

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2003 HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF ECOSOC
"PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"**

Background

The theme for the High-Level Segment of the substantive session of 2003 will be: "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development". The three key dimensions of the theme are thus: an integrated approach, sustainability, and poverty eradication in the rural context. In order to encompass all these dimensions, consideration of the theme would need to be approached from a perspective based on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The integrated approach will thus bring together the economic, social and environmental dimensions of rural development, and, in this context, will explore different approaches to rural development. Among these approaches, the two most prominent are the intensive area and community development approach and the poor, people-centered development approach.

This is, indeed, a timely topic. Three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas and rural development would significantly contribute not only to attaining MDG 1 "the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger" but also to most of the other MDGs. The different approaches to rural development mentioned above have yielded different results. The rich experiences of nations to promote rural development as well as the lessons learned by the UN system will be shared to further the analytical understanding of the concept of "integrated rural development". In addition, field experiences will be examined to advance the operational dimension of rural development. To support that role, during the preparatory process of the High-Level Segment, it may be necessary to look more closely at the approaches, policy tools and actors, which are crucial in achieving integrated rural development as well as in the implementation and evaluation of impact.

The challenge in the period ahead is to move from the agreed development agenda and goals emerging from the major conferences and summits of the 1990s to implementation and monitoring results. Internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits, provide a comprehensive basis for action at the national, regional and international levels to help improve the lives of people everywhere. The high-level segment of ECOSOC, together with its subsidiary machinery, strives to make a substantive contribution in advancing these goals, this time from the vantage point of an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries. This vantage point also allows ECOSOC to play its role of enabling implementation at all levels, including promoting and facilitating partnerships involving Governments, international organizations and relevant stakeholders, particularly in relation to its coordinating function within the United Nations system, and consultative relationship with NGOs and civil society at large.

Objective

The objectives of the ECOSOC High-level Segment are to advance the understanding of the role of rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, in particular its centrality for the achievement of the MDGs, and to explore different approaches for implementing rural development objectives. The theme will be examined in the context of integrated follow-up to the major UN conferences and summits and aims at bringing together UN conference outcomes pertinent to rural development. The United Nations System's Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) through the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), will be able to bring together the experience of the UN. The multistakeholders approach of the Council will bring in the additional perspective of civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The results will be submitted to the ECOSOC substantive session, to supplement the Council's goal of promoting consensus building and partnerships for the implementation of MDGs within the context of the integrated follow-up to major Conferences and Summits and adopting of the Ministerial Declaration. The results of the preparatory process will contribute to the Report of the Secretary-General on the theme of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment and the Ministerial Declaration.

Preparatory process

In order to provide support for the theme of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment 2003, the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (DESC) proposes holding a number of preparatory activities to contribute to the successful outcome of the High-Level Segment and the implementation of goals and targets agreed to at major UN conferences and summits, especially the Millennium Summit.

The preparatory process could contribute to the High-Level Segment in several ways. **Firstly**, it could help clarify the conceptual underpinnings of an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries and how this would constitute an effective means to realize the twin goals of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. **Secondly** it would provide an opportunity to appreciate the different approaches, which have worked, and identify those that have been more successful. **Thirdly**, it would bring out the policy implementation and evaluation tools that are available, at various levels. **Fourthly**, it would highlight the role of actors from the international to the local community and family level in rural development. **Fifthly**, it would demonstrate a clear need for political commitments to promote policies and programmes that will enhance the livelihoods of rural people in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. Finally, it would help profile the role of rural development in attaining the relevant Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular in the eradication of poverty and ensuring sustainability.

Preparatory activities in the area of the theme of the 2003 High-Level Segment
"Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for
poverty eradication and sustainable development"

On **24 March 2003** two informal ECOSOC dialogue Sessions will be organized at UN headquarters in New York:

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

ECOSOC Dialogue Session 1 on: "Integrated approaches to rural development policies, goals and commitments". This event will set the stage by identifying the major policy issues related to integrated approaches to rural development and will analyze goals established and commitments made in this regard. International, regional and national implementation policies such as PRSPs, MDG core strategy UNDAFs will be discussed.

ECOSOC Member States, representatives of UN agencies, funds and programmes, NGO representatives, parliamentarians, media, local authorities, women's group, academics, professional groups and foundations will be invited to attend the session and to actively participate.

3:00 – 6:00 pm

ECOSOC Dialogue Session 2 on: "Integrated approaches to rural development. Implementation and best practices: tools, approaches and the role of actors." This event will focus on identifying integrated approaches for promoting implementation of policies, goals and commitments adopted at the UN conferences and summits and the advancement of the MDGs in relation to rural development. International regional and national implementation tools such as conventions, laws, rules, regulations, strategies will be discussed as well as tools and approaches to track implementation such as good practices, networks, discussion groups etc. with specific examples.

The focus will be on the role of actors involved; how to get them committed; how to engage them in partnerships, particularly in the field of rural development; how stakeholders can be more effectively involved in applying UN policies, goals and commitments adopted at UN conferences and summits and the advancement of the MDGs; and how can stakeholders mutually reinforce their work through better coordination.

ECOSOC Member States, representatives of UN agencies, funds and programmes, NGO representatives, parliamentarians, media, local authorities, women's groups, academics, professional groups and foundations will be invited to attend the session and to actively participate.

On **30 April 2003** ECOSOC Roundtables on rural development and the MDGs will be organized. This one-day informal meeting of ECOSOC will bring together Ministers, ECOSOC Ambassadors, agencies and organizations of the UN system, members of the HLCP and the CEB, representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia and others, to discuss measures to promote an integrated approach to rural development within the context of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development as recognized at UN Global conferences on the ECOSOC High-Level Segment theme “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development”. The informal meeting will consist of an HLCP panel discussion with the Council, followed by interactive roundtable discussions, organized by agencies/organizations of the United Nations system. It will also provide an opportunity to present to ECOSOC the outcome of the two Council dialogue sessions held on 24 March.

The session will commence with an opening plenary meeting featuring a statement by the President of ECOSOC and a panel discussion featuring some HLCP members. The opening plenary will be followed by ten interactive roundtable meetings chaired by key UN agencies, funds and programmes and high-level representatives from Member States with the participation of Ministers, ECOSOC Members, UN system and civil society representatives. Each interactive roundtable discussion would review progress made towards rural development, the achievement of the MDGs and follow up to UN Conferences and Summits. Particular attention will be devoted to a sharing of views on possible solutions to further their achievement. The meeting will end with a closing plenary consisting of reports back from the Roundtables and a closing statement from the President of ECOSOC.

Roundtable format: Each roundtable would be composed of up to five invited individuals from government, UN agencies, funds and programmes, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, each of whom will make a presentation. ECOSOC Member States, representatives of UN agencies, funds and programmes, NGO representatives, parliamentarians, media, local authorities, women’s group, academics, professional groups and foundations will be invited to attend the session and to actively participate.

ECOSOC High-Level Segment "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development" from 30 June to 2 July

On **30 June** the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC will begin with a statement by the President of the Council and an address of the Secretary-General. A high-level policy dialogue will follow with the participation of the heads of international financial and trade organizations (World Bank, IMF, WTO and UNCTAD).

The afternoon session will begin with an introduction by the President of ECOSOC of the theme of the High-Level Segment "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development" with the participation of Heads of FAO, IFAD, WFP, UNIDO and the World Bank. Three simultaneous roundtable discussions exploring different aspects of the theme will follow. A summary of each roundtable will be presented to ECOSOC by the Chairs of the roundtables during the closing plenary. The meeting will end with a closing statement from the President of ECOSOC.

On **1 and 2 July** a total of 12 Ministerial Roundtable Breakfasts (six on each day) will be hosted by UN agencies, funds and programmes to allow for representatives of Member States, UN system and civil society to explore more in-depth issues related to the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development" in an informal setting.

The Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination will compile the preparatory materials and documents of the high-level segment into a publication to be distributed among Member States, UN agencies, funds and programmes and civil society at a later stage.