



Aide-Mémoire

Inter-Agency Expert Group Meeting in support of the the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa ■ Addis Ababa
ECACC-AA, Conference Room 3
18 -20 April 2018

I. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises to leave no-one behind and reaching the furthest behind first. Meeting this ambitious development agenda requires visionary policies for sustainable, inclusive, sustained and equitable economic growth, supported by full employment and decent work for all, social integration, declining inequality, rising productivity and a favorable environment. In the 2030 Agenda, Goal 1 recognizes that ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

While progress in eradicating extreme poverty has been incremental and widespread, the persistence of poverty, including extreme poverty remains a major concern in Africa, the least developed countries, small island developing States, in some middle-income countries, and countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict countries. In light of these concerns, the General Assembly, at its seventy-second session, decided to proclaim the “Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)” (A/RES/72/233). The objective of the Third Decade is to maintain the momentum generated by the implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) towards poverty eradication. Further, the 3rd Decade is also expected to support, in an efficient and coordinated manner, the internationally agreed development goals related to poverty eradication, including the Sustainable Development Goals and their objective of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Social Development Policy Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), is organizing an Inter-Agency Expert Group Meeting on the “Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty” under the theme “Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty”. The meeting will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 18 - 20 April 2018, as part of the preparations for the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to its seventy-third session a report that details the response of the United Nations system to the theme of the Third Decade, includes an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system, and contains recommendations concerning how to make the Third UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty effective, in support of the internationally agreed development goals related to poverty reduction, including the Sustainable Development Goals, utilizing, as appropriate, existing expertise and poverty-related follow-up mechanisms and processes.

II. Background: growth, poverty, employment and inequality

The global economy is growing by 3 per cent per annum¹, which is the highest rate of growth since 2011. Steady global economic growth of 3 per cent per annum is also expected this year and in 2019. These improving economic conditions are benefiting many countries, with about two thirds of all countries seeing stronger growth this year compared to last year. East and South Asia remain the most dynamic regions in the world while several economies in Africa, Latin America and Western Asia still see negligible per capita income growth. While the overall economic outlook is improving, significant problems that have broad implications for poverty eradication, job growth, combating inequality and fostering social inclusion remain. The global economy is still facing difficult macroeconomic conditions, low commodity prices, subdued trade growth and volatile capital flows.

And while the world has moved nearly 1.1 billion people out of extreme poverty since 1990, many of these are barely living above the extreme poverty line and are at risk of sliding back into poverty because of the loss of a job, illness, or a natural disaster. The ILO also estimates that the global unemployment level remains high at 5.8 percent, with no prospect of decline in the near term. In fact, the global unemployment increased by 3.4 million in 2017 to reach a level of more than 201 million unemployed people. Further, global unemployment is expected to rise by 2.8 million in 2018 with diverging trends at country and regional level. An estimated 71 million youth are also unemployed and another 160 million youth are working, but still living in poverty. In most regions and countries, the expansion of the labour force continues to outstrip employment creation.

Inequality's resurgence within and among nations is also a major concern. According to the 'World Inequality Report 2018'², the top one percent in the world had twice as much income growth as the bottom half since 1980. Oxfam's new report, 'Reward Work, Not Wealth'³ also reveals that the world's wealthiest one percent captured 82 percent of the wealth generated in 2017, while the bottom 50 percent or 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase at all.

1 United Nations. World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018

2 <http://wir2018.wid.world/>

3 https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-reward-work-not-wealth-220118-summm-en.pdf

III. Objectives, Key Questions and Methodology

This inter-agency expert group meeting will bring together experts to (i) reflect on progress and challenges toward ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, and review lessons learnt from designing and implementing poverty eradication strategies at various levels that can be leveraged to spur further progress in those countries or regions lagging behind and to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (ii) share country perspectives for better support from the United Nations system; (iii) review the response of the United Nations system's response to accelerate global actions for a world without poverty; (iv) discuss and finalize the system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system, and (v) come up with policy recommendations on how the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) be made effective, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Capitalizing on the strengths and comparative advantages of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and regional economic commissions, the United Nations system would enhance the system's ability to assist countries tackle the scourge of poverty in all its forms and dimensions. To maximize its effectiveness, the UN system has been asked by the General Assembly (A/RES/72/233 para 53) to develop an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system. In that regard, the system-wide plan of action will be grounded in mandates given to the United Nations system by Member States. This reflects the broader expectation of Member States for coherent and coordinated support that maximizes synergies, harnesses the potential of partnerships and optimizes the efficient use of existing financial and non-financial resources across the UN system.

The system-wide plan of action will be developed through a consultative process by the UN focal points on the 3rd Decade that were identified by Heads of UN entities. It is envisaged that the key elements of the plan of action will be included in the report of the Secretary-General that will be submitted to the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Further, it is envisaged that the plan of action will also be taken up for adoption at the High-Level Committee on Planning / Chief Executives Board of the United Nations in 2019.

The meeting will be a three-day event that will allow a robust exchange of ideas that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Third Decade among UN system focal points, policy makers, the private sector and other representatives from the United Nations system, regional organizations, government officials, independent experts, and civil society. Invited experts will set the stage for the meeting by making presentations on global and regional recent trends in income and non-income poverty, inequality and employment. The interaction will foster the identification of concrete social and economic policies as well as encourage greater inter-agency convergence and collaboration within the United Nations system in sharing knowledge, promoting policy dialogue, facilitating synergies, mobilizing funds, providing technical assistance in the key policy and programmatic areas underlying the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda of poverty eradication, and finalizing the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication.

To achieve its objectives, the meeting will seek to answer key questions such as:

- i. What are the key trends, patterns and challenges to eradicating poverty everywhere?
- ii. How can efforts to eradicate poverty be delivered globally while ensuring the principle of leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first?
- iii. What additional efforts are required to tackle the root causes of poverty, including tackling adverse norms and all forms of discrimination routinely experienced by poor women and men?
- iv. How can countries ensure that everyone, including those most in need benefit fairly from current and future economic and social development?
- v. What needs to be done to ensure that vulnerable groups have access to programs and measures that enhance their resilience and prevent them from falling into extreme poverty?
- vi. How can the voice and participation of people living in poverty and people in vulnerable situations be central to all national actions to eradicate poverty?
- vii. What further actions can governments undertake to raise resources to finance inclusive development efforts?
- viii. How can countries be more attentive to and be better prepared for new forms of poverty related to emergent phenomena such as technological disruptions, environmental shocks, forced migration, and population ageing?
- ix. What actions can the United Nations system put in place to promote the implementation of the Third Decade in a coherent and coordinated manner?
- x. How can the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty be effective, in support of the internationally agreed development goals related to poverty reduction, including the Sustainable Development Goals?
- xi. How can UN country teams be empowered/strengthened and supported from the highest levels to support the implementation of the objectives of the Third Decade?
- xii. How can UN regional coordination mechanisms promote the establishment or strengthening of consultative mechanisms and platforms of dialogues in support of the objectives of the Third Decade as well as inform the operational activities of the UN Country Teams?

IV. Expected outputs

The meeting is expected to provide substantive input for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on the “Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)” to be submitted to the 73rd session of the General Assembly; inputs for the finalization of the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication

In addition, the meeting will also produce the following outputs:

- i. Substantive papers on the theme of the meeting, with concrete policy recommendations, prepared by experts;
- ii. A meeting report, summarizing the deliberations of the experts and key recommendations to be included in Secretary-General’s Report.

V. Organizational and administrative matters

In addition to inviting UN system focal points for the Third Decade, the Division for Social Policy and Development of UNDESA will also identify and invite about 10 experts, taking into consideration gender and geographical balances. The Division will meet the costs related to the participation (travel and per diem) of all the invited experts from outside the United Nations system.

Invited speakers will provide brief background papers (approximately 5-10 pages, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by 6 April 2018 for distribution to other participants. Each background paper should address a specific agenda item and include a summary of the expert's own research and evidence from other sources, as well as references to relevant parts of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary and invited experts will lead-off discussions of each session by presenting papers which will then be followed by in-depth plenary discussions. During the wrap up session of the meeting, participants will outline the major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. The Division for Social Policy and Development will prepare a final report summarizing the discussions and key conclusions of the meeting. With participants' permission, the background papers and presentations will be posted on the Division for Social Policy and Development's website (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2018-expert-group-meetings-and-panel-discussions.html>).

Presenters are encouraged to prepare PowerPoint presentations and to share them in advance with the organizers, if possible. All papers and presentations should be sent to **Ms. Meron Sherif (sherif4@un.org)**, with a copy to **Mr. Amson Sibanda (sibanda@un.org)**. Participants are expected to arrive in Addis Ababa on 19 April 2018 and to stay throughout the duration of the meeting.

VI. Documentation and the Language of the meeting

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents and materials related to the theme of the meeting. With participants' permission, the background papers and presentations will be posted on the Division for Social Development's website.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will also be provided in English.