



DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Climate change as a sustainable development challenge

DESA approaches **climate change as a pressing sustainable development challenge** that should be linked more firmly to the broader United Nations development agenda, including to more socially-inclusive but less carbon-intensive economic growth and to other internationally agreed development goals. Many sectors may be involved – such as finance, energy, transport, agriculture and health – with the United Nations playing a major convening and advisory role to Governments and other stakeholders in the global partnership for development.

This cross-cutting approach informs the Department's normative and policy support, analytical work, and capacity development at the country level. DESA facilitates the negotiations of Member States in several intergovernmental bodies, contributing to a more effective UN system engagement with the issue of climate change. DESA gears the **substantive support it extends to intergovernmental bodies and negotiations** to achieving a renewed focus on implementation, with climate change currently at the top of the agenda.

The Department services **the Commission on Sustainable Development**, the main United Nations forum bringing countries together to consider ways to integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. The Commission considered climate change in its 2006-2007 sessions, and in 2008-2009 it will be reviewing progress made and discuss policy options in the climate-related thematic issues of agriculture, drought, and desertification. DESA also serves as the secretariat for the **UN Forum on Forests**, which recently adopted a landmark instrument that is expected to have a major impact on international cooperation and national action to reduce deforestation, prevent forest degradation, and promote sustainable livelihoods.

At its next substantive session in 2008, in New York, the theme of the **Economic and Social Council's** High-level segment is "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development". During this session, delegations will address climate change especially in the context of the impact of climate change on reaching the MDG goals.

DESA is home to the **UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**, which will examine "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges" at its seventh session in 2008. While indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to the environmental impacts of climate change, they are not passive victims and can indeed be valuable partners in the global efforts to address this sustainable development challenge.

Through its research, publications and reports, the Department seeks to deepen understanding of **sustainable development options** that can be incorporated into the climate change policies. It also compiles and disseminates comprehensive data and information to support evidence-based decision making relevant to climate change. Two prominent examples are energy statistics and population projections. The Department also carries out national-level capacity building to strengthen data production.

Through its series of policy notes and advisory services, DESA is active in assisting governments, including in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to increase capacities to design and implement **national development strategies**, as called for by the 2005 World Summit, including national sustainable development strategies that incorporate climate change. Through technical assistance, it helps build national capacities so that countries can put in place mechanisms to develop their economies while they curb greenhouse gas emissions and adjust to climate change. DESA's publication, **The International Development Agenda and the Climate Change Challenge**, suggests concrete ways in which countries may maintain high and socially-inclusive economic growth, while reducing its carbon-intensity.

The impacts of climate change are unlikely to be gender-neutral, and responses to the challenge, including adaptation measures and policies and national sustainable development strategies, will be more effective when **gender-related impacts** are addressed.

DESA also advises interested governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into sustainable development programmes at the country level, including with respect to **energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other advanced energy technologies**.

An emerging issue that has recently gained recognition at the international level is **environment-driven migration**. Changes in temperature and rainfall that are projected to affect various countries as a result of climate change, associated with local population increases, are likely to cause local imbalances between population densities and the resources (e.g. food, water) necessary to sustain those populations. DESA has initiated work on this issue by providing a **statistical method for identifying zones which are likely to be prone to water stress** given their population densities (see DESA working paper #47).

Along with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), DESA has led the **Marrakech Process on sustainable consumption and production** through analytical work on how measures to promote sustainable consumption and production can contribute to greenhouse gas mitigation efforts. Through a range of implementation programmes led by various Task Forces, regional Roundtables and Councils of Experts, as well as 34 UNIDO and UNEP supported national cleaner production centers, the Marrakech Process has contributed to the reduction of greenhouse gases by supporting, among others, initiatives for harmonized standards for more energy- and material-efficient products, improved building design and construction, sustainable public procurement, education for sustainable consumption, and African eco-label.

Upcoming events organized by DESA

High-level roundtable on climate change and sustainable development

13 December, 18:00 – 19:30, Wave Room

Selected senior officials

Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Ms. Kathleen Abdalla, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

DESA website on climate change

<http://www.un.org/esa/desa/climatechange/>

Marrakech Process website

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/consumption/Marrakech/conprod10Y.htm>

