

# DESA in the UN system

DESA is part of the UN Secretariat, which is funded through regular assessed contributions from Member States. The Department was reorganized into its present form in 1997 and is headed by Sha Zukang. As Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Sha manages the Department, advises the Secretary-General on social, economic and sustainable development, and nurtures key partnerships with governments, UN agencies and civil society organizations. The Under-Secretary-General convenes the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Secretariat's network for joint planning and initiatives on development, and is the Programme Manager of the Development Account of the United Nations regular budget which is implemented by ten United Nations Secretariat entities.

Mr. Sha also serves as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20.

In directing and managing DESA, the Under-Secretary-General is supported by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs.

## Forging global consensus

The focus on equitable participation by all people and nations is what makes the United Nations unique and gives the development agenda its universal legitimacy. By organizing global conferences and summits mandated by UN Member States, DESA has helped countries find common ground and elaborate plans of action on issues including sustainable development, population, social development, financing for development and other key areas. Together, these conferences have given shape to development strategies for achieving better standards of living in larger freedom – as envisioned by the UN Charter.

DESA supports deliberations and consensus-building in the General Assembly and in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies. The Department works to foster high-level engagement on a number of global development issues and supports consultation with multiple stakeholders, including UN system organizations, the private sector and civil society.

Over the last decade, consensus-building has become far more inclusive through increased participation by civil society organizations in UN deliberations. Facilitated by DESA's outreach, a large number of accredited civil society representatives now attend ECOSOC sessions as well as its functional commissions and forums each year.



United Nations

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# A PILLAR FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Promoting development for all

**The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, or DESA, helps countries around the world meet their economic, social and environmental challenges.** Our work flows from the United Nations development agenda: a shared vision of human progress rooted in the values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and mutual responsibility.

The UN development agenda represents an unprecedented global consensus on issues ranging from poverty reduction, health and women's empowerment to governance, finance and the environment.

**The Millennium Development Goals are an integral part of the UN development agenda.** In addition, the agenda also incorporates a range of cross-cutting issues that affect people's lives and livelihoods, from inequalities among and within countries, to global economic governance, global crises, including climate change, and the relationship between development and conflict.

**DESA serves to promote development for all, especially the most vulnerable.** This reflects a fundamental concern for equity and equality within and among countries large and small, developed and developing.

**Development for all goes beyond global agreements and is fundamentally about action.** Through the UN, the international community identifies the most pressing global concerns and assesses policy options to address them. All stakeholders come together to build consensus on goals, guiding principles and solutions. Countries commit to specific courses of action and time-bound targets. Commitments are translated into action at global, regional, country and local levels. Progress is monitored and evaluated to ensure implementation and delivery of results especially for those most in need. DESA supports all of these actions.

## Strengthening country capacities for development

Upon request, DESA advises Governments on ways to translate policy frameworks, developed in United Nations conferences and summits, into strategies and programmes at the country level. Additionally, DESA helps build capacities to develop and implement successful national policies and programmes. It also provides many analytical and methodological tools for use by country-level partners.

## From global commitments to national action

Within the framework of the United Nations development agenda, each division and office within DESA performs a critical function in promoting development for all.

### ECOSOC support and coordination

[www.un.org/esa/coordination/](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/)

The Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination assists the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council in reaching consensus on global development issues. It does so by facilitating negotiations among Member States based on substantive analysis and advice from DESA and the UN system. The Office advises on follow-up to the UN development agenda, particularly through the Annual Ministerial Review and the multi-stakeholder Development Cooperation Forum. The Office actively engages UN agencies, including the international financial and trade institutions and reaches out to civil society. Non-governmental organizations apply in large numbers for consultative status with ECOSOC each year.

### Social development

[social.un.org/index](http://social.un.org/index)

The Division for Social Policy and Development promotes awareness and understanding of the core social issues of poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration through its analytical and normative work. The Division assists governments and civil society organizations in formulating social policies that foster more secure, just, free and inclusive societies: societies in which all members – young and old, rich and poor, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples alike – are active participants. The Division's work is vital for the social pillar of sustainable development. It also serves as the secretariat of the Commission for Social Development, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### Sustainable development

[www.un.org/esa/dsd](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd)

The Division for Sustainable Development is an authoritative source of expertise within the UN system on development that recognizes the rights of current and future generations and integrates the economic, social and environmental dimensions. As secretariat to the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Division promotes sustainable development through inclusive forms of participation and partnership, as well as through technical cooperation and capacity-building. The Division advances implementation of Agenda 21 and the

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, along with the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Division also serves, together with seconded staff from the UN system, as the secretariat for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20.

### Statistics

[unstats.un.org](http://unstats.un.org)

The Statistics Division is committed to the advancement of the global statistical system. It serves as the secretariat to the UN Statistical Commission, coordinates global statistical activities, compiles and disseminates statistical information, develops methodological standards and norms, and supports national statistical systems. The Division facilitates the access to UN statistical resources covering a wide range of economic, social, demographic, environmental and geographic data sources which are available on-line free of charge through UNdata.

### Population

[www.unpopulation.org](http://www.unpopulation.org)

The Population Division studies population dynamics and monitors worldwide demographic trends and policies. Population estimates and projections prepared by the Division for all countries – on fertility, mortality, international migration and urbanization, as well as on population size and structure – are widely used by entities of the UN system for the derivation of other indicators and for modelling purposes, by Governments for policy formulation and programme design and by civil society for information and advocacy purposes. In its role as substantive secretariat for the Commission on Population and Development, the Population Division is also responsible for monitoring progress toward the achievement of selected indicators for the improvement of maternal health under Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals.

### Development policy analysis

[www.un.org/esa/policy](http://www.un.org/esa/policy)

The Development Policy and Analysis Division is the main development research unit of the United Nations. Its aim is to provide the analytical basis for strengthening sustainable global development and ensuring that all countries and their populations can gain from an increasingly integrated world economy. The Division's core functions include monitoring the global economy, researching mechanisms of macroeconomic policy coordination, analysing emerging long-term development trends to improve implementation of the UN development agenda, reviewing the list of least developed countries, and providing support to developing countries in strengthening analytical capacities to better integrate macroeconomic, social and environmental policies.

### Public administration

[www.unpan.org/dpadm](http://www.unpan.org/dpadm)

The Division for Public Administration and Development Management assists countries in building public institutions and government capacity to promote sustainable development, advance public sector reform and improve service delivery. The Division's training and capacity-building activities promote citizen-oriented, efficient and effective government, based on the principles of transparency, accountability and civic participation. The Division stresses innovative approaches to public management, in particular through e-government and expansion of the information society.

### Forests

[www.un.org/esa/forests](http://www.un.org/esa/forests)

The secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests promotes sustainable forest management based on Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration, Forest Principles, Global Objectives on Forests, and the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests. The secretariat is the UN focal point on all matters relating to forests and supports the work of the Forum in global forest policy development, implementation and coordination. The secretariat also provides information and analysis on critical forest issues including forest finance. To enhance UN system-wide cooperation on forests, it also serves as the secretariat for the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

### Financing for development

[www.un.org/esa/ffd](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd)

The Financing for Development Office provides secretariat support for sustained follow-up, at all levels, to the agreements and commitments contained in the Monterrey Consensus and Doha Declaration. To this end, it promotes an inclusive intergovernmental process, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, to address, in a coherent and integrated manner, such areas as domestic resource mobilization, private investment flows, international trade, official development assistance, external debt and the global financial and economic system and architecture.

### Capacity Development

[www.un.org/esa/cdo/](http://www.un.org/esa/cdo/)

The Capacity Development Office (CDO) supports the Under-Secretary-General of DESA in overseeing the use of resources for capacity development purposes. Building on the department's comparative strengths, the CDO helps Member States develop coherent capacity development strategies. The CDO also supports DESA in actively engaging as a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The Office promotes linkages between DESA's normative and analytical work and the UN system's operational work, including through regional and country-level cooperation mechanisms. The CDO also helps DESA mobilize partnerships to support its capacity development activities.

### Strategic Planning

[www.un.org/en/development/desa/about/strategic-planning](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/about/strategic-planning)

The Strategic Planning Unit supports the Under-Secretary-General in defining and pursuing DESA's strategic objectives, facilitates department-wide action in selected areas, and works to strengthen DESA's ties and collaboration with Member States, UN and other partners around key substantive priorities. The Unit serves as the secretariat for the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and focal point for DESA engagement in the Policy Committee and other strategic planning processes. It also leads the work of the DESA Task Force on Conflict, Disaster and Development.

## Cutting-edge research

DESA's professional staff researches a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues, identifying trends and analysing policy options. Their work is essential to UN negotiations and guides global technical cooperation efforts. Each year, DESA's publications are distributed in print and electronic formats around the world.

DESA's analytical work includes assessments of the world economic and social situation, which have been a mainstay of the global dialogue on development since the 1940s. In producing its surveys, DESA draws on experts in universities, private research organizations, government agencies and central banks in more than 60 countries.

Moreover, DESA plays a central role in monitoring and implementing global commitments to economic and social progress, including the Millennium Development Goals. National reports on sustainable development, social development, population ageing and forests are synthesized with data and analyses to review advances on many fronts, including financing for development, energy, water and sanitation, consumption and production and public administration.

DESA also oversees the global statistical system and produces authoritative population estimates and projections that are used the world over. These statistics provide a basis for informed evaluation and design of strategies for achieving development goals.



## TIMELINE OF MAJOR CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS SINCE 1990

1992	1994	1995	1996	2000	2002	2003	2005	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development	International Conference on Population and Development	Fourth World Conference on Women	Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II)	Millennium Summit	World Summit on Sustainable Development	International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries	2005 World Summit	Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus	UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development	15-year Review of the of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action	15-year Review of the Beijing Declaration & Platform for Action	UN Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20
International Conference on Nutrition	Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States	World Summit for Social Development	World Food Summit	Social Summit +5	Second World Assembly on Ageing	World Summit on the Information Society	10-year Review of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action	High-level event on the Millennium Development Goals	World Summit on Food Security	High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals	Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries	
				Special Session of the General Assembly for the 5 year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	Special Session of the General Assembly on Children		10-year Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	UN Conference on Climate Change	UN Conference on Climate Change	5-year Review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States		