its 47-year-old ban on Cuba's membership. Even though Cuban government expressed its appreciation the conciliatory signal from its neighbours, it refused to re-establish its association with the OAS. In July 2009 Cuba handed over the presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to Egypt, after having chaired it from 2006. Cuba is also an active member of the Group of 77 (G77), Grupo de Río, Alternativa Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA) and Petrocaribe. During 2008 and 2009, Cuba also deepened relations with African and Asian countries, and reinforced its ties with China and Russia.
3. US President Barack Obama announced in mid-April 2009 the elimination of the restrictions on travel for Cuban-Americans and on circulation of remittances to Cuba, imposed by the Bush administration since 2004. In addition, US telecommunication companies were authorized to apply for licenses to do business in Cuba, and the limit on the kinds and quantity of humanitarian-related goods that can be sent to Cuba from US has also been eased. The main Embargo restrictions were renewed through the signature of the extension of the exclusions under the Trading with the Enemy Act (September, 2009).
4. On 28 October 2009, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to condemn, for the 18th consecutive year, the embargo imposed in 1962 by the US Government on Cuba. The General Assembly passed the Resolution A/64/6 Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, after a record vote in favour by 187 out of the 192 members of the General Assembly.
5. Throughout 2009, Cuba has reinforced cooperation relations with the European Commission (EC), which were re-established on 23 October 2008, after a five-year freeze. The renewed relations have translated into a 40-million-Euro package of development cooperation assistance for the period 2008-2009. This rapprochement was solidified by the visit in November 2009 of the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Karel de Gucht, and opened the door for bilateral cooperation with EU member states.

6. The Communist Party of Cuba, governing political party, decided to postpone its plans to hold the VI Party Congress (it was originally planned for the last quarter of 2009). This will be the first Party Congress since 1997. This congress is extremely important to confirm the overall political direction of the country for the upcoming years.

7. Cuba has been categorized as a middle-income country and ranks 51st among 182 countries in the Human Development Report 2009. The important losses caused by the intense hurricane season in 2008, as well as the global economic and financial crisis, and high costs for imported food, have severely affected the economic situation of the island during 2009. Cuba's Economy and Planning Minister announced in December a reduction of 2009 GDP growth forecasts to 1.4%, down from a previous forecast of 6% (in January), of 2.5% (in May) and of 1.75% (in July). The GDP growth expected for 2010 is set at 1.9%. The liquidity crisis caused by the balance of payments has added to the aforementioned economic trends, leading to a decline in foreign investment and limited access to foreign credit.

8. As a consequence of the high food import prices, as well as of the dramatic loss of crops and stored food caused by the 2008 hurricanes season, Cuban government set as a national priority the food production and food-import-substitution policy via furthering the reform in the agricultural sector. This reform process continued with the creation of the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) delegations at the municipal level, the granting of idle land access rights to new farmers in order to increase food production; the change in the role of state-owned enterprises (from production to service-delivery); and the creation of sales outlets for agricultural production inputs. Cuba imports 80% of consumed food representing an unsustainable burden in the national budget.

9. Cuba has been moderately affected by the Influenza A H1N1 pandemic, with 53 cases of death reported (as of February 1st, 2010). Cuba's health authorities have been very active in trying to prevent the pandemic spread in the island, by controlling and following up passengers' health status at the main entry points, centralizing the epidemic surveillance and treatment sites and launching a country-wide awareness-raising campaign via national media. Cuba was also affected by a spread of dengue and conjunctivitis throughout 2009.

10. On 5 February 2009, Cuba underwent a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the fulfilment of the human rights obligations, organized by the Human Rights Council (HRC). The government in Cuba issued an invitation to the UN "Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", Mr. Alfred Novak, whose visit to the country, planned for 2009, has been postponed.

Summary on Progress in UN Reform

Highlights on progress in UN reform

- (i) efforts to align with the national development processes

16. The UNS in Cuba held meetings with key national partners on national priorities and policies through its interagency mechanisms. The Interagency Group on Health and HIV/AIDS met with officials and specialists from the Ministry of Public Health and from the National Centre for the Prevention of STIs and HIV/AIDS, in order to keep the UNS projects/initiatives aligned with the National Programme to Fight HIV/AIDS. The Interagency Group on Food Security exchanged with an official of the Ministry of Economy on challenges, strengths, threats and national policies on food security in the Cuban context. This group also held a meeting with a Vice-minister of Agriculture on the key priorities and strategies drawn up by this ministry. The Interagency Group on Natural Disasters and Risk shared information and exchanged with the Civil Defence on the national response to the hurricane season and its lessons learnt, as part of a lessons learnt workshop session. The Interagency group on Local Human development maintained a close working relationship with the Ministry of Economy on new policies to promote decentralization of production and services.

17. Two new joint programmes funded by the MDG-F were launched in 2009. The joint programme "Support for the fight against Anemia in vulnerable groups in Cuba" directly supports the National Plan for Iron Deficiency and Anemia Prevention and Control, which has a sector-wide nature in coordination with the Health Sector. This programme directly contributes to achieving the objectives of the National Plan, as a result of the direct alignment with its core strategies and contributes to multiple MDGs as it targets young children and mothers. The joint programme "Support for new decentralization initiatives and production stimulation in Cuba" is fully aligned with the Local Municipal Development Initiative promoted by the national authorities. The aim of this initiative is to support the municipalities in drawing up and implementing their own development strategies.

18. The Resident Coordinator and UNCT members held meetings with the key national counterparts (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment, Ministry of Environment, Civil Defense, Ministry of Economy and Planning as well as sectorial ministries) in order to ensure the alignment of UNS development goals and UNDAF with Cuban priorities.

(ii) support to the national government in the advancing the achievement of the Millennium Declaration/MDGs;

19. The joint multisectoral application to the MDG-Achievement Fund increased the awareness of several key national institutions on the links between MDGs and the national priorities and goals. In the early stages of the joint programmes elaboration, discussions with key policymakers on MDGs were developed, especially on those the programmes contributed to.

20. The UNS continued to strengthen the joint work on MDGs with the National Office of Statistics (ONE). It supported ONE national publication of: "Cuba en cifras. Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio 2009". Additionally the Cuban MDGs local Statistics Publication was presented by ONE to the UN staff.

(iii) progress UNCTs are making collectively in support of the national partners' endeavours towards capacity development and aid effectiveness;

21. ECLAC and UNDP, through an interagency initiative, are currently supporting Cuban government and the National Office of Statistics (ONE) in order to strengthen ONE's capacities to adjust to international standards of macroeconomic comparison in the calculation of major economic indicators including the GNP.

22. The UNS in Cuba held four meetings with international cooperation partners. In the first meeting, which took place in March, the UNS response to the hurricane season 2008 was presented, particularly focusing on the UNS Post-Hurricane Action Plan. It represented a forum to exchange experiences and lessons learnt on international community response to natural disasters in the Cuban context. Recognizing the relevance of south-south cooperation in the country, not only traditional "donors" but also Cuba's important Latin American partners were invited to this meeting. Additionally, two meetings were held with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in September and October, with the aim of analyzing the progress of the Spanish cooperation with the UNS in Cuba. The UNCT also met with the European Commission (EC) in September to discuss on EC Environment and Food Security programming frameworks and its funding windows.

(iv) experiences of common programming, including HACT;

23. A UNCT strategic planning retreat was held in February 2009, with the objective of strengthening the coordination capacity of UNCT to work as a team. The UNCT reviewed the achievement of the expected results of UNS work plan 2008 and established its strategic priorities for 2009. The retreat took place in an Eastern province and the UNCT could also exchange on the Local Human Development Programme mechanisms and reflected on opportunities for interagency cooperation at local level.

24. The interagency work in Cuba is strongly supported by nine interagency groups (the UNCT, five programmatic groups and three operational groups). The UNCT kept a regular fortnightly meeting calendar, with a total of 15 meetings during the year. The other interagency groups met regularly to achieve a more coordinated effort and eliminate duplication in the agencies individual work. The RCO played a key role in supporting the interagency groups and the interagency topics that do not have a working group.

25. The elaboration of the two MDG-F joint programmes represented the main programmatic interagency effort. Both documents were the result of a joint design and elaboration effort from the main participating stakeholders. The elaboration process of the joint programmes extended from March to September 2009, and centred the work of the two interagency groups (IG) involved –the IG on Food Security and the IG on Human Local Development– and of more than 10 national institutions. The joint programme "Support for the fight against Anemia in vulnerable groups in Cuba" (8.5 million USD) was jointly developed by five UNS agencies (FAO, OPS/OMS, PMA, PNUD, UNICEF –lead agency) and four national ministries, whereas in the joint programme "Support for new decentralization initiatives and production stimulation in Cuba" (7 million USD) three UNS agencies (FAO, PNUD –lead agency– and UNESCO) and five national ministries were involved. The Ministry of Trade and

Foreign Investment (MINCEX), main counterpart of the UNS in Cuba, played an essential role in the coordination of the national participation. The parallel elaboration process entailed an extra challenge for many of the key players involved in both programmes, both for the national counterparts as well as for the UN staff.

26. The formulation process unfolded against the background of a major government reshuffle in the country. Merges among ministries, changes of ministers, or both were announced during the first week of March, some of which directly affected three (Ministry of Agriculture, MINAG; Ministry of Economy, MEP; MINCEX) of the five key national institutions involved in this process and in the future implementation of the programme.

27. The trend towards joint programming within the UNS Cuba was further deepened in common exercises to develop and submit project proposals to external donors. Within the framework of the Interagency Group on Health and HIV/AIDS, a common strategy was planned and implemented in order to apply for three different modalities of the Programme Acceleration Funds (PAF) offered by UNAIDS. Similarly, the Interagency Group on Natural Disasters and Risks jointly developed a project proposal for the 7th DIPECHO Action Plan for the Caribbean, from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). Even though none of the abovementioned experiences resulted in joint programmes per se, they all developed from an interagency joint programming strategy, and follow a combined structure in which an agency acts as leader whereas a second agency offers a supporting role.

28. Progress was made within the joint programme on desertification and drought, OP 15, financed by the Global Environmental Fund (GEF), where FAO, UNEP and UNDP participate. In this sense, two project proposals, signed in 2008 are currently being implemented.

29. Cuba UNCT requested and received HACT exemption to RDT in August 2008 (covering 2008-2009 period).

30. The capacity of UN staff was strengthened through the implementation of a joint capacity plan consolidated with UN agencies. Each of this training had an interagency approach: agency needs were consolidated and members from all UN agencies participated in the different training sessions. The implemented plan included trainings on ethics, common services, emergency and natural disaster response (lessons learnt from Hurricane season 2008 and SitRep online elaboration), joint programmes, communication, A H1N1 prevention, HIV/AIDS and STIs, security, and UNDAF M&E.

31. OMT made progress in the implementation of common services definition and framework. One workshop, focused on common services procedures (action plan and task forces role) and the OMT response to natural disasters, and was conducted to increase the effectiveness of OMT actions. OMT members were trained on diagnosing, planning and managing common services; strengthening team building capacities and developing and identifying new joint initiatives (specially in the emergency response). This training was designed (with support of RCO) and conducted by two experts on common service and members of UNDG. As a result, OMT drafted a Common Service Plan for the UNS that allowed making recommendations on new common services and enhancement of existing ones.

32. A joint comparative analysis was conducted by OMT members on bank services, exchange rates, telecommunication services and administrative expenses in order to reduce costs and improve efficiency and effectiveness of services. Consequently, the RC and OMT Chair negotiated with national banking authorities the improvement of bank service conditions such as: accounts in Cuban convertible Pesos (harmonization of exchange rates applied to agencies), and frequency of bank statements received, among others. Likewise, OMT continued to identify the provision of common services by contractors, hotel services and travel agencies and therefore, four contracts with institutions were extended and a joint purchase of office supplies among some agencies was conducted. Furthermore, OMT kept inviting different national and international suppliers and service providers to OMT to make presentations so as to broaden the roster of service providers by different areas of specialties. In order to support these activities, three task forces were created on travel services, procurement and bank services. OMT also gave utmost priority to penalty and conflict clauses included in contracts with suppliers and contractors. In this sense, written communication was sent to the key national counterparts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment) regarding the procedure to be followed in penalty and conflict solution clauses as current legal language is not in line with the SBAA.

33. In 2009 the UNS in Cuba monitored the response to the hurricanes 2008. The RCO implemented the project “Support the coordination of the implementation of the Plan of Action”, establishing an interagency coordination platform and strengthening UNETE capacities. In this regard, supporting personnel was recruited for the response coordination, an interagency M&E mechanism for the 2008 post-hurricanes projects was created and related reports were rendered to the UNCT and the Government. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) report was submitted to the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in March 2009. Approximately, 22 million USD were channelled to Cuba by the UNS, via the Plan of Action Post Hurricanes 2008 and other UN mobilization mechanisms.

34. The RCO was strengthened through the recruitment of a Risk Management Associate in August 2009. The Panama-based DSS Desk Officer for Cuba (Mr. Luis Castro; Cuba still does not have a UNDSS supported in-country officer despite DO requests) undertook three missions to the island, during which the accuracy and compliance of the main security-related documents were revised and updated (SRA, SRM; MOSS and MORSS). The MOSS self-assessment exercise surpassed the 90% compliance. Following the recommendation of the DSS Desk Officer, the SMT decided to change the Interagency Warden System based on geographic zones, to a Warden system organized by agencies. The new system will be officially implemented in the first quarter of 2010. Revision of the agencies’ contingency plans was initiated to prepare for a potential severe spread of influenza A H1N1. OPS/OMS organized a joint purchase of Tamiflu and face masks for the UNS in Cuba, in addition to the yearly joint purchase of seasonal flu vaccines, which were offered to all staff and their cohabitants during the last quarter of 2009. OPS/OMS has also been in negotiations to obtain a contingent of vaccines against influenza A H1N1 both for the country and for the priority groups of the UNS staff (medical staff; pregnant women and staff with chronic conditions; and essential staff).

35. An RCO/UNDP Communications Officer was recruited in December 2009, who will dedicate 50% of her tasks to the RCO and the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) and the remaining 50% to the UNDP office in Cuba. The coordinated efforts of the UNCG resulted in an increased visibility of the UNS in Cuba, more joint activities during UN international days (Women, Health, Environment, VAW, VIH/AIDS) and the

preparation of joint advocacy materials. The presence of the UNS, RC and Heads of Agency in the national media was frequent and demanded by the media.

36. The highlight of UNCG's 2009 communications plan was "Trazos hacia del Desarrollo", an exhibition of paintings on MDG-related topics offered by 23 of the most renowned artists in Cuba, which took place in February. The artists kindly granted one-year-long reproduction rights of the paintings to the UNS, for their use in MDG advocacy materials. An additional exhibition of MDG-related pictures was the result of a photography contest organized by the UNS in collaboration with the Fototeca de Cuba and the Consejo Nacional de las Artes Plásticas (CNAP; National Council of Arts). The UNS repeated its yearly participation in the Havana International Book Fair, where advocacy activities about the work and message of United Nations are undertaken. The UN Day was celebrated in presence of UNS Cuba staff as well as main counterparts and diplomatic corps. A TV spot about the UNS in Cuba was broadcasted on national TV.

37. The RC and the UNCT in Cuba committed with the Secretary General's Campaign "Unite to End Violence Against Women" through the production of several advocacy materials: a poster to commemorate the International Day to End Violence Against Women (November 25) using one of the paintings appeared on the art exhibition "Trazos hacia el Desarrollo" (see paragraph 36.) and a brochure with information about intra family violence, produced in conjunction with the Cuban Women Federation (FMC). Additionally, five spots from the regional campaign "Latinoamérica: Únete para poner fin a la violencia contra la mujer" are being broadcast since December 2009 for a-year period in the Cuban national TV. The RC supported and participated in activities organized by the FMC on November 25 2009.

38. A new website section on the response to natural disasters in Cuba has been designed and added to the interagency website: The design of an interagency calendar of events and activities was initiated, as well as of a database containing the main features of all projects and programmes of the UNS agencies in Cuba, which will result in an upgraded UNS webpage. The UN Common Services Database with information on contractors and suppliers was updated and OMT members received training on this tool.

39. The RC and UNCT prepared for and received 17 high level missions and visits. These include: Nicky Fabiancic, UNDP Deputy Regional Director, January; Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director General, January; Teresa Rodriguez, UNIFEM Regional Director, February; Jorge Mattar, Deputy-Director of the Subregional ECLAC Office in Mexico, March; Haile Menkerios, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, April; Hind Khatib Othman, Regional Director at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, May; Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, May; Alicia Barcena, ECLAC Executive Secretary, May; H.E. Mr. Miguel d'Escoto, President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly visited Cuba in May and September; Jadranka Mihalik, Director of UN Information Centre for Mexico, Cuba and Dominican Republic, June; Luis Mora, UNFPA Deputy Regional Director, June; Olabibi Babalola Joseph Yaï, Chairperson of UNESCO Executive Board, June; Kandeh Yumkella, UNIDO Director General, July; Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, July; Hugo Beteta, Director of ECLAC's Sub regional Headquarters in Mexico September; Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director General October; and Dr. Mirta Roses, PAHO Director October.

(v) progress on results achieved in cooperation with UN peacekeeping, peace building, political, and humanitarian actors in line with the Secretary General's decision on Integration of June 2008 (where relevant) as well as other highlights in coordination

Summary on Progress Towards UNDAF Outcomes

Highlights on progress towards UNDAF

11. The five UNDAF interagency programmatic groups held regular meetings and followed work plans designed for each cooperation area. A common monitoring matrix was prepared for all UNDAF interagency groups and each of them reported on the projects aligned to UNDAF, facilitating necessary inputs for UNDAF annual review. Likewise, Heads of Agencies in their role as Chairs of interagency groups, reported on progress to UNCT.

12. UN agencies continued to support the implementation of UNDAF-based programmes according to their area of expertise and involving key government partners in the process. To this aim, meetings and exchanges were held with national authorities through interagency interagency groups related to UNDAF cooperation areas. New resources mobilized through different financing and cooperation mechanisms (MDGF, EU, GEF, GFATM and AECID) within the UNDAF framework were around 61 million USD, a record for the UN and surpassing our UNDAF goals. This is directly related to the reestablishment of relations between Cuba and several major donors who see the UN as a trusted development partner.

13. In order to strengthen the implementation of M&E framework, a communication was sent to main national counterpart (MINCEX) on the need to conduct a UNDAF M&E workshop. As a result, a workshop was designed, with the support of Uruguay RCO, aimed at UN programme officers with participation of a MINCEX official. Consequently, UNDAF M&E situation was assessed, M&E calendar and a plan of action were revised and updated, and roles of interagency groups, RCO and agencies were defined. Moreover UNCT agreed on creating an interagency ad hoc group for following up M&E process.

14. In order to strengthen and maximize complementarities and synergies an online database has been designed where agencies will be posting information on their projects linked to UNDAF, MDGs, and geographical areas.

15. UNCT has given relevance to the dissemination of advocacy materials in order to increase awareness among counterparts and population as well. In this sense, publications and communication materials have been designed and distributed among main stakeholders, NGOs and Cuban population such as: brochures with a summary on UNDAF, bookmarks, folders, wall calendars and posters.

Key Aspects of the Proposed 2009 Workplan

Key aspects of proposed Work plan 2010

40. An effective and timely implementation of the two MDG-F joint programmes will center the efforts of the UNCT and the interagency groups involved. Intensified dialogue and cooperation with key national partners involved in the joint programmes, including the National Programmes Offices. Synergies and complementarities between both programmes, as well as homogenization among them (where possible) will be sought.

41. UNDAF's M&E process will be one of the main objectives of the UNCT. The UNDAF M&E calendar and plan will be revised and the interagency groups of the five UNDAF cooperation areas will revise and improve their corresponding M&E matrixes. During the UNDAF's mid-term implementation process, an intensified dialogue with MINCEX will be developed to ensure alignment with national priorities. Periodic reports on UNDAF outcomes progress will be regularly delivered by interagency group chairs.

42. UNS communication plan will be developed and implemented, focusing on the awareness-raising campaign around the MDGs, as well as around the UNS in Cuba and the UNDAF cooperation areas. A Communication strategy will be developed, covering the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the UN. Training on joint communication strategy will be given to UNCG. UNCG will direct its efforts to strengthen its relations with local media.

43. Security management will remain a main concern for RC/DO and the SMT. The transition to an agency-based warden system will be consolidated and strengthened by a simulation exercise. Two designated SMT members will receive training as DO a.i. and the capacity of SMT and security focal points will be further strengthened. The UNCT will continue addressing the issue of emergency preparedness as a priority, as part of its preventive strategy regarding the occurrence of natural disasters.

Recommendations

Recommendations 2009

44. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks and compliance guideline should be established by all new funding mechanisms before they are launched to the field level. In the case of Cuba changing guidelines regarding both the UNDAF and the MDG-F implied retroactivity and the need to train mid stream on issues which the government did not identify as high priority.

45. Quarterly reporting to the main government counterpart on Plan of Action Progress and new joint programme development opportunities was appreciated and improved the quality of the dialogue between the UNS and national authorities.

46. As recommended in the past, all high level UN officials should inform the RC of their plan to undertake visits to the country as a courtesy and it would be desirable if they sought some sort of engagement with the RC or UNCT while in country. In some notable occasions this did not occur and strengthens the impression of an uncoordinated UN system.