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Cutting the Umbilical Cord? The Merger with DDSMS

3.1 Introduction

When Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived as the new UN Secretary-General in 1992, he inherited a UN system that operated in an international context differing considerably from the one his predecessor originally faced. The Soviet Union was collapsing. However disruptive the Cold War had been, its ending did not lead to a much-feared large-scale global conflict. Instead, a whole series of smaller, often unexpected, conflicts erupted. Boutros-Ghali, and many other hopeful observers at the time, perceived that the UN system was well poised for the post Cold-War era. The deadlock between the superpowers had been broken, which would considerably ease UN decision-making. During the Cold War, high politics over security, in particular nuclear security and the arms race, dominated the superpowers’ agenda. The demise of the Cold War opened up new opportunities for low politics, with greater involvement of non-state actors, such as NGOs and other civil-society initiatives (see Weiss and Gordenker, 1996: 24–25). It also initiated substantial interest in issues such as good governance and development cooperation.

Moreover, it was hoped that the second Gulf War, in which Iraq was defeated by a broad alliance of international partners united under the banner of the UN, could provide an incentive, if not a model, for international conflict resolution and cooperation. In response to these trends, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali wrote:

The new era has brought new credibility to the United Nations. Along with it have come rising expectations ... Together the international community and the UN Secretariat need to seize this extraordinary
opportunity to expand, adapt and reinvigorate the work of the United Nations so that the lofty goals as originally envisioned by the charter can begin to be realized. (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: 89)

However, one characteristic of UN management survived the Cold War: the continuing calls for reform. The new global situation ‘demanded’ an adaptive UN system. Moreover, considerable criticism of UN management needed to be countered.¹ In these respects, Boutros-Ghali proved himself to be a rather activist Secretary-General, who, especially in his early years, focused strongly on peacekeeping. In addition, many hoped that reform would gain (even) more credibility for the UN system.

3.2 The UN system in transition: OPS in limbo

Boutros-Ghali’s reforms began in earnest in 1992. In December of that year, the General Assembly discussed a proposal for UN reform. One proposal would strongly affect UNDP’s Office for Project Services; the Secretary-General wanted to institute within the UN Secretariat a Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) to replace part of DESD. It would carry out two related functions:

The first [was] to serve as a focal point for the provision of management services for technical cooperation. The second [was] to act as an executing agency in selected cross-sectoral areas, with emphasis on the twin concepts of institutional development (including institution building, institutional reform and enterprise management) and human resources development (including activities aimed at human capital formation and at enhancing the contribution of different social groups to development). (A/47/53: 4)

Management services were, of course, OPS’s traditional strong point. The Secretary-General also ‘noted that the new arrangement would require a significant reallocation of existing programs within the economic and social sectors’ (Dadzie, 1993: 8–9).

Kenneth Dadzie, at that time the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), became the ‘Special Adviser and Delegate’ to address these issues. In his report on the reform of the economic and social sectors, commonly referred to as the Dadzie Report, he argued that the new DDSMS should incor-