

Informal Summary

2007 High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council

Highlights

Breakfast hosted by the President of the Council

On “Climate change”

Thursday, 5 July 2007

Geneva

The President of the Council opened the breakfast meeting. He said that the Council could add value to the international efforts to address climate change in advance of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is to be held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. The Council had a role in addressing the impact of climate change on development and could bring in a multi-stakeholder and integrated approach, thus raising awareness and promoting action.

The Secretary-General welcomed the fact that the Council was examining the issue of climate change and said that he had made climate change one of his priorities. He had decided to convene a one-day high-level meeting on climate change on 24 September to garner political will and promote global agreement before the holding of the conference in Bali. In addition, he reported that he had appointed three special envoys on climate change in view of the fact that the issue had important socio-economic implications that required a multisectoral response. He stated that there was an urgent need to help the poorest countries in taking measures to adapt to climate change while ensuring, at the same time, that addressing climate change and promoting development should go hand in hand. The Secretary-General stated that he had been heartened by the commitments on climate change made at the Heilingendamm Summit.

The Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underscored the need to take immediate action to stabilize the global mean temperature increase at 2 to 2.4 degrees centigrade. Developed countries needed to take important steps in this regard, and developing countries also needed to bear some of the burden. Agriculture would be severely affected by climate change through a decline in productivity, and there would also be a negative impact on those in the agricultural sector who depended on rainfall.

Speakers concurred that urgent action was needed to curb greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to address the impact of climate change. There was broad agreement that the global challenges of development and climate change had to be addressed in an integrated manner. The positive dynamic between actions to address these two challenges had to be at the centre of the post-Kyoto approach. Technological innovation and strong political will could help in advancing the two fronts at the same time. Speakers recognized that climate change was a major threat to the poorest. Some speakers noted

that climate change had to be addressed within the context of sustainable development and its three pillars.

Some speakers said that developed countries had to face their historical responsibility and make large cuts in emissions. The outcome of the Heiligendamm Summit of the Group of Eight and the commitment by the countries of the European Union and by other countries to reduce global GHG emissions by 2050 were praised. Some speakers noted that while it was in the interest of the developing countries to follow a different path of development, this could not be done at the price of development and growth. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility needed to be applied. It was important that developing countries be supported through additional financing and access to clean technologies. The special needs of small island developing States (SIDS) also needed to be addressed. One speaker said that adaptation and mitigation measures had to receive equal attention and that flexibility and diversity were key in designing national responses to climate change. It was noted that some developing countries could make voluntary commitments to reduce large greenhouse gas emissions.

There was broad agreement that climate change has to be addressed within the UN context. The UN could help in building consensus among all stakeholders and in mobilizing political will. It was important to go beyond Kyoto. The next framework on climate change needed to have universal coverage so as to move towards a reduction of global emissions. Some speakers said that the scope of international instruments required further study.

Speakers noted that there should be coordination among the various initiatives of the UN and other initiatives in the area of climate change. It was suggested that the thematic debate of the General Assembly, to be held at the end of July 2007, should focus on national strategies, while the meeting of 24 September 2007 could, inter alia, be an occasion for the special envoys of the Secretary-General to share the results of their consultations. One speaker said that it should be clear that the meeting of 24 September would have no negotiated outcome.

ECOSOC had a significant role in the response to climate change, in the context of its work on sustainable development. One speaker said that ECOSOC could help mainstream climate change into all development activities, while another said that the Council should maintain its focus on the importance of achieving sustained economic growth and poverty eradication.

Speakers suggested that the UN should lead by example and take measures aimed at conserving energy. For example, the Organization could decide not to use heating or air conditioning in its facilities when the temperature is between 20 and 28 degrees Celsius. Meetings should start on time. It was also proposed that, in the context of the Doha Round, taxes could be eliminated on all products and services conducive to saving energy.

Responding to climate change required partnerships involving Governments and other actors. It was important to clarify how business could most constructively contribute

to addressing climate change. It would be useful if the membership of the Global Compact of the Secretary-General were to develop some ideas in this area.

The Secretary-General said that the outcome of the consultations between his special envoys would be shared with Member States. He hoped that upcoming UN meetings on climate change would give a strong impetus to the Bali conference. He welcomed national initiatives in the area of climate change and wished that these would be integrated within the UNFCCC framework. He agreed that while there was the historical responsibility of developed countries to curb climate change, we all have a responsibility towards the next generations to take action to that end. There should be a collaborative effort by all to address climate change.