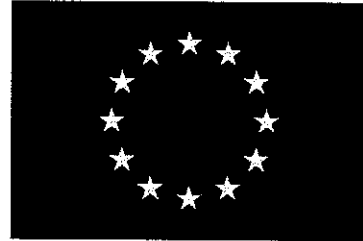




UNITED NATIONS



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Joint Action Plan on Visibility

Introduction

The European Commission and the United Nations (hereinafter 'the Parties') have agreed to improve communications about and visibility of co-financed external assistance programmes.

To that end, it has been agreed in the course of the annual Working Group meeting on the implementation of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA), which took place in April 2006, to develop a Joint Action Plan focussing on strategic issues. On the basis of this, joint visibility guidelines will be developed.

This action plan aims at clarifying the scope of the visibility clauses (section 11, articles 11.1 to 11.4) included in the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement, signed on 29 April 2003 (hereinafter "the FAFA") between the European Commission and the United Nations (hereinafter, "the Parties"), as well as establishing a course of action for improving public understanding of the role of the Parties in co-financed operations.

It describes actions to be undertaken to strengthen the understanding of and support for key humanitarian and development messages among authorities, non-state actors and the general public in beneficiary countries in EU member states and interested parties in the wider donor community.

Strategic considerations

Since 2001, the UN and the EC have engaged in a series of discussions on establishing a framework for partnership¹. These efforts culminated in the signing of the EC/UN Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) in 2003 and in the conclusion of strategic partnerships with a number of UN bodies².

¹ Relevant documents include EC communications on "*Building an effective partnership with the United Nations in the fields of Development and Humanitarian Affairs*" (2001) and "*The European Union and the United Nations: The choice of multilateralism*" (2003) and UN documents on "*A vision of partnership: the UN and the European Union in Humanitarian Affairs and Development*".

² To date, six strategic partnership agreements have been signed, with the UNDP (June 2004), WHO, ILO (July 2004) and FAO (September 2004), UNHCR (February 2005), and WFP (September 2005). European Community assistance to UNRWA began in 1971, with the latest convention covering the period 2002-2005.

The UN and the EC share many common concerns about global issues and are continuously engaged in policy discussions and information exchange. The EC and the UN have a common interest in communicating key messages and highlighting the fruits of their collaboration.

The UN and EC agree that there is a need to communicate the positive results of their partnership more effectively to beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Both organisations have an obligation to be transparent about the use of public funds, and both have an interest in underlining global solidarity.

The UN and the Commission are natural partners by virtue of the extensive field presence of both organisations and many shared policy agendas. The Commission recognises the added value of partnering with the UN in specific circumstances. The UN recognises the importance of the Commission as a key strategic partner and a major donor, and acknowledges the Commission's consistent commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The increasing emphasis in the Commission on co-financing with international institutions is the result of political decisions taken as part of the drive to improve co-ordination and effectiveness. This approach involves significant gains, both in terms of reducing transaction costs for beneficiaries and in improving aid effectiveness. It should not result in reduced visibility of the Commission contribution.

By working together, the Commission and the UN are well placed to shape policy in a way that supports effective implementation at country level. While the Commission is often able to facilitate co-ordination, in particular among EU Member States, it appreciates the co-ordinating role that the UN often also plays. The UN works with donors and beneficiaries world-wide and is well-placed to access specialist expertise. Both the Commission and the UN have field presence throughout the world and are well placed to ensure that planned interventions can effectively contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. The Commission recognises the value of the UN in conferring the legitimacy needed by donors to operate in highly sensitive or volatile environments.

Existing framework of co-operation

The current framework for co-operation between the Commission and the United Nations in relation to visibility is the FAFA. This agreement, which is the subject of annual implementation review meetings and which applies to UN programmes, funds and organisations clearly sets out the minimum obligations of the UN in relation to visibility. These obligations are set out under section 11 of the FAFA itself and are repeated and expanded under Article 6 of the General Conditions applicable to European Community contribution agreements with international organisations.

If needed and agreed by both parties, this framework can be developed to better reflect the need to take a more holistic approach to communication and visibility, which gives due weight to the partnership operating between the Commission and the UN and which allows for greater innovation in the way this aspect is funded.

Joint visibility guidelines will serve to explain the existing framework and, through their use, to identify those areas in need of further development.

Respect of the visibility provisions of the Framework Agreement

1. Both Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the visibility provisions of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement, as clarified by this action plan, are duly respected, and that their services comply with their respective visibility obligations. Each contribution agreement signed by the Parties will complement the visibility provisions of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement by including a visibility plan and budget adapted to the specific action.
2. The services of the European Commission, including its Delegations, and the relevant services of the United Nations, will, in the framework of their respective regular reporting requirements, report on their assessment of the implementation of the visibility provisions of the specific contribution agreements.
3. The result of the reports on visibility mentioned in the previous paragraph will be discussed in the meeting of the annual Working Group between the Commission and the United Nations provided for in section 13 (13.1) of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement. Specific recommendations to improve the implementation of such visibility provisions, as necessary, may be adopted during the meeting of the annual Working Group.

High level visits

Where high level visits are planned concerning activities co-funded by the Commission, the Parties will inform each other and consider co-ordinating these visits and agreeing on joint messages.

Trust Fund Management

Where the European Commission contributes predominantly to a Trust Fund it would expect to have an appropriate role in the Technical and Steering Committees, where contributors participate.

Joint press conferences, donor conferences and public debates:

The United Nations and the European Commission should, if appropriate, invite each other to participate at press conferences, donor conferences and public debates on programmes and Trust Funds where the European Commission is a significant contributor.

Other initiatives for better visibility

The Parties will strive to work together to improve visibility of co-financed actions, both in the field and in the EU. Special initiatives such as material for schools, website management and development, shared photo banks and TV spots should be considered where appropriate in the visibility plan referred to above, and the necessary financial provision made in the visibility plan.

Staff

Improving visibility will depend primarily on initiatives of staff in both institutions. These initiatives will be agreed during the negotiation of each contribution agreement and their cost covered by the agreement. The Parties will strive to reinforce the training of their staff in communication skills and to disseminate best practices through appropriate channels.

Guidelines

The Parties will adopt joint guidelines to clarify and support their co-operation in relation to visibility.

For the European Community, represented by the European Commission **For the United Nations**

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