

**Nairobi Knowledge Week**

***Remarks by***

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**Resident Coordinator a.i**

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**UNON Conference 3**

**Representatives from the Ministry of Devolution**

**Ambassador Hussein Dado, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Devolution and ASAL**

**Mr. Charles Sunkuli, PS devolution in absentia**

**Ambassador of the Republic of Austria in Kenya, Amb. Christian Fellner**

**Mr. James Njugo, the Deputy Secretary General for the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO**

**Dr. Andreas Brandner, Managing Director, Knowledge for Development Partnership**

**Reps of Governments, academia and research institutions, civil society, the private sector and Development partners,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**All protocols observed.**

It is a sincere pleasure to welcome you all here to the UN Office in Nairobi on behalf of Mr. Sid Chatterjee, UN RC Kenya, to share some perspectives on “Knowledge Management in the development context” at this 1st African Knowledge for Development Partnership Conference. UN reform has recently separated functions in UNDS.

If knowledge is what one knows, then knowledge management (KM) is expeditiously getting what you know to the person who needs to know it; through study, observation and sharing of one’s own experience.

As the UNDP Administrator recently remarked, “we are witnessing today the increasingly important role of knowledge in the development of our societies. Gaining knowledge, sharing it, and applying it develops capabilities and expands opportunities in every aspect of people’s lives, enriching the nations to which they belong -- from education to the economy, from technology to the world of work. We cannot but consider knowledge as our strong ally to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Investing in knowledge is a priority for any country striving to meet the ambitious vision of the 2030 Agenda. To maximise its impact on the ground, any development plan, strategy or framework must be grounded in knowledge and evidence. UNDP supports national development strategies in many ways, including by helping to gather, analyse and disseminate data that can inform policymaking and promote thought leadership.

Data are the lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability. By investing in data-driven solutions and solid knowledge management platforms, we at UNDP have taken concrete steps to provide people with timely and trustworthy information for more effective decisions. To navigate a world where data are bigger, faster and more detailed than ever before, we decided to place additional attention on innovation and new technology.”I will speak more later about the UN Accelerator Labs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the great management scholars of our time, **Peter Drucker**, said that knowledge management is “the coordination and exploitation of organizational knowledge resources, in order to create benefit and competitive advantage.” **Drucker** defined knowledge workers as high-level workers who apply theoretical and analytical knowledge, acquired through formal training, to develop products and services. He noted that knowledge workers would be the most valuable assets of a 21st century organization because of their high level of productivity and creativity[[1]](#footnote-1).

However, Knowledge Management should not be confused with information management, as most of us often do; because, whereas information informs, knowledge adds value by benefiting learning either at individual level, as one person gains knowledge from another, or organizationally, as an organization gains knowledge from its staff.

*Esteemed Colleagues,*

For the **United Nations[[2]](#footnote-2)**, knowledge constitutes a paradoxical challenge and opportunity, it is an intangible and a concrete asset, an operational reality and a permanent aspiration, a general and a specific resource. Indeed, the United Nations system is the generator and catalyst of a special kind of knowledge—one that is values based. It is knowledge that makes cooperation possible among Member States—irrespective of their size and location—in so many areas of high complexity and diversity.

Essentially, knowledge is the lifeblood of any organization. And with such a large pool of individual knowledge, every UN agency striving for relevance and impact should be tapping into and applying what their staff members and professional partners know.

As such, through Knowledge Management we seek to enhance the overall organizational effectiveness by consolidating collective individual knowledge and applying it to new situations and environments, continually improving and refining what works and what does not in a given context.

However, this has, admittedly, been a challenge for the UN development system (UNDS). Few UN agencies have been successful in achieving Knowledge Management, despite repeated efforts. I am proud, however, that my organization, UNDP, has had some success, winning the knowledge management Austria award in 2012 for “outstanding efforts and achievements to promote the idea of knowledge societies”.

In 2016, the UN’s Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) conducted a review of knowledge management in United Nations system organizations. From the study 20 agencies were identified as having some aspects of a Knowledge Management strategy, and some were working well. The overall study, however, concluded that “knowledge management remains a challenge for the United Nations system organizations in their attempt to systematically and efficiently develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve their cross-cutting goals.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

So what can we do to improve the UN’s management of its knowledge?

As I stated earlier, in the context of the 2030 Agenda,Knowledge management is an indispensable contribution of the UN towards the implementation of the new holistic and collaborative approach for Sustainable Development. Therefore, it is not “if” but “how” we go about doing this.

The United Nations as a catalyst and a disseminator of knowledge requires strategic knowledge management to break down silos and as a tool for promoting interdepartmental, system-wide and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The main objective of knowledge management must therefore be to influence better interventions in the future, informed by stakeholders varied competences, national and county priorities, utilising and anchoring global, regional and national best practices, enforcing shared values and global norms and agreed standards.

In my remarks today, I was asked to reflect a bit on KM in the context of our UNDAF. The UNDAF 2018-2022 for Kenya is the corporate strategy for the UN in the country, the convergence center on which knowledge management takes place. If we mainstreamed knowledge management in our programming successfully, our collective actions will not only inform better interventions and results, it will lead in the realisation of SDGs in Kenya.

Throughout the analytical and intellectual processes, through the process of strategic prioritisation and the 18-months process of reaching the final UNDAF, more than 100 institutions were involved. The UNDAF has been co-created together with more than 50 government departments and counties. Knowledge management has thus informed both the Common Country Assessment (CCA), the UNDAF results framework and ensured that work plans were aligned to national and county priorities.

Knowledge management is in this sense a pivotal aspect of transformative change and UN reform. The follow up and learning from the implementation of the UNDAF will inform the next level of reform.

The UN also host a great number of conferences and events in Kenya, which the RCO and the UNCT both facilitate, support and invest in knowledge management. Recently we have hosted the blue economy conference and the Regional African conference on the prevention of violent extremism and soon the ICPD global summit is coming up. These conferences add to the knowledge base of the UNDAF but extends to both the regional agenda 2063 and the global 2030 agenda.

Another good example of KM in the context of the UNDAF, is Through the signing on Saturday by the Government of Kenya of a Communique with the the United Nations and other partners to inspire future action and support for the delivery of Kenya’s Big Four agenda. The agreement will contribute to building SDG focused partnerships to drive financing and innovations that help tackle complex development goals. The Government of Kenya also announced the launch of a co-created SDG Accelerator Lab, that will leverage on the recently initiated UNDP Accelerator Lab Network, as a strategic development platform for Kenya that will bring together the government, private sector, civil society, philanthropy, academia, and young people to reimagine development for the 21st century. Here again KM will be at the heart of what the Accelerator lab will focus on.

*Esteemed Colleagues,*

For us to fully succeed, knowledge management must become an integral part of how each of our agencies operate. Thus, situating Knowledge Management as a core business process will require a culture shift, directed by a dedicated and persistent transformational leadership; and, a buy-in and commitment of all staff. We need to encourage our staff to be *knowledge workers*, if we have to remain relevant in supporting our Member States to deal with the complex development challenges, that require new ways of thinking, and that challenge and question our ways of doing business.

I thank you for your attention and wish you all a fruitful time as you deliberate on this critical aspect of our institutions.

Thank you.

1. https://medium.com/@stangarfield/peter-drucker-profiles-in-knowledge-429dfdef5d28 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu\_document\_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\_REP\_2016\_10\_English.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, (2016). “*Knowledge Management in the United Nations System Organizations*,” publication prepared by Petru Dumitriu, JIU inspector, JIU/REP/2016/10, Available at <https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_10_English.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)