

Concept Note

Regional consultation for Africa in preparation for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review

“Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as drivers of productive capacity and job creation”

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Background

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a key function of the Economic and Social Council established by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. It was mandated as an instrument to track progress and step up efforts towards the realization of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals, by the 2015 target date.¹

Over the last five years, the ECOSOC AMR has assumed an important role to assess and review progress (or lack thereof) in the implementation of these goals. General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/16, of 20 November 2006, entitled “*Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council*”) provides general guidance on the AMR. The Report of the President of the General Assembly adopted on 30 June 2011(A/65/286) - in the context of the review of implementation of resolution 61/16 -- provides further guidance.

The AMR process features three main elements: national voluntary presentations, country-led regional reviews and a global review, based on a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General. These elements are complemented by an innovation fair; and, prior to the session, by a global preparatory meeting and e-forums on the theme of the AMR.²

The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva and focused on poverty and hunger (MDG1). The following AMR sessions focused on, respectively, goals related to sustainable development (MDG7) in 2008; health (MDG 4, 5, 6) in 2009; gender (MDG3) in 2010, and education in 2011.

All AMR sessions are preceded by multi-stakeholder regional consultations.³

The theme for 2012 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review is “*Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the MDGs*”.

¹ A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c).

² For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr.shtml>

³ In 2007, the Government of Brazil hosted a regional consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean on the “*Key challenges of financing poverty and hunger eradication in Latin America*” (Brasilia, 17-18 May). In 2008, Bahrain hosted a regional meeting for Western Asia on “*Sustainable Urbanization*” (Manama, 1-2 June). In 2009, there were five regional ministerial meetings hosted respectively by: Sri Lanka for South Asia on “*Financing Strategies for Health Care*” (Colombo, 16-18 March); China for the Asia Pacific on “*Promoting Health Literacy*” (Beijing, 29-30 April); Qatar for Western Asia on “*Addressing Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries: Major Challenges to Sustainable Development in the 21st Century*” (Doha, 10-11 May); Jamaica for Latin America and the Caribbean on “*HIV and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*” (Montego Bay, 5-6 June); and Ghana for Africa on “*e-Health*” (Accra, 10-11 June). In 2010, Senegal hosted a regional meeting for West Africa on “*Women and Health*” (Dakar, 12-13 January).³ In 2011, the following four consultations were held: in Qatar, on “*Innovative Approaches to Reaching Women, Girls and the Marginalized in the Arab Region*” (Doha, 9 December 2010); Thailand, on “*Education and the Millennium Development Goals*” (Jomtien, 24 March 2011); Togo on “*The right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity*” (Lomé, 12 April 2011); and Argentina, on “*Key Education Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: Teachers, Quality, and Equity*” (Buenos Aires, 12-13 May 2011). A regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific was held in Kyoto, Japan on 7 December 2011 in preparation for the 2012 AMR.

Objective and expected value-added of the meeting

Objectives

The objective of country-led regional consultations is to support the preparations of the AMR and to enable countries to engage at an early stage in the process leading to the AMR session to be held during the ECOSOC high-level segment in New York, in July 2012.

The initiative can also support the global review by focusing, in addition to the overall performance of the region in achieving the development goals related to productive capacity and employment (2012 AMR theme), on one specific aspect relevant to countries in the region. The outcome of such review would contribute to the analysis that will support the Council's deliberations in July.

The expected value-added of the meeting includes:

- Examination in greater depth of a specific aspect of AMR thematic focus particularly relevant to the countries in the region
- Examination of progress in achieving the education and development agenda in the region and related challenges, especially those that could best be addressed through regional cooperation
- Exchange of lessons learned
- Promotion of stakeholder engagement -- governments, civil society, UN system institutions and private sector - early on in the AMR process
- Provision of an opportunity to prepare the launch of new partnership initiatives at the AMR July 2012 session, in New York

Proposed modalities of the meeting

Format

The meeting will be held as a one day event, on 25 March 2012, in the context of the African Union/UNECA Fifth Joint Meeting Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance, to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22 to 27 March 2012. It would consist of an opening followed by four plenary sessions, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The first session would be devoted to a brief introduction of the topic by a distinguished speaker followed by a roundtable discussion on the theme. The composition of the roundtable should aim to incorporate diverse perspectives to facilitate an interactive debate. The second session would be devoted to another key aspect of the theme. The third session would focus on the presentation of case studies, lessons learned and best practices. The fourth and concluding session would be devoted to a discussion of the main messages and policy recommendations to be transmitted to the 2012 ECOSOC AMR session.

Proposed Focus

The focus of the meeting is “Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as drivers of productive capacity and job creation”. The discussion would explore ways to maximize the potential contribution of SMEs towards a more inclusive growth path in African countries. Specifically, the meeting could address the following questions:

- Which policies and strategies (such as investing in employment-intensive infrastructure, skills development and training, finance) can most effectively contribute to a more enabling environment for small and medium enterprises?
- How can a more integrated view of macroeconomic, employment and inclusive labour market policies that incorporate employment and decent work targets and impact assessments be achieved?
- What measures adopted in the region have successfully promoted youth employment and youth and women’s entrepreneurship?

This focus would be relevant to the Joint AU/UNECA theme: “Unleashing Africa’s Potential as a Pole of Global Growth”.

Documentation

A substantive background document to be prepared in advance of the event on the theme of the meeting will lay the basis for discussion and raise issues for debate. ILO and UNECA would provide support in the preparation of this document. As a follow-up to the meeting an analytical summary will be circulated (see below).

Participation

Target participants would include: 1. Policy makers from the countries in the region entrusted with the implementation of national development strategies. 2. Representatives of multilateral institutions and key donors working on the theme of the meeting. 3. Representatives of NGOs and other members of civil society and the private sector.

Outcome

The meeting is expected to have the following main outcomes.

Firstly, an analytical summary of the meeting, which will capture the lessons that can be learned from the experiences presented. This will be prepared by UNDESA. The summary will be submitted and circulated at the main AMR session during the ECOSOC high-level segment. A representative of the host country will also be invited to present a report of the meeting to the July AMR session. Similarly, the case studies presented would be made available at the AMR session, as well as disseminated through the ECOSOC website (through an open database).

Secondly, the meeting will provide an important opportunity for key policy makers to develop new partnerships - both North-South and South-South - which could be announced at the AMR session in July 2012.

Finally, the event will identify follow-up actions to be undertaken by the relevant stakeholders within the region in furtherance of the particular theme.