

30 January 2008

To: Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary General  
United Nations  
New York

Dear Mr. Ban Ki-moon,

**Subject: UN Resident Coordinator Report for 2007 for the United Arab Emirates & Qatar**

I have the pleasure to enclose here with for your kind attention the Annual Resident Coordinator Report reflecting the United Nations operational activities for development undertaken by the country office in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the State of Qatar in 2007.

In recent years, several UN agencies have set up major operations in the UAE and hosted in Dubai Humanitarian City. Some of these agencies are operating under the Basic Agreement between UNDP and the Government of UAE and are generally relying upon UNDP for logistical support.

Currently, there are 12 UN agencies with presence in the UAE. UNDP and FAO have country representations in Abu Dhabi, the capital, while UNICEF, UNHCR and UNIFEM have staffs that are accommodated in the UNDP CO (the UN House). WFP, UNDSS, OCHA, OCHA-IRIN, UNHCR, UNOPS and UNU have activities initiated from Dubai but mainly to serve other countries in the region and beyond the region. Non-resident UN agencies have activities in the country and is generally implemented in cooperation with UNDP.

In Qatar, UNDP resumed its activities in 2006, after signing a MoU between UNDP and State of Qatar, and the UNDP-UAE country office is managing Qatar's activities. FAO and UNESCO operate in Qatar, the first has a country presence and the second has a sub-regional office. In 2007 UNODC established a sub-regional office and OHCHR will have their sub regional office set up in 2008.

The number of international staff in UAE and Qatar at the end of 2007 was 67 and 6, respectively and the locally recruited staff members were 106 and 13 correspondingly. Meanwhile, the number of VIP missions that have visited Qatar or UAE in 2007 were 12. Furthermore, the number of UN flights that operated from Dubai was 245, carrying 16,396 UN personnel from January to October 2007.

The UN technical cooperation activities and coordination in UAE & Qatar are characterized by special circumstances among which are:

- a) Both countries are classified as Net Contributor Countries as GDP per capita exceed US\$ 5,500 and was estimated at US\$ 34,000 and 36,500 (PPP US\$) in UAE and Qatar respectively in 2006;
- b) UN presence in UAE benefits from the free logistical facilities that have been offered by the Emirate of Dubai and use Dubai city as a regional hub to reach out to other countries in the region.

- c) UNDP, on the other hand, has a full fledged country programme for UAE and initiated and/or implemented about half dozen projects in Qatar in 2007;
- d) Although, the two countries have relatively high development indices; nevertheless, there is demand for highly qualified expertise, mostly at the policy decision-making level. UAE and Qatar were ranked 39<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> respectively in the HDI in the HDR of 2007/2008.

### **Economic, political, and development trends**

#### *a) UAE:*

At economic realm, real GDP growth rates have been strong in recent years and estimated at 9.7 and 7.5 in per cent annually in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Inflation rate, on the other hand, increased from 5.0 per cent in 2004 to around 10.1 and 14.0 per cent in 2006 and 2007, correspondingly. This is attributed to the high oil revenues, which boosted fiscal earnings substantially and has allowed for major expenditure increases. Inflation has also been picking-up as the result of weakening the US dollar to which UAE currency is pegged.

The UAE government continues to pursue economic diversification strategy in order to reduce economic dependency of economic growth on oil sector. In 2005, for example, service sectors accounted to 44 per cent of the GDP and manufacturing sector to another 13 per cent, while extraction sector (mainly oil) contributed 32 per cent. FDI inflows, on the other hand, increased to US\$ 10 billions in 2005 amounting to nearly 34 per cent of the total foreign capital flow (US\$ 29.6 billion) into the Arab World. Domestic and international investments have paid dividends as far as economic growth is concerned and, indeed, placed the UAE the first place both regionally and globally.

Elections were held across UAE in December 2006 to elect 20 of the 40 members of the Federal National Council, while the other half continues to be appointed by the rulers of the seven emirates that constitute the UAE Federation. The 20 elected members were voted through Electoral College, which led to the election of one woman. The vote was the Emirates' first since it become independent from Britain in 1971, and it is hoped that it ushers a process of a wider democratization in the coming years.

According to the 2005 population census, UAE had 4.1 million of which about 20 per cent are nationals, while the remaining are foreigners (mostly labor from the sub-Indian content). The number of workers was more than doubled between 1995 and 2005, from 1.2 to 2.6 million.

#### *b) Qatar:*

Qatar's economy has also been growing at unprecedented pace in recent years. For the past three years, the GDP at current prices increased from 23 billion US dollars in 2003 to 52 billion in 2006. The growth has been driven by oil and gas sector which accounted for 62 per cent of GDP in 2006. With the anticipated increases in the demand for oil and gas, GDP is forecasted to grow by 7.8 and 9.5 in 2007 and 2008, respectively. However, in Qatar like elsewhere in the Gulf region the inflation rate has increased from 2.3 in 2003 to 11.8 in 2006.

With oil prices at historically high levels, Qatar has pursued a programme of economic liberalization aimed at encouraging FDI and developing a more diversified economic base. The strategy is aimed at attracting investments to develop the gas sector (the third largest in the world), while simultaneously encouraging private and foreign investment into other economic sectors. According to UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2006 FDI inflows into Qatar increased from US\$ 624 millions in 2003 to 1,469 millions in 2007.

Qatar is undergoing gradual political reforms, under the direction of the emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. The apex of this programme will be the creation of a new parliament, the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), which will have legislative power. In pursuance of political reforms, municipal elections were held in Qatar in 2007, which are seen as forerunner to the first partial parliamentary elections in Qatar.

Qatar remains politically stable and committed to both regional and international cooperation and has been investing significant resources to contribute to international development. This is testified by hosting several international conferences and meetings the last of which is the 7th Doha Forum for Democracy, Development and Free Trade. In 2007 Qatar has also hosted South-South High-Level Meeting on the future of new oil producing nations, which Qatar and other petroleum exporting countries shared their knowledge and experience with emerging and potential oil and gas producing nations from the South.

### **Summary on progress in UN Reform**

While UNDP is the only ExCom agency with full fledged programme and representation in UAE, a number of non-resident UN agencies continue to deliver specialized development services in the country. In 2007, UNCT agreed that UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA will coordinate their activities in the areas of HIV/AIDS and Women Empowerment in the spirit of UN reform. Other UN system activities in the UAE include: i) UNHCR documentation of refugees and registration of asylum seekers in the UAE, which were 159 and 64 cases, respectively; ii) FAO support to capacity development to strengthen the operation of the national agricultural information centre, which will act as a national and regional resource for agricultural information management. Further, through sharing information, the initiative will create and strengthen networks of trained experts and decision makers to support food security among the Gulf States and neighboring Middle Eastern countries; and iii) UNODC tackling of drug abuse and the trafficking of illicit drugs in UAE and regionally. UNODC will help upgrade the Dubai Police Training Centre into a centre of excellence for the region-wide transfer of knowledge and the training of law enforcement staff. UNICEF is also involved in the UAE with repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of children previously involved in camel racing in the UAE. UNICEF's TA has a strong component of community-based work and capacity building of government institutions aiming at developing child protection mechanisms for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, and violence.

Furthermore, delivering as ONE in UAE and Qatar, numerous TA missions were mounted jointly with: ESCWA, ILO and UNDESA, SURF-AS, UNDP-BDP, and UNDP-HARPAS; these missions provided capacity development -- human and institutional - and sectoral specific support at the national and emirate levels.

The assistance of the UN/UNDP in the implementation of developmental projects and the provision of highly qualified consultants to execute TA projects contribute to national capacity development and, more importantly, national ownership of developmental programmes. Furthermore, it aligns all developmental activities in the two countries with their national development priorities.

### **Major Results Achieved in Qatar and UAE in 2007**

The following refer to UNDP activities in key thematic areas that are pertinent to the case of Qatar and UAE.

a) Qatar:

UNDP activities in Qatar in 2007 focused on: HIV/AIDS, economic governance, environment protection and the preparation of Qatar's second National HDR. The interventions provided the State of Qatar with high level

advisory services and support to overcome its human and institutional challenges. Furthermore, in each area of TA, the core task was enhancing national capacities and advocating national ownership of the developmental support. The Qatar programme is expected to fully unfold in 2008.

b) UAE:

#### Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

UAE Ministry of Economy jointly with UNDP has launched the country second MDGR in May 2007. The Report documents achievements and challenges for achieving the MDGs by 2015. UAE is very much on targets.

#### Democratic Governance and National Capacity Building

In the area of democratic governance; namely strengthening the national capacity of the Federal National Council (FNC), and in light of the partial elections in 2006, UNDP has provided needed support to FNC. The support included: i) identifying seven key areas for strengthening the capacities of this key institution; ii) providing technical advice on knowledge management, information base and data analyses that FNC requires in order for the MPs to discharge their legislative and oversight functions properly; and iii) conducting a series of workshops on legislative drafting and research techniques for FNC staff and the staff of the local councils.

#### Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Gender Mainstreaming Programme in UAE made concrete progress towards MDG3 through promoting gender equality and empowering women, and through engendering other MDGs. To fully achieve MDG3, the Programme concentrated on capacity development of Women's Organizations to effectively contribute to gender empowerment, which included: i) capacity development of General Women's Union through specialized trainings; ii) gender mainstreaming manual produced and distributed to all ministries/agencies and relevant CSOs/NGOs in the country; and iii) policy advocacy pursued in ratifying article 2 of CEDAW.

#### Environment

Protection of the environment and natural resources remains a priority for UAE and among the activities undertaken is: i) support the metrological information system, which is an integral part of the national strategy. It includes collection of metrological data, procurement of the state of the art systems, and training nationals on those systems; and ii) the date palm project focused on identifying national capacity development needs in various areas to support development responses, including in-vitro date palm production, biotechnology, and investment opportunities in date palm production; and iii) efforts also continued to support other date-producing countries, south-south, in developing their respective capacity in date palm production.

With the launch of HDR 2007/2008 in the UAE, concerned authority has been seriously looking at the global warming and other environmental challenges that have to be dealt with. The Report launch and subsequent follow up meetings and press releases served as an advocacy tool to highlight the risks of global warming.

#### Responding to HIV/AIDS

The main activity regarding HIV/AIDS projects undertaken in the UAE in 2007 focused on: i) discussing at national level the factual information about HIV/AIDS health issues; ii) pursuing rigorous dialogue with concerned authorities on the stigmatizations of HIV-AIDS positive persons; and iii) treating HIV/AIDS as a development and human rights issues, in addition to being a health concern.

### Resource Mobilization

In 2007 resource mobilization for the UN System stressed the emerging role of UAE and Qatar (MDG 8) as donors helping LDCs achieving the MDGs. To this end, the CO facilitated the mobilization of: i) half a million USD for UNDP-Indonesia from UAE Red Crescent. It was part of UAE support to Indonesia recovery from the Tsunami; ii) half a million USD for Bosnia-Herzegovina from Zayed Foundation to assist ongoing post reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina; iii) half a million USD for UNRWA for Palestinian people; iv) UAE Red Crescent Society supported UNICEF's involvement in Lebanon's recovery following the 2006 war with a \$1 million towards UNICEF projects in south Lebanon, covering water supply, health, and education; v) The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and UNDP launched a new partnership to promote creative knowledge generation and investment in education with a budget of 20 million USD over five years; vi) UAE provided Government of Syria 10 million USD to assist Iraqi refugees in Syria; and vii) US\$ 8.0 million for rehabilitation of children who were involved in camel racing under a regional project that is implemented by UNICEF in several countries.

Throughout 2007 in a variety of occasions media advocacy was pursued in the UAE, such as the international Stand-Up and Shout campaign to highlight the developmental challenges and needs of LDCs in meeting MDG1 and the critical role UAE can play in helping LDCs achieving this goal. Moreover, efforts were made to tap into the newly launched \$10 billion dollar fund and 'Dubai Cares' initiatives by the Ruler of Dubai, towards enhancing R&D and in the long run contribute to the human capital and knowledge based economy in the Region and in providing educational opportunities for one million child from poor countries.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all colleagues who have contributed to this report and to colleagues in the United Nations Development Group Office for their continuous support. Our country team is committed to continually identifying opportunities to promote a proactive and substantive participation of UN operational activities in the UAE and Qatar.

**Key aspects of the proposed 2008 work plan: UAE and Qatar**

UN/UNDP programme in UAE and Qatar will continue to align its TA with national development priorities and concentrate on: i) support women empowerment to inline with MDG3 and pursue policy advocacy campaign to ensure implementation of CEDAW as intended; ii) combat the spread of HIV/AIDS through supporting national efforts in the implementation of national strategies and assist with the development of the National HIV/AIDS strategy; iii) enhance institutional and human capacities of key national entities including the Federal National Council, General Women Unions, federal and local public sectors; iv) mainstream sustainable development inline with MDG7; v) pursue UNDP/UN resource mobilization for LDCs in the spirit of MDG8; vi) support UN System, particularly the non-resident agencies; and vii) two joint programmes will be implemented with UNCT in the areas of *women empowerment* and *HIV/AIDS*.

Furthermore, UNDP/UN interventions in both countries are part of ongoing long term support of the MDGs and with a cross-cutting focus and holistic approach to development and, above all, with UAE and Qatar's national development needs.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the UNDO for their continuous support.

Sincerely yours,  
Khaled Alloush  
UN Resident Coordinator