



20 March 2014

## **Integration Segment**

### **Achieving sustainable development: Integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions**

#### **Background Note**

The Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference gave ECOSOC the mandate to play a key role in the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; that is, economic, social and environmental. This key role of the Council was also recognized in the establishment of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development (A/RES/67/290).

To promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development both within the United Nations system and beyond, in its resolution A/RES/68/1 on the strengthening of the Council, the General Assembly decided that “an integration segment shall be held annually. The main functions of the segment will be to:

- consolidate all the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders;
- promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development;
- bring together the key messages from the Council system on the main theme of ECOSOC and develop action-oriented recommendations for follow-up.

The work of the segment will thus facilitate the transmission and incorporation of policy guidance by governing bodies of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies. The segment will also address the interplay of the three dimensions of sustainable development and cross-cutting issues such as gender, science and technology, trade and finance, particularly in relation to policy options and their implications. The integration segment can thus serve as a platform to identify the potential short-term policy choices, the resulting adjustments and longer-term gains inherent in an integrated and balanced sustainable development approach.

The segment could complement the work of the HLPF by providing a platform for the ECOSOC system, policymakers and key stakeholders to identify policy choices that could allow for an integrated approach to sustainable development. The outcome of the Integration Segment will be a summary by the ECOSOC Vice-President highlighting the main policy recommendations coming out of discussions and providing guidance on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development. The summary will serve as an input to the high-level segment of the Council and the HLPF.

The Integration Segment will also reinforce the Council’s mandate to promote the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Integration requires an inclusive process that brings together not only sectoral and central government agencies in the formulation and implementation of development plans, but also other stakeholders such as civil society and major groups. The Integration Segment will therefore attract

high-level participants from all three areas of sustainable development. The Segment will serve as a platform to bring together sustainable development champions, including government officials and local authorities, representatives of the United Nations system, Bretton Woods institutions, civil society, major groups, academia, scientific community and the private sector, to identify policy choices that allow for an integrated approach to sustainable development. The Segment will go beyond multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and focus on the substance of policy integration, with concrete national and regional experiences and exchange of ideas, practices and strategies.

In preparation for the Segment<sup>1</sup>, a background note will be prepared by the Secretariat to analyze how integration has taken place at the national, regional and global level with regard to the theme, what policy actions need to be taken, and what the trade-offs may be. The subsidiary bodies of the Council will provide inputs on the theme around the three dimensions of sustainable development, with recommendations and technical guidance on how ECOSOC can integrate their inputs into the larger picture of sustainable development. Inputs from the United Nations Funds and Programmes, Bretton Woods Institutions will also be sought to examine how integration is pursued at the operational level and how the United Nations system addresses the obstacles faced in doing so. The regional commissions will bring regional perspectives on integration to the Council. Particular attention will be paid to the African countries and their efforts for integration at the regional and sub-regional level.

## **Objectives**

In the context of the annual theme, the Segment could:

- Serve as a platform to identify the potential short-term policy choices, the resulting trade-offs, and longer-term gains inherent in an integrated and balanced sustainable development approach;
- Facilitate a multi-stakeholder dialogue, integrating the views of major groups and scientists and hence the quality of ensuing policy recommendations;
- Provide solutions, innovations and partnerships on the theme of the Segment; and
- Identify tools and instruments to facilitate inputs that can be used to assess the integrated approach by the Council.

## **Format**

The segment will be a three-day event with formal Council meetings, as well as side events and ministerial breakfasts organized by Member States, UN system and other stakeholders. It will feature opening and closing plenary sessions plus interactive panels and dialogues. The panel sessions will feature substantive presentations and discussions on how to achieve policy convergence to address the theme in an integrated manner.

Presidents of Governing Boards and heads of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, chairs of relevant ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, representatives of the scientific community and academia, as well as of major Groups, civil society and the private sector will interact with the Council and bring their perspectives during the segment.

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<sup>1</sup> DESA will work in close collaboration with UN-Habitat, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) and relevant UN system organizations and Secretariats of the subsidiary bodies in supporting the deliberations at the segment.

## ANNEX

### 1<sup>st</sup> ECOSOC Integration Segment (27-29 May 2014) to focus on SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION<sup>2</sup>

#### *Sustainable urbanization as an integration tool*

In 2014, the Economic and Social Council will focus on the overall theme of “Addressing on-going and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”. One area that poses both challenges and opportunities for achieving the MDGs by 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future is urbanization. Recognizing the importance of this issue, in 2012, the Economic and Social Council invited Governments to further promote sustainable cities and the role of local authorities in their national development policies and programmes and to consider the environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically productive roles of cities in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda (Resolution 2012/27). In this connection, the Integration Segment could focus on sustainable urbanization to address the main theme in an integrated and focused way.

At the beginning of the 19th century, only 2 per cent of the world’s population was urban. By the beginning of the 20th century, the percentage had increased to 10. During the first decade of the 21st century, a historic milestone was achieved when the global population living in cities and towns reached the 50 per cent mark, thus making urban centres the dominant habitat of humankind. The rapidly increasing dominance of cities as the habitat of humankind places the process of urbanization among the most significant global trends of the twenty-first century. But this is not simply a demographic phenomenon. Rather, it is a force which, if effectively steered and deployed, could potentially help the world to overcome some of its major challenges.

With the world urban population estimated to increase from 3.5 billion today to 6.2 billion in 2050, urbanization constitutes both a challenge and an opportunity to sustainable development. Rapid urbanization is a mega trend linked to internal migration, development transformation, and the distribution of development activities. For example, Africa’s urbanized population in 2009 was 359 million – 40 per cent. By 2040 due to lack of job opportunities, drought and desertification in rural areas, it is projected to reach 1 billion and 1.23 billion by 2015 – 60 per cent. Urban areas are faced with problems of unsustainable geographical expansion patterns (especially urban sprawl); ineffective urban planning, governance and financing systems; inefficient resource use (especially energy use); poverty, unemployment, inequalities, slums, poor infrastructure, safety and security, as well as inadequate delivery of basic services (including, water, sanitation and waste management). Youth, women and people with disabilities have often been left behind in conventional models of urban development. Extreme deprivation remains a major concern with one billion people living in slums. Furthermore, cities continue to be the major contributor to the total greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite these challenges, as centres for business and innovation, urban areas are also a source of growth, development and jobs. If well-managed and adequately planned, urban densities offer opportunities for economies of scale and scope in development efforts, in particular in addressing poverty, health and education issues. In fact, the positive correlation between urbanization and development has long been recognized and, throughout history, urbanization has been, and continues to be, a source rather than simply an outcome of development. Today, urban centres account for 70 per cent of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP), i.e. 55 per cent in low-income countries, 73 per cent

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<sup>2</sup> For further information on the Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council, please go to the background note available at [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/pdf/integration\\_segment\\_background\\_note.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/pdf/integration_segment_background_note.pdf)

in middle-income countries, and 85 per cent in high-income economies. Thus Governments can use urbanization as a powerful tool for transforming production capacities, income levels and living standards, especially in developing countries. However, this requires a shift in mindset of the decision makers, away from viewing urbanization as a problem, towards viewing urbanization as a tool for sustainable development.

The potential of cities was highlighted in the Outcome Document of Rio+20 Conference, which recognized that if cities were well planned and developed, including through integrated planning and management approaches, they could promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. At Rio+20, Governments committed to promoting an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements and the generation of decent jobs. Promoting an integrated and holistic approach to planning and building sustainable cities requires local authorities to work with national Governments as well as other stakeholders to create employment opportunities, provide efficient transportation and communications networks, greener buildings, an efficient human settlements and service delivery system, improved air and water quality, reduced waste, improved disaster preparedness and response and increased climate resilience. Integrated approaches to sustainable urbanization target multiple MDGs and allow for strengthening of synergies between efforts to achieve different goals, such as health, education, water and sanitation, maternal and child health, empowerment of women and environmental sustainability.

Addressing sustainable urbanization would entail the consideration of its economic (i.e. employment, revenue generation), social (i.e. social services requirements) and environmental (i.e. energy consumption, transport and building policies, greenhouse gas emissions) implications and connections. It is clear that sustainable urbanization requires collective action by a wide range of stakeholders, including Governments, the UN system, private enterprises, academia, civil society and communities. While in the past it was sometimes thought that focusing on urban areas could jeopardize the progress made in rural areas by attracting the rural population to urban centres, it is now clear that urbanization is inevitable, that the challenge is how to manage urbanization rather than reducing or preventing it, and that sustainable urbanization should, in fact, be planned to be supportive of rural development through the provision or improvement of physical, economic and social infrastructure in small rural towns and service centres. Furthermore, urban centres of all sizes have always provided extremely valuable markets for rural produce throughout history.

Consideration of the issue of sustainable urbanization during the Integration Segment would also give the Council an opportunity to contribute to the third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III), scheduled to take place in 2016, especially to the formulation of the 'New Urban Agenda', the envisaged outcome document of the conference. In its resolution 2012/27, the Council encouraged the United Nations system, in particular the regional and functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, to actively support the preparatory process of the conference.

By bringing together the ECOSOC system, policy makers and key stakeholders, including networks of UN-Habitat, Major Groups representatives and UN system organizations, the Integration Segment will help to establish a common understanding of the role of urbanization in sustainable development, and also to define the fundamental attributes of the 'sustainable city' that Member States and United Nations system organizations could collectively promote, from the perspectives of their different responsibilities and mandates. In addition, the Integration Segment will identify policy choices that could allow for an integrated approach to sustainable development and consider concrete national experiences and draw policy recommendations that could advance the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through sustainable urbanization.