

What does ECOSOC do?

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) coordinates the work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, ten functional commissions and five regional commissions, receives reports from nine UN funds and programmes (see reverse) and issues policy recommendations to the UN system and to Member States. Under the UN Charter, ECOSOC is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. ECOSOC's purview extends over 70 per cent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system.

The Council's 54 member Governments are elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms. In carrying out its mandate, ECOSOC consults with academics, business sector representatives and more than 2,500 registered non-governmental organizations.

The Council holds a four-week substantive session each July, alternating between New York and Geneva. The session includes a high-level segment, at which national cabinet ministers and chiefs of international agencies and other high officials focus their attention on a selected theme of global significance. This year, the 29 June–1 July segment, chaired by ECOSOC President Munir Akram (Pakistan), will focus on progress made and challenges encountered in efforts to meet international development targets, including those in the Millennium Declaration.

Policy coordination

- In 2004, the High-Level Segment focused on challenges faced by least developed countries working to attain the MDG targets, and important support measures developed countries could provide – such as access to markets – were identified.
- A UN public-private alliance to promote rural development, with Madagascar designated as the initial beneficiary, came out of the 2003 session.
- In 2001, ad hoc advisory groups that could play an important advocacy role for African countries emerging from conflict were created.
- The High Level Segment in 2000 led directly to the formation, in 2001, of the ICT [Information and Communication Technologies] Task Force, now the universally recognized forum where ICT professionals and the development community can interact and move ahead with ICT-for-development. Also that year, the Council's review of African development resulted in the first formal international endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In 1998, the Council initiated a tradition of meeting each April with finance ministers chairing key committees of the Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These annual consultations paved the way for the success of the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in March 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, and earned the Council the primary role in monitoring and assessing follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus.

More information on the work of the Council and its 2005 high-level segment is available on the ECOSOC web site, at: <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/bwi2005/index.html>.

UN bodies within the purview of the Economic and Social Council

Specialized agencies

- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Bank Group
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- World Tourism Organization (WTO)

Functional commissions

- Statistical Commission
- Commission on Population and Development
- Commission for Social Development
- Commission on Human Rights
- Commission on the Status of Women
- Commission on Narcotic Drugs
- Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Commission on Science and Technology for Development
- Commission on Sustainable Development
- United Nations Forum on Forests

Regional Commissions

- Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Standing Committees

- Committee for Programme and Coordination
- Commission on Human Settlements
- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Committee on Negotiations with Intergovernmental Agencies
- Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Ad hoc bodies

- Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics

Expert bodies composed of governmental experts

- Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.
- United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Expert bodies composed of members serving in their personal capacity

- Committee for Development Policy
- Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance
- Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Related bodies

- International Narcotics Control Board
- Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
- Committee for the United Nations Population Award
- Programme Coordination Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Funds and programmes which send reports to ECOSOC

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- UN-HABITAT