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The Voice of Civil Society at Rio+20

It has become something of a given that significant new national or international issues that are addressed by government must include a component of multi-stakeholder involvement. That multi-stakeholder model was invented at the United Nations' 1992 'Earth Summit' and formalized in Agenda 21. For Rio+20, Major Groups have been invited to present general policy inputs for the "zero draft" document.

The extent of the role that various stakeholders would play was not fully anticipated in 1992, when the idea of active participation by the independent sector first was reflected in a document at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Agenda 21 – the Summit's blueprint of action to achieve sustainable development – acknowledged and codified those stakeholder sectors as the "Major Groups". Nine Groups were explicitly identified: [Women, Children and Youth](#), [Indigenous Peoples](#), [Non- Governmental Organizations](#), [Local Authorities](#), [Workers and Trade Unions](#), [Business and Industry](#), [the Scientific and Technological community](#), and [Farmers](#)

Major Groups included a vast number of non-governmental actors whose input was becoming increasingly critical in defining policies and mechanisms related to sustainable development issues.

Each major group was given its own chapter in Agenda 21 defining its role, areas of influence, obstacles and responsibilities in achieving sustainable social patterns. Those roles could involve being consumers of resources, producers, innovators, communicators or role models who could pioneer new techniques and motivate others to move towards more sustainable practices.

A social dimension

One of the most visionary aspects of Agenda 21 and the 1992 Summit was the premise that, in addition to the environmental and economic dimensions that needed to achieve integration, a social dimension also needed to be addressed. Without access to adequate clean water, energy, nutrition, education, individual rights and information or participation in local democratic decision making, people around the world would not be able to focus on the longer term requirements of a sustainable future.

The understanding was that enabling every single sector to take action would not only benefit itself, but benefit the broader society as well. And it could help build public constituencies in favor of sustainability-friendly policies and programs that could

motivate political leaders to act as well. In general, the “Major Groups” approach has proven to be a functional and definitely useful example of wide-ranging civil society participation

Since 1992, these groups participated in each annual meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and in subsequent Review processes, such as the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. They attend many types of intergovernmental meetings and have opportunities to speak at most plenary meetings. They hold consultations with bureau representatives on process, and with governments on substantive issues. They receive official documents and distribute their own. They organize side-events and build coalitions through meeting among themselves.



A growing stakeholder's involvement

Over the past two decades, similar models of multistakeholder involvement have been adopted by various UN agencies and programmes, and by other intergovernmental processes, if in less intensive forms, such as the World Bank, the IMF and the G20. There has been a broad movement toward increased stakeholder participation that has taken place at the local, sub-national and global governance levels – not to mention the growth of stakeholder consultations with business and industry.

The Rio+20 process has continued the involvement of the Agenda 21 major groups, and in some ways expanded it. This past November, for the first time in a General Assembly Conference-level negotiation, the accredited major groups organizations were invited to present general policy inputs – at the same time as governments – to the planned Rio+20 ‘zero draft’ document. Nearly 500 organizations did so. And in February, the DESA Division of Sustainable Development accepted specific additional text comments to the emerging Conference draft document, and integrated them into an informal parallel document – brackets and all – so that interested governments could have easy access to those groups suggested positions.

Towards a Sustainable Development Council

Major groups generally hope that an acceptable way can be found to strengthen the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and to start the process toward the establishment of a Sustainable Development Council that would maintain and hopefully upgrade the active participation that they had in the Commission on Sustainable Development.

On the ‘green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development’, there is a significant range of opinions and concerns among major group organizations. Many organizations expressed concerns that this new notion could ‘water down’ the unanimously agreed principles of sustainable development, in a way that could result in regarding natural resources merely as commodities, and would open the door to any business using ‘green’ terminology without meaning.

Most major groups will be trying to communicate to the public that a sustainable future is possible; that there are a large number of proven, effective programmes and technologies already at work; and that sustainable societies would provide affordable, achievable and attractive communities to live in.

Major groups all agree on one point: the success at Rio+20 is essential.

The author of this article, Michael Strauss, has been involved with media relations for Major Groups over the last two decades.

For more information:

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/majorgroups.html>

Indigenous peoples and the right to food

Where data exist, they show that levels of hunger and malnutrition among indigenous peoples are much higher than among the non-indigenous population. Indigenous peoples and their right to food and food sovereignty will be one of the focus of the Eleventh session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), to be held at UN Headquarters in New York from 7 to 18 May 2012.

Understanding what the right to food means to indigenous peoples goes beyond merely examining statistics on hunger, malnutrition or poverty. It encompasses indigenous peoples’ own particular conceptions of food, hunger, and subsistence. It has to be understood as a collective right, where food procurement and consumption of food are part of culture, as well as of social, economic and political organization. In addition, subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering are

essential not only to their right to food, but to nurturing their cultures, languages, social life and identity.

The few available data on indigenous peoples' nutrition shows that inappropriate development efforts often intensify the marginalization, poverty and food insecurity of indigenous peoples. Addressing the lack of disaggregated data on the situation of indigenous peoples, including on the extent of hunger and malnutrition, has been indicated as a key priority by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues.



Traditional food jeopardized

The realization of indigenous peoples' right to food depends crucially on their access to and control over the natural resources in the land and territories they occupy or use. Industrial development, especially mining and logging, as well as urban sprawl have polluted land, water and air. The creation of reserves, national parks, private lands and over-fishing have further reduced the areas and resources available to indigenous hunters, fishers and gatherers. Changing environmental conditions due to climate change that jeopardize traditional food species further exacerbate food insecurity.

Recent practices violating indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights – such as “bioprospecting” or “biopiracy” – pose a threat to indigenous peoples' genetic resources and traditional knowledge. Indigenous peoples want to be consulted about the ways their knowledge is used, and to equitably share in any benefits.

Food as a social indicator of existence

Over the years indigenous peoples have expressed deep concerns over the obstacles and challenges their communities face in fully enjoying their right to food. Indigenous peoples have urged the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to address these issues as a separate question to his work. The Declaration of Atitlán drafted

at the First Indigenous Peoples' Global Consultation on the Right to Food in April 2002 in Guatemala stated that the denial of the Right to Food for Indigenous Peoples is a denial of their collective indigenous existence, because it not only denies their physical survival, but also their social organization, cultures, traditions, languages, spirituality, sovereignty, and total identity.

For more information:

<http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples.aspx>

The right to food and indigenous peoples:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Right_to_food.pdf

Urban population to grow more than ever

The Population Division of UN DESA launched on 5 April the 2011 Revision of the World Urbanization Prospects. "Urban areas are expected to absorb all future population growth between 2011 and 2050. They will effectively have to cope with the equivalent of the world population of 1950 by the year 2050", said Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development.

While the world population is expected to increase by 2.3 billion, the population living in urban areas is projected to gain 2.6 billion, representing the entire future population growth and even drawing some rural population into urban areas.

"We need to focus on the absolute numbers instead of growth percentages. Why? Because people drink water, not percentages. People need sewage systems. People need housing. It is absolute numbers that count in many aspects" said Mr. Gerhard Heilig, Chief of the Population Estimates and Projections Section. Because of the expected increase in urban population, a lot of new infrastructure will have to be built, just to keep up with the growth rates.

According to the Report, five out of every six new urban residents will be either in Asia or in Africa, where the growth is expected to be the greatest. Special focus should be put on the mega-cities of 10 million inhabitants or more, where evidence shows most rapid growth. While in the 1970s, there were only two such cities; in 1990, there were already ten. Today, there are 23 mega-cities, and in 2025, we expect to have 37. There seems to be a process of urban concentration: cities with more than 1 million inhabitants will increase their share of the urban population, while cities with less than 1 million inhabitants will have a declining share of the urban population of the world.

The significance of the 2011 Revision of the World Urbanization Prospects is largely due to the availability of the new census data. While the previous 2009 revision relied on data from the 2000 census, the 2011 revision relies on information collected from the 2010 census, allowing for more accurate projections.

For more information: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm>
webcast: <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2012/04/press-conference-launch-of-the-world-urbanization-prospects-report-desa.html>

Global Dialogue on Development

Voluntary commitments to the Future We Want

Coming generations require us to move towards a sustainable development pathway – today.

The Rio+20 Secretariat welcomes submissions of Voluntary Commitments from all corners of society; Major Groups, the United Nations system, inter-governmental organizations and Member States, in order to reach the Future We Want – and need.



At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders, along with thousands of participants from governments, the private sector, NGOs and other major groups of society, will come together to see how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on an ever more crowded planet, to get to the future we want.

Visit the Rio+20 website to **Commit to the Future We Want:** www.uncsd2012.org/commit

Last sprint towards Rio+20

Intense negotiations of the Conference's Outcome document are under way since the 23 April in UN Headquarters in New York.

Over 130 Heads of State, Vice Presidents, Heads of Government, and deputy Prime Ministers have inscribed on the speakers list for Rio+20.

In addition, the two main Rio+20 Twitter accounts allowed reaching out more than 16 million people so far, and echoing further through re-tweeting another 110 million.

On 4 April, Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the 2012

UN Conference on Sustainable Development, briefed members of the UN Economic and Social Council about the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. "Clearly the decisions taken at Rio+20 will have major significance for the post-2015 development agenda," he said, while mentioning a proposal submitted to the Conference to define Sustainable Development Goals that would complement the successful Millennium Development Goals. "We are hearing one thing from all stakeholders," Mr. Sha added. "We need to work towards one UN development agenda, post-2015, with sustainable development at its centre."

Rio+20 Host-Country Agreement

The Host Country Agreement, a legal agreement officially allowing Brazil to host the Rio+20 Conference, was signed on 5 April by Mr. Sha and the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti at the Rio+20 Conference Secretariat. "Signing this agreement is a major milestone on our way to Rio," Mr. Sha stated. "The agreement that we signed today, together with the strong cooperation we have enjoyed with the Government of Brazil throughout the preparatory process, helps pave the way forward for Rio+20 to achieve its potential for setting us on a new path toward a sustainable future — the future we want."

Ambassador Viotti said the signing was "a good omen." She said that "Today we are launching the process. This is the beginning of our engagement with the UN in terms of hosting the Conference. There is goodwill on all sides and we all work together to make sure that the Conference is a success."

Counselling and mobilizing business leaders

A two-day consultation of business and industry, governments and civil society for Rio+20 entitled "Realising Inclusive and Green Growth" attracted 300 participants, mostly business people from both developed and developing countries, on 11 and 12 April in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Mr. Sha warmly invited business leaders to go to Rio to announce new green initiatives and to persuade the public and policy-makers "that business and industry can help accelerate the pace towards sustainable development." "We count on you to persuade those companies that are less sensitized, that the sustainable development approach is also a smart business choice," he also stressed.

Business and industry are one of the nine Major Groups working for sustainable development and playing an official consultative role in the Rio+20 process. The other one are women, youth and children, workers and trade unions, scientific and technological community, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities and NGOs.

Declaration of UN system chiefs

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) met on 14-15 April to discuss Rio+20 and adopt an inspiring joint declaration of UN system chiefs about the Conference, which notably states: “Rio+20 must provide the roadmap to the future we want, a future with peace dynamic economic and social development universal social well-being and a healthy and equitable environment for present and future generations where women and men, boys and girls equally contribute to and benefit from development.”

Harmony with nature

To mark International Mother Earth Day, the UN General Assembly held an interactive dialogue on harmony with nature on 18 April at UN Headquarters to examine how human activity has affected the regenerative capacity of the planet. “As we get closer to Rio+20, we must keep the Earth in full view when making decisions and taking actions shifting from a self-centered to an Earth-centered approach,” Mr. Sha told to the participants. “Our success and wealth must be measured by the balance we create between ourselves and the world around us; that is, by our ability to live in harmony with nature.”

Intensive negotiations continue

Critical negotiations on the Rio+20 Outcome Document resumed on 23 April in New York. The 19-page “zero draft” issued in January was condensed from 6,000 pages of submissions from various stakeholders. A large number of proposals were made by governments during intense negotiations in March. The draft was then significantly expanded, bringing the text to over 200 pages. The revised draft identified 26 critical areas for action, including: water, energy, food, jobs, cities, oceans, disaster preparedness, poverty eradication, tourism, transport, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, lands, chemicals and forests, among others. The current round of informal negotiations on the Outcome Document is due to continue up to 4 May.

Empowering youth for a sustainable future

Since the onset of the global economic crisis, youth unemployment has increased across the world, affecting both developed and developing countries alike.

This problem poses significant challenges not simply to the youth themselves but also to the capacity of companies and countries to innovate and develop competitive advantages which are critical for economic recovery.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will hold a youth forum, “Creating a Sustainable Future: Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities” on 4 May 2012 at the UN

Headquarters, New York City. This event is organized jointly by UN DESA and the UN Department of Public Information (DPI). It is part of the preparatory process for the 2012 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), to be held in July on the theme of **Promoting Productive Capacity, Employment and Decent Work**.

The programme will consist of an opening plenary, to be followed by two dialogue classroom sessions on “Training and education to facilitate access to job market” and “Promoting youth employment-Creating jobs for a more sustainable future”. Youth representatives around the world will participate in this event.

Recommendations coming out from the ECOSOC youth forum will be shared with Member States at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), to take place in Brazil, in June 2012, and also during the ECOSOC high-level session in July 2012.

For more information: <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/youth/>

5 years of rights for indigenous people

The 11th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will be held in New York from 7 to 18 May.

This 11th session will focus on “The Doctrine of Discovery”. There has already been extensive discussion on the Doctrine of Discovery, its historical development, past and present impacts, the different ways it has affected or affects indigenous peoples, as well as the relationship between governments and indigenous peoples. This year the Forum will look at ways of redefining indigenous and State relationships as an equally important lens through which to understand the Doctrine of Discovery and work together to build a future on mutual respect, equity and justice.

Discussions on the right to food and food sovereignty for indigenous peoples, as well as the challenges indigenous peoples are facing in the Central and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia region will be part of the Forum.

On 17 May, there will be a high-level commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This Declaration provides a crucial opportunity to integrate indigenous visions of development into states’ policies and legislative frameworks, as well as into the UN work towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There is a need for indigenous peoples to provide their own holistic definitions of

well-being and development with culture and identity. Rio+20 and inclusion of indigenous concepts of relationship with nature, land and natural resources is one of the main current challenges for the world's indigenous peoples.

The General Assembly has decided to organize a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014. The main objective of this Conference is to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples and to pursue the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A discussion will be held during this 11th session on this World Conference. The full and effective participation of indigenous peoples at all the stages of the process, including the definition of the modalities, is of the outmost importance to ensure its success and sustainability.

For more information:

<http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples.aspx>

Trends and Analysis

The benefits of family-oriented policies

An Expert Group Meeting on “Good Practices in Family Policy Making”, will be held in New York from 15 to 17 May 2012.

This expert Group Meeting is entitled “Good Practices in Family Policy Making: Family Policy Development, Monitoring and Implementation: Lessons Learnt”. The main issues to be discussed will be family policy making, work-family balance, recent trends in family poverty and social exclusion, anti-poverty family-focused policies, as well as social integration and intergenerational solidarity. The meeting is convened as part of preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014.

Strategies promoting social integration and intergenerational solidarity are critical for families and societies. They promote social cohesion and shared responsibility and contribute to developing positive relationships across age groups and have been shown to strengthen the quality of ties between family members. In times of economic crises, intergenerational ties grow in importance, with family members shielding one another from the consequences of the loss of employment or housing.

Flexible working arrangements result in better health outcomes for parents. At a company level, they have also been associated with employee productivity, organizational commitment, retention, moral, job satisfaction and reductions in absenteeism. Investments in early childhood education and care are another form of support for parents with young children to help them remain engaged in paid work. In addition, other policy objectives such as gender equality and fair distribution of family responsibilities between both parents help achieve work-life balance for all family members.

For more information, please visit:
<http://social.un.org/index/Family/EGMonGoodPracticesinFamilyPolicyMaking.aspx>

Internet Governance for sustainable development

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) will hold Open Consultations and a meeting of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) from 15 to 17 May 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Today we see a growing emphasis on technical measures to address concerns about the online market for counterfeit goods and

digital copyright infringement, as well as ever stronger demands to enlist Internet intermediaries as the instrument of law enforcement. These trends are emerging in States of all political persuasions, and are paralleled by longer-standing efforts to limit or control free speech in the political and social realms. All stakeholders have responsibility to ensure that everyone has the right to create, access, use and share information and knowledge in the digital realm. The IGF 2012 should look at the impacts of all topics on the free flow of information in a cross-cutting way while engaging participants on the various dimensions of the issues.

The Open Consultations and the meeting of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) will focus on discussions on the programme, workshops and schedule of the 2012 IGF meeting that will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan on “Internet Governance for Sustainable Human, Economic and Social Development”. Mr. Elmir Velizadeh, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan will chair the meetings. The MAG currently consists of 56 Members from governments, the private sector and civil society, intergovernmental organisations including representatives from the academic and technical communities

For more information: <http://www.intgovforum.org>

Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The 7th Facilitation Meeting on implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) will be held on 17 May 2012 in Geneva.

Participants will exchange information and discuss progress in implementing three of the 11 WSIS Action Lines: the role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICT for development (Action Line C1); ICT applications – e-government (action Line C7); and international and regional cooperation (Action Line C11).

The purpose of the Seventh Facilitation Meeting, which is open to all stakeholders from the public and private sectors, the civil society, the international organizations, is to provide a platform for participants to exchange information and experiences; to identify the propriety areas for implementation within the Action Lines; and to create synergies among different stakeholders for more effective knowledge sharing and collaboration in order to ensure the implementation of WSIS at the international, regional and national levels. The Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) is organising this Facilitation Meeting.

For more information: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>

Capacity development

Information and Communication Technologies for Parliaments

The Second Workshop on ICT Strategic Planning in the SADC Parliaments will be held from 14 to 16 May 2012 in Windhoek, Namibia.

The purpose of the second Workshop is to provide a forum for parliaments to discuss how the UN DESA Project “Support to ICT Strategic Planning in the SADC Parliaments”, funded by the European Commission, through the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, lead to any particular achievements, challenges and all other related experiences obtained during their respective ICT strategic planning process. The Workshop will also allow participants to jointly identify needs and promote opportunities going forward for the greater use of ICT in SADC Parliaments while also solidifying an ongoing and supportive community of practice.

The Workshop will be attended by key decision makers in the SADC Parliaments such as Members of Parliament, Secretaries General and ICT Directors. It is jointly organised by UN DESA, through the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), its Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Parliament, and the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF).

For more information: <http://www.ictparliament.org/node/4647>

Open government and citizen engagement

A workshop on “Future Government: A Global Perspective in Connection to Open Government and Citizen engagement”, will take place in Geneva on 16-17 May 2012.

This international workshop will serve as an enabling platform of WSIS, for an international and multidisciplinary (public officials, academia, civil society and private sector stakeholders) group of experts, and national practitioners, to share their experiences and exchange practices on open government data and citizen engagement.

The Workshop has the following objectives:

- Strengthen the participants’ capacity in policy and program formulation, implementation and evaluation of open government data initiatives;
- Understand the value created for governments, citizens, civil society, and the business community, by opening government data;
- Share open government initiatives based on experiences of early adopters and also identify challenges, especially in the area of data security and privacy;
- Accelerate participants’ learning on implementation of legislation concerning access to government data and personal data privacy;

The main output of the workshop will be an Open Government Data (OGD) Toolkit which will serve as the entry point for those UN Member States who plan to share data with their constituents. The toolkit will include strategies for opening government data, templates that governments can customize for their own needs, technologies for opening data, recommendations about the data hosting applications and platforms.

The event, organised by The Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of UN DESA, in cooperation with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), will take place during the 2012 annual follow-up meetings of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

For more information: <http://www.unpan.org/ogdce>

A census software for more accessible data

A Regional Workshop on CensusInfo will be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 15-18 May 2012 for nine Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region countries.

One of the major lessons from the 2000 round of population and housing censuses points to the necessity of taking full advantage of the data collected through censuses via appropriate dissemination and analysis mechanisms. Often, census results are disseminated only in a tabular format—whether in print publications or on the web—which potential data users find unappealing. Interested data users often encounter language and other data access barriers (for example, the data is restricted or only available in print form). For census data to be truly useful, it needs to be easily accessible via the Internet and access to data should be provided in an interactive manner along with tools for visualization and analysis.

The goal of the Regional Workshop is to provide a forum for sharing national practices and experiences in the dissemination of census data as well as highlighting CensusInfo's software potential as a platform for disseminating census data at any geographical level. The workshop will demonstrate the various processes involved in the adaptation of CensusInfo, including the preparation of CensusInfo template and database, importing data, language translation and customization of the software package. The workshop sessions will also include hands-on training on using the CensusInfo User Interface and Database Administration applications. It is primarily intended for census experts and census data managers. This event is organized by UN DESA's Statistics Division in collaboration with the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/cwp2010/docs.htm>

Population and housing censuses in South Asia

A workshop on "Collection and Dissemination of Socio-economic Data from Population and Housing Censuses" will take place in New Delhi, India, from 28 to 31 May 2012.

The purpose of this workshop, aimed for South Asian countries and organised by the UN Statistics Division is to present international standards and country practices for conducting population and housing censuses with a focus on recommended core topics and tabulations as identified in the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2.

The workshop will also offer an opportunity to discuss the use of technological tools and of GIS web-based mapping and spatial analysis in the dissemination of census data as well as of the CensusInfo software as a tool for data dissemination. Lastly, the workshop will also provide a forum for sharing of national practices and experiences regarding determination of census topics and tabulations and also strategies for dissemination of census data.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/cwp2010/docs.htm>

New technologies in the legislative branch

A workshop on "The Impact of New Technologies in the Transformation of the Legislative Branch" will be held from 30 May to 1 June 2012, in Bridgetown, Barbados.

This regional workshop intends to serve as a forum for participants to discuss how the recently developed Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Strategic Plans can be implemented in each of the beneficiary Parliament of the UN DESA Project "Support to ICT Strategic Planning in the Caribbean Parliaments". It is entitled "The Impact of New Technologies in the Transformation of the Legislative Branch: From Awareness, to Planning, to Action".

This workshop also intends to provide exposure to ongoing regional developments and trends in parliamentary ICT within the context of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Programme "Connected Parliaments". Finally, the Workshop will explore regional opportunities and identify synergies for solidifying a supportive regional community of practice aimed at continued e-Parliament learning and capacity building.

This workshop is organized by UN DESA, through the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) and its Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD). It will convene around 75 participants from Caribbean parliaments, including presiding officers (Speakers, MPs and Clerks) and senior ICT staff, as well as senior ICT experts from other more ICT advanced parliaments.

For more information: <http://www.ictparliament.org/node/4648>

Publications and Websites

Technical reports

World Urbanization Prospects, the 2011 Revision



The report, published by the Population Division of DESA, states that Africa's urban population will increase from 414 million to over 1.2 billion by 2050 while that of Asia will soar from 1.9 billion to 3.3 billion. According to the report, both regions together will account for 86 per cent of all increases in the world's urban population.

According to Sha Zukang, USG of DESA and Secretary-General of Rio+20, "The launch of the World Urbanization Prospects is timely because world leaders, along with thousands of participants from governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and other groups, will come together to shape how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on an ever more crowded planet. We expect world leaders to come up with concrete action plans to realize sustainable cities for the future we want," he said.

To download:

http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/pdf/WUP2011_Highlights.pdf

More information: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm>

Statistical compilations

Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and MBS Online



The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics presents current economic and social statistics for more than 200 countries and territories of the world. It contains over 50 tables of monthly and/or bimonthly, quarterly and annual data on a variety of subjects illustrating important economic trends and developments, including population, prices, employment and earnings, energy, manufacturing, transport, construction, international merchandise trade and finance.

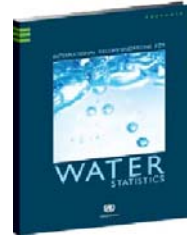
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This month, the following tables, which are featured in the MBS on a quarterly or bimonthly basis, are presented along with the regular recurrent monthly tables: Earnings in non-agricultural activities, by sex; Fuel imports, developed economies: unit value

and volume indices; value; Indicators on fuel imports, developed economies; External trade conversion factors; Manufactured goods exports: unit value indices, volume indices and value; Selected series of world statistics.

For more information: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mbs>

International Recommendations for Water Statistics



The International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS) was developed to assist countries establish and strengthen information systems for water, which in turn support the design and evaluation of better water policies. In particular, these recommendations: (a) support the collection, compilation and dissemination of internationally comparable water statistics in countries; (b) support the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts for Water (SEEA-Water); and (c) provide the necessary information for deriving coherent and consistent indicators, enabling comparisons over time and between countries from an agreed list of data items.

The IRWS consolidates the experiences and practices of countries and international organizations in the field of water statistics, and was developed in close collaboration and consultations with many countries and international experts. Following this process, the IRWS was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its forty-first session in February 2010.

The UNSC is a functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations that brings together the Chief statisticians from the Member States. As such it is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities, especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international level.

Outreach material

Rio+20 Newsletter: Making it Happen, Volume 3, Issue 4

"We need to mobilize public support around the world for the vision of finally building a sustainable world that guarantees the well-being of humanity, while preserving the planet for future generations," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Over 130 Heads of State, Vice Presidents, Heads of Government, and deputy Prime Ministers are currently inscribed on the speakers list for the Rio+20 Conference, from 20-22 June.

Read more in our latest issue of the Rio+20 Newsletter – Making it Happen.

View full issue at:

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/newsletter.html>

Monthly briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects

The April issue covers, among other things, the continuation of developed countries' policies of quantitative easing. The central banks of the United States, the European Union and Japan have taken a number of steps such as lengthening the maturity of their holdings, providing loans at low rates and continuing asset purchase programmes. Industrial output has slowed in a number of countries across the world such as Brazil, Croatia, Japan, Serbia and Viet Nam. China's trade deficit increased in the first two months of the year. An easing of food prices from their highs in 2011 has helped to slow inflation, particularly in the Commonwealth of Independent States and East Africa. In the developed world, there are some signs pointing to modest recovery in the US, but growth has slowed in Australia and New Zealand and the growth prospects for the EU remain depressed. Another development is that Hungary may be one of the first countries to face EU financial sanctions due to a budget deficit above the agreed threshold.

View full issue at:

http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_mb/wesp_mb42.pdf

Enable Newsletter

March issue is now available. ENABLE Newsletter is prepared by the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (SCRPD) within UN DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development, with input from UN offices, agencies, funds and programmes, and civil society.

View full issue at:

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/newsletter/march2012.doc>

United Nations Youth Flash

April issue is now available. The newsletter is a service of the UN Programme on Youth to keep the public informed about the work of the UN on youth issues. It is prepared with input from UN offices, agencies, funds and programmes, and from youth organisations around the world.

View full issue at:

<http://social.un.org/index/Youth/YouthFlashNewsletter/2012/April.aspx>

Social Development Link Newsletter

The April issue is now available online. The newsletter, which is now published monthly by the Civil Society and Outreach Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development, aims at providing a sharp and synthetic summary of major activities carried out by DSPD.

As its title shows, the newsletter will serve as a link between DSPD and its major partners, from civil society actors to social development practitioners and scholars.

View full issue at :

<http://social.un.org/index/Newsletters/SDLNewsletter/April2012.aspx>

Working papers

The Imprudence of Labour Market Flexibilization in a Fiscally Austere World

This paper assesses the effects of combining fiscal austerity with flexibilization policies aimed at reducing labour costs and increasing competitiveness. Core to our analysis is a global perspective where the aggregation problem is fully taken into account. We derive a stylized macroeconomic framework of distributive and demand dynamics. We show that even in export-led regimes, after considering global feedbacks, flexibilization policies do not lead to higher income and employment. Rather, the end result is contractionary. Over time, the world economy is essentially wage-led and responds positively to coordinated Keynesian stimuli.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2012/wp112_2012.pdf

Mobile applications

UN CountryStats



Statistics Division's first app – the new UN CountryStats app for iPhones and iPads – became available for download from the App Store on 1 March. Adapted from the print version of Statistics

Division's World Statistics Pocketbook 2010, this data visualisation tool offers free-of-charge portable access to key economic, social and environmental indicators for 216 countries and areas. It's easy-to-use interface enables users to view country profiles in table format as well as to compare indicators for several countries and years at a time, display them as bar graphs, and save them as favourites. The indicators covered are those which have been compiled by the United Nations Statistics and Population divisions, the statistical services of United

Nations specialized agencies and other international organisations and institutions.

To download: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/un-countrystats/id505192468?mt=8>

Publications in other languages

Launch of the Chinese Edition of the “United Nations E-Government Survey 2012: E-Government for the People”



More than 200 senior officials from the central and local ministries responsible for e-government and information technology in China, research and academia institutions engaged in e-government, as well as several industry representatives, attended the launch of the Chinese language edition of the “United Nations E-Government Survey 2012: E-

Government for the People” in Beijing, China, on 26 March 2012.

For more information:

[http://www.unpan.org/Library/MajorPublications/UNEGovernmentSurvey/
PublicEGovernanceSurveyintheNews/tabid/651/mctl/ArticleView/
ModuleId/1555/articleId/30717/Default.aspx](http://www.unpan.org/Library/MajorPublications/UNEGovernmentSurvey/PublicEGovernanceSurveyintheNews/tabid/651/mctl/ArticleView/ModuleId/1555/articleId/30717/Default.aspx)

Comings and Goings

Comings

The following staff member was promoted in April:

Melissa Lazarovich, Finance and Budget Assistant, Executive Office

Goings

The following staff members retired in April:

Luis Prugue, Programme Assistant, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

Alice Samuel, Editorial Assistant, Population Division

Calendar

May

Youth forum on “Creating a Sustainable Future: Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities”

New York, 4 May

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/youth/>

Eleventh Session of the UNPFII

New York, 7-18 May

<http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples/UNPFIISessions/Eleventh.aspx>

Second Workshop on ICT Strategic Planning in the SADC Parliaments

Windhoek, Namibia, 14-16 May

<http://www.ictparliament.org/node/4647>

United Nations Regional Workshop on CensusInfo

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 15-18 May

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/cwp2010/docs.htm>

Expert Group Meeting on Good Practices in Family Policy Making

New York, 15-17 May

<http://social.un.org/index/Family/EGMonGoodPracticesinFamilyPolicyMaking.aspx>

Internet Governance Forum

Geneva, 15 - 17 May

<http://www.intgovforum.org>

Workshop on Future Government: A Global Perspective in Connection to Open Government and Citizen engagement

Geneva, 16-17 May

<http://www.unpan.org/ogdce>

Seventh Facilitation Meeting on implementing the outcomes of the World Summit

17 May 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>

Workshop for South Asian countries on Collection and Dissemination of Socio-economic Data from Population and Housing Censuses

New Delhi, India 28 – 31 May

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/cwp2010/docs.htm>

Regional Workshop “The Impact of New Technologies in the Transformation of the Legislative Branch: From Awareness, to Planning, to Action”

Bridgetown, Barbados, 30 May - 1 June

<http://www.ictparliament.org/node/4648>

June

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Rio de Janeiro, 20-22 June

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.html>

Observances

International Day of Families:

The 2012 observance of the International Day of Families, with a theme: "Ensuring work family balance" is organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the New York NGO Committee on the Family. A panel discussion will take place on 15 May (1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.) in Conference room 6 (NLB) at UN Headquarters in New York. All are invited to attend.

The panel discussion will address the following issues:

- Trends impacting work-family balance, such as growing number of dual earner families, increasing women's labour force participation, competition for jobs, anti-social working patterns
- Impact of work pressures on family life
- Benefits of work-family balance for adults and children
- Gender equality and fair distribution of family responsibilities
- The importance of quality childcare
- Family-oriented responses to ensure work-family balance
- Types of policies and programmes
- Examples of good practices
- Perspectives on the role of Governments, UN entities, civil society, private sector and academia in advocacy, design and implementation of work-family balance policies and programmes

For more information:

<http://social.un.org/index/Family/InternationalObservances/InternationalDayofFamilies/2012.aspx>

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