

**Informal Summary
High-Level Segment
of the Economic and Social Council in 2007**

**Informal High-Level Roundtable
“Emerging challenges to efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger:
climate change, desertification and health crises”**

**Monday, 2 July 2007, 5:30 -7 pm
Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Chair: H.E. Mr. Dalius Čekuolis (Lithuania), the President of ECOSOC.
Panelists: Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
H.E. Mr. Sid Ahamed Ould Rais, Minister for Commerce and Industry of Mauritania
Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund
Mr. Nick Rance, Television Trust for the Environment.
Moderator: Mr. David Shukman, Environment and science correspondent of BBC.

Key points:

- Threats caused by these emerging challenges to the development efforts as well as interconnectedness of these issues were recognized.
- There was a call for addressing these issues in an integrated manner. At the same time, the need to address the links between these issues and MDGs were stressed.
- Many developing countries are affected by desertification and its impacts on development efforts were stressed. The need to recognize desertification as a global problem and increased support needed to address the issues was emphasized.
- In order to address the needs of developing countries in their efforts for tackling these issues, in particular adaptation, increased global partnership was called for.
- There was a call for the United Nations to undergo energy audit and raise energy efficiency and to set the example of sustainable business conduct.

The Roundtable focused on the major emerging challenges, such as climate change, desertification and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, to the realization of the development goals, in particular MDG-1. The Roundtable provided a platform for discussing *what is being done; new and innovative strategies that can be employed; and ways we can promote collective action to respond to these imminent challenges.*

Dr. Pachauri presented the crux of the three Assessment Reports released so far. He explained how climate change affects efforts to eradicate poverty. First, global warming is accelerating with the 100-year linear trend of 0.74 °C, which is greater than what was assumed in the last assessment (0.6 °C). Experts expect a rise in average temperature in the range between 1.8 °C and 4 °C by the end of this century. At the high end of this

scenario, there can be severe impacts on the life system. **Dr. Pachauri** pointed out that this rise in temperature is not uniform and the Arctic is warming up twice as fast as the rest of the world, posing threat to indigenous ways of life. With the interaction with other climate factors, the temperature increase is expected to cause more frequent extreme weather events, such as heat waves and heavy rainfalls. The sea level rise is also posing a threat, especially to large delta areas in Asia and Small Island Developing States. Those extreme events generally strike the more vulnerable parts of society, the poor, children and the elderly.

Dr. Pachauri pointed out that the climate change has severe impacts on agricultural yields, which is already observable in Sub-Saharan Africa, India and Southeast Asia. In the affected regions, food security will be increasingly at risk. Desertification is also advancing in many parts of the world. In addition, there are health impacts caused by climate change and its negative consequences.

Dr. Pachauri emphasized the need for warning systems and an appropriate health infrastructure, which are lacking especially in the poorer countries. He also highlighted the efforts of media in raising awareness as well as to inform the public on the extreme events and called for a partnership between climate experts and the media, so as to spread the extreme event warnings more rapidly.

H.E. Mr. Sid Ahamed Ould Rais, Minister for Commerce and Industry of Mauritania, highlighted the link between desertification and poverty. Mauritania was largely a rural society dependant on rural agriculture, but because of desertification and resulting decline in agricultural productivity, there is a massive migration to urban areas. The migration of farmers poses threat of food insufficiency. The rapid urbanization, in turn, is resulting in lack of infrastructure, causing a number of problems. First, insufficient clean drinking water and sanitation is causing health problems. Second, there is a lack of educational infrastructure. Third, the fact that sand from the seashore was used to build houses has resulted in increase of flood in those areas.

Clearly, desert is advancing and now 90 per cent of Mauritania is covered by desert, which is leading to disastrous consequences. The chain reaction from the decline in husbandry to decline in livestock has resulted in increase in poverty. Infrastructure is posing a huge problem. For example, even if roads are built, desert covers and erodes them. These issues illustrate that the problem is not just of climate change and environment. He emphasized that there is a need to integrate sustainable development concerns in development policies.

Dr. Michel Kazatchkine highlighted the importance of this panel in treating these issues in an integrated manner. The Global Fund principally addresses MDG 6 on combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases. But it impacts on MDG 4 (reducing child mortality) and MDG 5 (improving maternal health). These health impacts, in turn, relate to other MDGs. For example, HIV/AIDS relate to the issue of women, poverty and education, food security and environmental degradation, in particular clean water and sanitation, as highlighted by Minister Reiss. Yet, 2 million people die each year due to tuberculosis (TB) and 90 per cent of TB cases and death occurs in developing countries.

Malaria also affects low-income countries more and 90 per cent of about one million deaths that occur each year are in sub-Saharan Africa. The situation is similar for HIV/AIDS. Seventy per cent of people infected with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa, even though it holds only 11 per cent of the world population. He emphasized that with right tools and drugs, these cases could be preventable, as demonstrated by Botswana.

The Global Fund spends about 58 per cent of its fund on HIV/AIDS and has contributed to increase the reach of antiretroviral treatment. To fight against malaria, the Global Fund finances insecticide-treated bed nets and drugs, resulting in reduction of death toll.

Dr. Kazatchkine explained that the Global Fund operates as a financial instrument. It is demand-driven and finances programmes that are nationally-owned. After five years of existence, it is facing a new phase and it needs to grow. Last month, the Board set target of tripling the global contribution to \$6 billion per year by 2010.

Mr. Nick Rance highlighted the role of media in raising awareness of key issues, such as climate change and desertification. The film clip that he prepared illustrated some examples of how people are adapting to climate change and desertification in East Africa.

The discussion that followed these presentations was conducted in an interactive manner and the delegations engaged in active dialogue, with the moderation of **Mr. Shukman**.

Delegations of **Nigeria and Kenya** highlighted the severe effects of desertification and stressed that it was not getting the sufficient attention that it deserved in terms of financial support, in particular compared to the other Rio conventions, perhaps due to the fact that it is not considered as global issue by many. These delegations stressed the importance of raising understanding on the reality of desertification and the situations of countries affected by it. **Portugal, on behalf of the European Union (EU)**, expressed their support for the UNCCD and indicated that they as a group provided €38.3 million between 2001 and 2005 on projects that addresses issues covered by UNCCD. He further highlighted the interconnectedness of these issues and acknowledged the threat these issues pose to development efforts. **Israel** also shared the concern on desertification and stated that the Government works closely with the UNCCD. He further stated that it is a global challenge and considered that the political and practical cooperation was the only way to move forward. **The EU** indicated human health and agriculture as well as access to clean water as areas of concern affected by climate change. Noting the absence of intergovernmental mechanism that deal with these issues in an integrated manner, **France** proposed to establish a mechanism to link these issues.

With regard to climate change, **the EU** expressed its commitment to keep the global average temperature increase below 2 °C compared to pre-industrial levels. **The EU** emphasized that meeting this objective requires global action to tackle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. **The EU** therefore has committed to reduce GHG at least by 20 per cent by 2020 and called for a global reduction of up to 50 per cent by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. Some delegations, including **Russia, Barbados, Bolivia, the United Kingdom**, also stressed the importance of post-Kyoto multilateral process that involves

all countries. A number of developing country delegations, including **Cape Verde, Barbados and Bolivia**, stressed the need for global partnership for assisting their efforts for adaptation. It was emphasized that it is particularly needed by African countries and Small Island Developing States. **Bolivia** pointed out the link between climate change and migration. **The United Kingdom** stressed that climate change is not just environmental issue and questioned if the international system respond quickly enough to global emerging challenge, citing the example of the Adaptation Fund, which has not yet attracted sufficient fund.

A speaker from **the United Nations Volunteers (UNV)** called for changes in lifestyles, in particular in developed countries, and suggested that media could produce programmes to engage the youth and the middle-aged people to change their lifestyle. **Japan** proposed that the United Nations should set the example and change the way of conducting business, starting from controlling the temperature at 28 °C

Facing these challenges, such as lack of clean water, food insecurity and malaria, many delegations called for increased development partnership. **Kazakhstan** also noted the importance of private-public partnership.

Noting potential environmental consequence of development projects, **Kenya** proposed that all development projects should carry out environmental assessment.

In concluding and responding to some of the points raised, **Dr. Pachauri** suggested that all UN building should undergo energy audit and increase energy efficiency. In order to get the understanding of the international community, he stressed the importance of make everybody understanding that we are all in this together and in this regard, he noted the important role that media plays.