

20 July 2006

**High-Level-Segment 2006 ECOSOC Substantive session**

**Chairman's Summary on the Informal Ministerial Roundtable  
"ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEWS"**

**Monday, 3 July 2006, 3-5p.m.  
Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Chair: H.E. Ali Hachani, President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations in New York;

Moderator: Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs;

Panellists: H.E. Mr. Keat Chhon, Minister of Finance and Economy, Cambodia; H.E. Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, State Minister for Finance and Economic Development, Ethiopia; Hon. Clyde Mascoll, Minister of State, Ministry of Finance, Barbados; Mr. Richard Manning, Chair OECD/DAC; Mr. Ian Goldin, Vice President World Bank; Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP; Mr. Bruce Jenks, Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships, UNDP

**Background**

The 2005 World Summit entrusted the Economic and Social Council to hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews (AMRs) to assess progress on the follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, drawing on its functional and regional commissions. The General Assembly is currently in the process of finalizing a resolution on some of the details regarding the operationalization of the AMRs, upon the conclusion of which ECOSOC will also hold consultations on the modalities and substantive focus of AMRs. While waiting for the conclusions of these political processes, it was considered beneficial to seek further guidance by ministers through discussions with heads of UN system organization and representatives of other stakeholders during the ECOSOC Substantive Session. To this end, the Informal Ministerial Roundtable on "Annual Ministerial Reviews" was held on 3 July 2006 during the ECOSOC High-Level Segment.

**Key messages:**

The focused inter-active dialogue held during the Roundtable highlighted the following key messages.

- The AMRs constitutes an important step in strengthening the development work of the UN system and an opportunity to fully restore ECOSOC's charter role as a body of policy coordination and coherence.

- There is a need to ensure that the AMR adds value by speeding-up and scaling-up implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.
- The AMR could serve as an important global platform for an exchange of lessons learnt and examples of best practices on how to internalize the IADGs, including MDGs, into national development strategies and on making progress in the implementation.
- Through the AMR, the current “hard follow-up processes” of the MDGs should be expanded to encompass the whole range of internationally agreed development goals.
- Duplication should be avoided by building upon existing review mechanisms, in particular those of functional and regional commissions, as well as other international organizations, such as the Bretton Woods institutions and OECD/DAC.
- The AMR is not an event, but a process that involves review, assessment to the follow-up. A close cooperation in this process with institutions carrying out reviews, in particular functional and regional commissions, are the key.
- A thorough preparation for the AMR is required and it should be started as early as possible.
- A cutting-edge report prepared by DESA, based on the latest and good quality data, will be critical in the success of the AMR. Such a report will demonstrate the added-value of the AMR and will attract the attention of ministers as well as high-level civil society and private sector.
- Reviews are not conducted as an end in themselves. The true test for success of the AMR will be whether the AMRs will have a real impact on implementation.

## **Introduction**

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Ocampo, gave a short overview of the current state of thinking on AMR in order to kick-start the discussion. He explained that AMR is a new mechanism aimed at promoting implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits. He elaborated on his thoughts on how AMR could serve efficiently in this regards, highlighting four main features: by providing a forum for systematic monitoring and assessment of the progress in the implementation; by identifying gaps and obstacles; by sharing good practices and experiences; and by serving as a tool to pool knowledge within and beyond the United Nations system. He noted that there was a consensus emerging in the General Assembly consultations on ECOSOC reform that AMR would consist of global-, thematic- and voluntary national reviews. He also stressed that AMR will be useful to the extent that it serves as an apex for the review of implementation of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs) by building on and creating synergies between the existing review mechanisms at the global-, regional- and national levels. Mr. Ocampo noted that in addition to the input from its subsidiary organs, notably the functional and regional commissions, the Council will also need to systematically involve civil society and the private sector in the preparation and follow-up of AMR. He also stressed that reviews are not carried out as an end in themselves and that to ensure a positive impact of AMR on implementation, the outcomes of AMR needed to be followed-up.

## **The Roundtable discussion**

Mr. Ocampo encouraged the participants to focus on four questions:

- 1. How can the AMR contribute to implementation of the outcomes of the UN conferences and summits?*
- 2. How can it help in bringing different review mechanisms together and help prevent duplication?*
- 3. What are the next steps that need to be taken to prepare for the first AMR?*
- 4. How can it be ensured that guidance of the AMR will be followed up?*

In the following, the interventions by the panellists as well as delegations are summarized along the main issues around the above-mentioned four questions.

### **1. The contribution of the AMR to implementation of the outcomes of the UN conferences and summits**

Several panellists highlighted that the AMR can make an important contribution to implementation by serving as a **global platform for sharing cutting edge analysis as well as knowledge, lessons learnt and examples of best practice** on the progress made in internalizing the IADGs, including the MDGs, into national development strategies and in the overall implementation. Several panellists also noted that with the IADGs countries had agreed on a common base for national development policies and that these goals could serve as benchmark, against which progress can be assessed. In particular, it was pointed out that even for those countries, such as Barbados, which have already achieved and in some cases surpassed the MDGs, the framework of the IADGs continued to be helpful in formulating national development strategies.

Several panellists stressed the important role that the AMR could play in stepping up **implementation at the regional level** by pooling knowledge and sharing lessons. For example, the AMR could promote greater cooperation among CARICOM countries, which have diverse, but highly interdependent economies. A suggestion was made for DESA to organise a seminar in CARICOM to facilitate such an exchange.

Panellists concurred that one key advantage of ECOSOC is its **effective convening power**, which in turn enables the Council to bring together the knowledge and data generated by a variety of global-, regional- and national-level review processes in an authoritative way. In particular, it was noted that the United Nations regional commissions with their direct contacts to member states, including national statistical offices, can provide an important link between the domestic and the global levels.

Several panellists also stressed that the ministerial participation in AMR lends **legitimacy** to the guidance that emanates from AMRs. In particular, it was stressed that the presence of ministers will help **raising visibility and public awareness**, which in turn could help in fostering a global environment that is supportive of national efforts. At the same time, panellists generally considered that the broad-based participation in AMR would uniquely position ECOSOC to promote a policy consensus among participants. It was

also suggested that AMR should focus on a theme where it could make a real impact in accelerating implementation.

Delegations pointed out that AMR could fill the gaps, which currently exist in monitoring the progress made in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. However, there was also a concern that while there remain gaps in data, analysis and operations, there is a danger of overlap between AMR together with DCF and the work already undertaken elsewhere, such as the detailed considerations of most of the MDGs by the functional commissions. One delegation expressed a view that the 2005 World Summit might have simply reaffirmed the current format of the high-level segment and suggested that after some years of trial, if there was no value added, the mandate of AMR should be reconsidered and the current format of the high-level segment may need to be restored. Overall, however, delegations concurred that, providing a global forum, AMR can combine actions of government and **inputs from development cooperation partners and NGO**, and contribute towards an agreement on how to scale up and speed up the implementation.

## **2. Coordination and making synergy among different review mechanisms**

Roundtable participants noted that the **global reviews should tie up the different review processes by drawing upon and building on existing review processes**, such as the global level reviews by functional commissions on their respective fields, the Global Monitoring Report by the Bretton Woods institutions, the work by OECD/DAC on trends of aid and aid effectiveness, the regional level reviews, such as the work carried out by the regional commissions and regional development banks, and the country-level work of UNDP and other funds and programmes as well as specialised agencies. In addition, it was stressed that there should be no duplication between AMR and DCF. If AMR could synthesize the various reviews in a rigorous way and capture the lessons learnt and pool the examples of good practice, AMR could serve as a reference point for countries on the internalization of the IADGs, including the MDGs, into national development strategies.

With regard to **thematic coherence in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals**, it was suggested that AMR should identify gaps in tackling MDGs and identifying where initiatives could provide new opportunities in advancing implementation. One panellist suggested that in terms of thematic focus AMR could pick up “orphan issues”, such as the link between humanitarian relief and development, post conflict recovery or how to reach certain policy outcomes in areas still not well understood, for example, the link between growth and equity. In addition, by addressing interlinkages between the different conferences AMR could help in overcoming compartmentalization and promote multi-faceted strategies. It was suggested that AMR could focus on the identification of enabling factors for advancing attainment of MDGs.

With regard to **creating synergies within the UN system and beyond**, it was stated that AMR should identify whether the “UN system has its act together” both at the normative and operational levels and in areas where synergies could be further enhanced. At the global level, AMR could help fostering **closer cooperation between the Bretton Woods**

**institutions and the UN** and should engage the private sector, civil society and foundations. Regional commissions can strengthen the link between the normative and operational work of the UN by linking country progress with the regional effort.

It was also emphasized that **monitoring of progress in the implementation of the MDGs** is only as good as data collection goes and that data continues to be patchy and unreliable. It was pointed out that progress had been made in establishing concrete monitoring processes for the MDGs and that these successes should be built upon. In this regard, it was also noted that with the 2005 World Summit decision, especially with its broad vision of development and commitments to the full and timely implementation of all the internationally agreed development goals, **the “hard” follow-up processes should be expanded beyond the MDGs to other internationally agreed development goals**, such as the goals agreed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

In order to help in the formulation of comprehensive, inclusive multi-sectoral national development strategies, the panellists stressed that **monitoring should start from the country level and should involve all stakeholders**. In Ethiopia, for example, a monitoring system was put in place in 1996, which is based on a public system to generate data, complemented by sectoral reviews. Cambodia has also set up a monitoring system, which is a coordinated mechanism among key line ministries, with Joint Monitoring Indicators providing useful information on progress. It was emphasized that **capacity building in national data collection** is of great importance. In this regard, the work of the World Bank on tracking progress in the implementation of national development strategies and general aid was noted, although this work mainly focuses on issues concerning the work of the World Bank. On regional monitoring, regional commissions' potential contribution was noted.

Delegations expressed their support for **the role of the functional and regional commissions** in the AMR through their role in current review of progress. The link with the High Level Meeting of ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD was also welcomed in providing a unique opportunity of interaction with these institutions. It was suggested to strengthen this link, and also to link with DCF. A need to enhance the role of UNCTAD was also expressed. In addition, the link with peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction was welcomed, with ECOSOC mid-term review of peacebuilding, such as the one by the Ad-Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi, providing an example. At the regional level, several delegations highlighted the **important role of the regional commissions** in implementation. The example of Regional Implementation Forums held by the UN Regional Commissions in preparation of the review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was noted as a good example of how to link the regional and global review dimensions.

### **3. The preparation for the first AMR**

Many delegations considered that AMR could serve as a **global high-level forum** to exchange experiences of good practices and lessons learnt. There was an emerging consensus that AMR would be composed of global, thematic and national reviews.

Concerning the **conduct of AMRs**, a view was expressed that AMR should form part of the ECOSOC high-level segment. It was also suggested that the discussion should be truly free flowing and that there should be high quality participation of civil society and the private sector. It was further suggested that AMR should not always take place in New York or Geneva, but should also be held at national level in other places.

Member states attached particular importance to the **national review**, given that the primary challenge of implementation is at the country level. It was therefore suggested that focus should be given to specific challenges of individual countries, in particular vulnerable countries. It was emphasized that AMR should serve as a forum where ministers and other policy makers pool their knowledge on internalizing the MDGs into national development strategies. A suggestion was made to conduct a country-specific peer review, but there was also an opposing view to this idea.

With regard to the **format of review**, some called for a **thematic focus**, drawing from the international development agenda with clusters, such as poverty, partnership, sustainable development and social development. Some also considered that, while supporting the thematically focused discussion, a comprehensive review of all MDGs and cross-sectoral review should not be ruled out. Many delegations supported the idea of a **multi-year programme of work** for AMRs, which should assist the preparation by the interested organizations, in particular the subsidiary bodies of the Council. There was also a suggestion that AMRs could follow different formats in different years.

Many considered that AMR should be seen as a **process rather than as an event** and that it would be important to involve the UN system, other major institutional stakeholders, civil society as well as the private sector in the preparations from early on. More specifically, with regard to the **documentation for the meeting**, it was noted that research should be specific and of cutting edge in its analysis. It is important that a report of the Secretary-General to be prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, while drawing upon input from existing review processes at the national, regional and global levels, should not be collated from past reports and other publications. Instead it should build upon reports such as the MDG Progress Reports prepared with the assistance of UNDP, the reports of the regional commissions, the Global Monitoring Report of the World Bank and IMF and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The report should synthesise the key findings and identify gaps and opportunities for progress both with a focus on the UN system and the broader international community. The need for adequate resources, human as well as financial, for DESA to carry out this work was also pointed out.

With regard to **documentation**, it was further proposed that thematic reports should form the basis of AMRs. Another suggestion was that the documentation could be a non-paper or an issue paper, which could contain more new ideas, noting that the traditional

Secretary-General's report could be too constrictive. Further suggestion called for one consolidated report of the Secretary-General for the entire high-level segment in order to reduce the burden of the Secretariat. It was stressed that major stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, should be able to contribute to this report.

There was a divergence of views regarding the **outcome** of AMR. Some supported Ministerial Declaration or a negotiated outcome, while others supported a non-negotiated outcome. Noting the trade off between energetic policy discussions and agreeing on a negotiated text, one panellist cautioned against a negotiated outcome.

#### **4. Follow-up to the guidance of the AMR**

Noting that **reviews are not an end in themselves**, it was stressed that **considerations should be given to the concrete results which can be achieved by AMR and its follow-up activities**. ECOSOC is well equipped for the follow-up within the UN system. In addition, it was suggested that the President of the Council could write to institutions outside the UN system to request a response on how they have followed up on the outcome of AMR. It was further pointed out that this new mandate of ECOSOC from the 2005 World Summit provides an important opportunity to strengthen the governance of the development work of the UN, providing an extremely important opportunity to re-energize ECOSOC and to restore its Charter role. It was further suggested that in order to ensure follow-up and thematic coherence throughout the Council's substantive session, the Coordination Segment should have the same theme as AMR.

#### **Conclusion**

In concluding, Mr. Ocampo highlighted several key points emanating from the discussion. First, he noted that AMR offers an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of the implementation process by identifying gaps and proposing opportunities for improvement. In this regard, he noted that the United Nations was put to the challenge of producing a quality study on the gaps in and obstacles to the implementation of the MDGs and IADGs. Second, he noted that this will involve a mixture of monitoring and analytical work, at the country level, from which policy recommendations could be drawn for ECOSOC to follow-up. The AMR could serve as a tool in synthesizing the numerous existing review processes and in coming out of coherent policy guidance that cuts across themes and actors. Third, AMR offers an opportunity not only for meaningful reviews, but also for bringing together different actors, identifying opportunities for improvement, in the follow-up with the outcome both by the UN system and outside actors, and in evaluating progress. In other words, AMRs are not just events that take place once a year, but a process which should draw on the existing mechanisms. Fourth, the IADGs become relevant as they get internalized into national strategies. AMRs should therefore both start from the national level reviews and feedback back into the national-level implementation processes. Fifth, the benefit in bringing in regional perspective was also pointed out. He noted that several speakers suggested to study the model of the Commission on Sustainable Development in this regard. Mr. Ocampo also recalled that other innovative features of the Commission on Sustainable Development, such as a

global monitoring process, the exchange of best practices and lessons learnt in the learning centre and the partnership fair as well as the experience of broad based participation of civil society and the private sector, could also be explored by the AMR.

In his concluding remarks, the ECOSOC President, H.E. Mr. Hachani expressed his intention to hold consultations to reach consensus between September and December on the Council's resolution on the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit, following the anticipated adoption of the GA resolution on ECOSOC reform, in order to get ready for the first AMR, which is expected to be held during the 2007 ECOSOC substantive session.