



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

31 December 2018

Dear Colleagues,

As the year comes to an end, I wish to express my gratitude for your work and support to the ongoing reforms of the United Nations. There is no doubt that 2018 has placed multilateralism under test. However, the year concludes on a measure of hope, with many efforts coming to fruition. The successful outcome of the climate conference in Poland – enabling a strong platform for the Climate Summit in 2019, the adoption of a landmark Global Compact on Migration, and the agreements on Yemen that might mark a starting point for peace and for ending the humanitarian crisis, show the benefits of painstaking diplomacy and unity in pursuit of a common cause.

The year has also seen significant progress – and unprecedented ambitious mandates by the General Assembly – in our efforts to strengthen the management of the Organization and reposition the United Nations to address challenges to peace and security and sustainable development, grounded in respect for human rights. These reforms come at a critical time in the history of our Organization. I am convinced that the reform of the United Nations development system will enable us to better demonstrate our value and impact in eradicating poverty, preventing human suffering and promoting a better future for all.

While many may argue that the relevance of the United Nations is at stake, Member States have given us a clear vote of confidence through the mandates of General Assembly resolution 72/279 to reposition the United Nations development system. They have also given us the opportunity to prove our ability to adapt to changing needs by counting on us to rise to the challenge. It is now time to take decisive action and implement all reform mandates.

Much will depend on you, our Resident Coordinators – and I was glad to meet with you to discuss these important issues this past October. The Resident Coordinator system rests at the heart of the United Nations ability to deliver results on the ground. As of 1 January 2019, you will start a new journey with an independent, empowered and impartial role to drive collective results of United Nations country teams. This is a major shift at many levels – from operational matters to the mindset required to fulfil this function successfully.

You will be the highest-ranking representatives of the United Nations development system on the ground, with my direct backing and support. This comes with increased authority and responsibility, but also requires even stronger capacities, humility, and transparent and inclusive leadership.

All Resident Coordinators of the United Nations

You will need to lead by example, as the system adjusts and catches up with the shift towards a new generation of United Nations country teams, a strengthened United Nations Development Assistance Framework which will act as the United Nations development system's primary planning instrument, as well as a reconfigured physical presence, and a shared approach to delivering results at the country level.

There is no other way to go. Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals requires that we respond as a system, building on each other's strengths and along with stronger alignment to national priorities and needs. I expect you to lead this shift with determination, but also a spirit of collaboration and creativity, to find solutions to old and new challenges.

Your key task will be to position your United Nations country team as an indispensable partner to Governments in their journey towards 2030. In order to do so, you will need to seize new opportunities, innovate, be strategic and above all draw on all our assets to provide high-quality operational support and integrated policy advice. You will also need to be able to advocate, explain our work, and tell the story of our successes, and at times, our shortcomings, which we will continue to address moving forward.

As you are called to lead the collective response of the United Nations development system on the ground, you will need to earn your authority. You will have to demonstrate your value to all members of the United Nations family and partners in government and beyond. You will need to use the resources at your disposal to incentivize and enable the work of your country team. You will need to show your creativity, your analytical insights, your ability to see the whole picture and communicate it effectively. You will be our main agents of transformation as this journey proceeds.

In doing so, you will not be alone. You can count on my unwavering support, as never before, in this important endeavour. I will continue to underscore the importance of your role with all Principals of the United Nations, with national Governments, and with the partners of the United Nations. I will support you when difficult decisions have to be made as you strive to generate a shared vision and common sense of purpose for our work at the country level across all agencies, funds and programmes.

Together, we will ensure your offices are equipped with the right people and skill sets, in a transition process that will unfold throughout 2019. We will continue to raise funds for inter-agency programming, such as through the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Spotlight Initiative. We will champion a dual reporting system with your agency colleagues, based on the Management and Accountability Framework that will be available in January 2019, while we build a more accountable system-wide response to national needs and priorities.

You can also count on strengthened support and backstopping from Headquarters through our stand alone, strengthened Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO), the functions and structure of which will be established through a Secretary-General's bulletin that will enter into effect on 1 January 2019. In the coming days, I will be appointing the new Head of UNDOCO, at the level of Assistant Secretary-General, who will be – alongside the UNDOCO advanced team – your key interlocutor as you navigate the early days of transition. We will continue to place a priority focus on UNDOCO recruitments until the office is at full capacity in the first half of 2019.

UNDOCO will serve as a one-stop shop should you require advice on issues relating to human resources, budgetary administration, resource planning and substantive support on coordination issues, working hand-in-hand with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office of Human Resources Management. I am grateful for the leadership of UNDP for having created a dedicated rapid response team for administrative issues relating to the transition of the Resident Coordinator system, including related staff members, from UNDP to the Secretariat.

With support by the Head of UNDOCO, issues of a strategic or extraordinary nature that require direct attention by senior leadership will be escalated to the Deputy Secretary-General, as Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. I also intend to maintain a direct dialogue with you, as my representatives for sustainable development, as we set up a system to ensure a direct link to my office on issues that may warrant so.

Resident Coordinators and country teams are the face of the United Nations for most citizens of the planet. Your words and your actions are the mark that the United Nations will leave in a country and with its people. This reform is about improving our ability to support countries to have an impact in people's lives, preventing strife and building resilience for a peaceful and prosperous world. I count on you to carry the torch, on my behalf and that of all Member States and peoples of the United Nations.

With my sincere appreciation and warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

António Guterres