

Mozambique Hosts UNDP Regional Management Team And Encourages Discussion On Development Priorities

Maputo, 26 March 2008 - Greeted by a colorful, traditional Mozambican choir, dancers and drummers, UNDP Resident Representatives and Country Directors from Africa Region arrived today at the Conference Hall of Joaquim Chissano here Maputo, for the opening ceremony of the organization's annual Regional Bureau for Africa Regional Management Team Meeting (RMTM). RMTM was lastly held in Brazaville, and this year Maputo is hosting this important event for UNDP and development partners.

Several eminent personalities from Mozambique were present at the meeting and spotlighted Mozambique as a prime example of post war development and for the current One UN Reforms.

“Indeed, it is not accident that Mozambique was asked to be one of the 8 ‘Delivering as One’ Pilot countries. This has demonstrated just how effective the UN can be in support of the country’s priorities. In this regard, the positive experience of the One UN underway in Mozambique will constitute a valuable lesson for the rest of the UN system in Africa and beyond”, Gilbert Hougbo, Regional Director for Africa stated at the opening ceremony.

Mozambique’s Minister for State Administration, Lucas Chomera, said that his country is honoured to host the gathering and that he hopes it will help strengthen the partnership between Africa and the UN. “It is extremely timely since the mid-term evaluation of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) implementation has determined that Africa, by herself, will not achieve the agreed MDGs by 2015”, he said.

During the week-long gathering, participants will discuss UNDP’s assistance strategies and tools with a view to finding a balance between a long list of broad development priorities and also determining how to counterbalance priorities that are formulated internationally with those which emanate from African countries.

Following the opening ceremony, conflict prevention and resolution as well as the new aid architecture after the Paris Declaration took centre stage, for a panel of prominent personalities from the UN family, African governments and donors.

“The support to create an enabling political development encouraging dialogue should be a key priority”, said, Joaquim Chissano, UN Special Envoy to Uganda and former President of Mozambique. “Through dialogue with the people we help to resolve the problems that affect them, and issue which is too often neglected in African policies”, he said, pointing out that enhanced focus on dialogue as an overarching theme would not only improve development assistance effectiveness but could also bring together different political, ethnic and social groups to help prevent conflicts. “There is no substitution for dialogue,” he argued.

While Chissano urged African policy-makers to re-examine their own traditional governance norms, he also recommended that the UN system re-visit its own mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution and find ways to become more pro-active as a broker for dialogue.

Accountability in the development aid structure was the main priority underlined by Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, the South African Minister of Public Service and Administration: “I am not only mentioning accountability of African partners, but also for donors”. A new mechanism for bringing mutual accountability to the aid structure -- she suggested -- could be the creation of a dedicated ombudsman who could have the authority to impose fines or penalties for breaches of development aid agreements. By doing this, and by going beyond the harmonization both beneficiaries and donors would be held accountable and own the process of development.

“The UN is already on the right track”, said Margaret Vogt, Deputy Director of Africa 1 Division, UN Dept. for Political Affairs. “We are already building partnerships on the ground, she said, “but we have to do more to go the same way and we have to walk faster”.

Other panelists included Dr. Victor Fodeke, Head of the Special Climate Change Unit in Nigeria’s Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban Development; Mikio Moro, Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations in New York.

During an afternoon session, participants discussed the role of Africa in international initiatives in 2008, including TICAD IV in Yokohama, Japan and The Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in Accra, Ghana.