



Volume 4— Number 3

ECOSOC News

Newsletter on the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Council

The 54-member Economic and Social Council serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and to the United Nations. It makes or initiates studies and reports; makes recommendations on international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters; and promotes respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Subsidiary bodies, commissions and committees of ECOSOC carry out its year-round work. ECOSOC strengthens cooperation within the United Nations system, coordinates the work of the specialized agencies and consults with non-governmental organizations. A substantive session of the Council is convened annually in July, and supplementary formal meetings as well as informal panels on topical issues are held throughout the year.

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The Members of the Bureau of ECOSOC (2005)

President of ECOSOC:

H. E. Ambassador Munir Akram (Pakistan)

Vice-Presidents of ECOSOC:

H. E. Ambassador Ali Hachani (Tunisia)

H. E. Ambassador Agim Nesho (Albania)

H. E. Ambassador Diego Cordovez (Ecuador)

H. E. Ambassador Johan C. Verbeke (Belgium)



The Theme for the 2006 ECOSOC High-Level and Coordination Segments

During its resumed organizational session held on 21 October 2005, the Economic and Social Council adopted the High-Level Theme for its 2006 substantive session, which is the following:

"Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development"

The theme for the 2006 coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council is the following:

"Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger"

The theme for the coordination segment is the theme for the second year of the multi-year work programme (MYWP) of the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council. Informal consultations will begin shortly in order to complete the initial four year work programme of ECOSOC, before its substantive session in 2006.

Follow-up to the Summit Outcome on ECOSOC Reform

The 2005 World Summit has expressed an unequivocal determination to ensure the full and timely realization of the development goals and objectives agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Summit also reaffirmed the need for the United Nations to play a fundamental role in the promotion of international cooperation for development and the coherence, coordination and implementation of development goals and actions agreed upon by the international community.

The Summit has also recognized the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations summits and conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals.

To perform these functions, the Council is expected to (i) hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews to assess progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major UN summits and conferences, including the internationally agreed development goals; (ii) hold a biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum to review trends in international development cooperation; (iii) respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields as well as support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies and (iv) play a major role in the overall coordination of and in promoting coherence in the functioning of the funds, programmes and agencies. ECOSOC is also expected to work closely with the Peacebuilding Commission. To ensure that follow-up to the 2005 World Summit is implemented efficiently and quickly, it is important that other tasks also be considered.

For example, it will be vital to ensure that developing countries formulate comprehensive national development strategies to

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achieve the MDGs and adopt them in 2006, and that donors provide the necessary support. These issues are inter-related because part of ECOSOC's revised mandate is to ensure follow-up of the relevant outcomes of the major UN Conferences and Summits. Drawing on existing processes, ECOSOC will need to work out a mechanism for monitoring follow-up that can take effect as soon as possible.

The President of the General Assembly has invited Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra of Mali and Ambassador Johan C. Verbeke of Belgium to co-chair the consultations on ECOSOC reform and development over the coming weeks. To help move the consultations on ECOSOC reform further forward, the President of ECOSOC has already

presented a Working Paper on the "Implementation of the 2005 World Summit decisions regarding the ECOSOC" (http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/documents/2005/ECOSOCsummitfollow_up.pdf), and a Working Paper on the "Framework for the Implementation of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals including the MDGs" (http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/documents/2005/Draft_Elements_on_Implementation_Framework.pdf).

Breakfast Meeting of the ECOSOC Bureau at the Level of Head of State and Government:

The Role of ECOSOC in the Implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda, including the Implementation of the Decisions Made by the 2005 World Summit in the Areas of Economic Development

15 September 2005



UN Photo/Mark Garten

This breakfast meeting was attended by H.E. President Pervez Musharraf (Pakistan);

Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; H.E. President Alfredo Palacio (Ecuador); H.E. President Alfred Moisiu (Albania); H.E. Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium); H.E. President Mathieu Kérékou (Benin), on behalf of the Least Developed Countries; H.E. President of Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), on behalf of the African Union, H.E. Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam (Mauritius) and Chair of AOSIS; H.E. Mr. Abdelwahab Abdallah, Foreign Minister (Tunisia); Mr. Rodrigo de Rato, Managing Director of IMF; Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, President of World Bank; and Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

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The Bureau presentations were followed by interactive dialogues with participation of H.E. Mr. Tang Xiajuan, State Counselor (People's Republic of China); H.E. Mr. Paul Robertson, Minister of Development (Jamaica); H.E. Mr. Nobutaka Machimura, Minister of Foreign Affairs (Japan); Mr. Louis Michel (European Commissioner for development and humanitarian aid); H.E. Mr. Sichan Siv, Ambassador and Representative to the Economic and Social Council (USA); H.E. Mr. Adam Thomson, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative (United Kingdom); Mr. Kim Hak Su, Executive Secretary, ESCAP on behalf of the five regional commissions of the United Nations; and Mr. Mourad Wahba, on behalf of Mr. Kemal Dervis, UNDP Administrator.

The main objective of this meeting, held at the level of Head of State and Government, was to discuss the crucial role of ECOSOC in the implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda as well as the outcome of the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly at its 60th Session.

At the meeting, participants were unanimous in their support for the proposals made on the role and reform of ECOSOC in the outcome document of the High Level Plenary Meeting. They agreed that over the years, the ECOSOC

had undergone changes aimed at revitalizing and improving its method of work and this should continue.

However, concerns remained that the ECOSOC was not fully enabled to live up to its full potential and responsibilities as contained in the Charter of the United Nations. They hoped that the ongoing reform within the United Nations would enhance the role of ECOSOC in providing and promoting system-wide coordination, coherence and cooperation between the various entities of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO.

Participants also supported the Council's role as a High Level Development Cooperation Forum, where global, regional and national strategies and policies for social and economic development cooperation could be reviewed. To that end, participants believed that the Council needs to enhance its effectiveness and flexibility, and that it should strengthen its supervision and management role over its subsidiary bodies. At the same time, participants felt that the Council should intensify its efforts in engaging NGOs, the academic community as well as the private sector. It was also felt that the Council's interactions with the Security Council should be strengthened and that the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission was a step in the right direction. ■

Meeting of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau and Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau

20 September 2005

The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau of the Economic and Social Council, and by H.E. Mr. Mousa Gibril Bala-Gaye, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Gambia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of friends of Guinea-Bissau. The meeting discussed the situation in Guinea-Bissau and how to mobilize the support of the international community.

At the meeting, statements were made by H.E. Carlos Gomes Junior, Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau; H.E. Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal;

H.E. Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola; H.E. Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal; H.E. Dr. Mohamed Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); H.E. Dr. Nkosazana C. Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa; H.E. Mr. Aminu Bashir Wali, Permanent Representative of Nigeria; H.E. Mr. Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, Permanent Representative of Brazil; Mr. Arjan Hamburger, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; and H.E. Mr. Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa,

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Participants commended the government of Guinea-Bissau for the organization of successful legislative and presidential elections which resulted in the return to constitutional order on 1 October 2005. The partnership approach as recommended by the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea Bissau (E/2003/8) was considered instrumental in the transition process. Participants also praised the efforts of the government of Guinea-Bissau to promote sound governance.

The consensus of the meeting was that the international community should support Guinea-Bissau after a difficult transition process. This would require concrete demonstration of support by donor countries at the upcoming Roundtable conference as well as transforming the IMF staff monitoring programme into an Emergence Post-Conflict Assistance (EPCA) Programme. A prerequisite for donors to support Guinea-Bissau is continuous stability between various institutions and political parties in the country. ■

ECOSOC Special Event “Food Crisis in Africa” 27 October 2005

The Special Event of the Economic and Social Council on “Food Crises in Africa”, held on Thursday, 27 October 2005, was the first in a series launched by the Council in response to the new responsibilities entrusted to the Council by the 2005 World Summit to “develop its ability to respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields” and to “support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies.”

The Special Event, chaired by the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Munir Akram of Pakistan, was well-attended by delegations, representatives of the United Nations organizations, and civil society. It began with an opening statement by the President of the 60th Session of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson.

This was followed by a panel discussion with the participation of H.E. Mr. Simeon A. Adekanye, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations; Mr. James T. Morris, Executive Director, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP); Mr. Lennart Båge, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); Mr. Henri Carsalade, Assistant Director-General,

Technical Cooperation Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Mr. Mark Bowden, Chief of Policy Development Branch, Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); and Ms. Julie Howard, Executive Director, Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa. Presentations by panelists were followed by an interactive dialogue among representatives of Members States.

The main message of the meeting was that the international community was not giving adequate attention to persistent food crises in Africa. This was despite the fact that since 1998 there had been approximately 20 food emergency cases every year in Africa and that currently 24 countries faced significant food shortages, affecting close to 35 million people. One illustration of less than sustained global attention on the food crisis in Africa was the poor response of the international community to flash appeals, as well as the lack of tangible, consistent and sustainable effort to address the root causes of the crises.

Secondly, a lethal mix of recurring drought, the impact of AIDS, weakened capacity for governance, and conflict contributed to the cycle of recurrent food crises. Conflict and its legacy were identified as being a significant factor in the cycle of food

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crises facing a number of countries in the region.

Another important theme covered in the meeting touched on the impact of malnutrition and hunger on the prospects of achieving the MDGs. While the severity and impact of HIV/AIDS was acknowledged, a number of participants also noted that hunger claims more lives globally each year than HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

In proposing solutions to address the recurrent cycle of food crises, participants largely accepted the principle of “twin-track” approach of immediate relief assistance and social safety nets combined with increased investment in agricultural and rural development over the long-term. In this connection, access for the poor to land and water, technology, financial services and markets and giving a voice to poor farmers were highlighted as crucial steps for unleashing the potential of Africa’s smallholder farm sector. Enabling policies for private sector initiatives, and dynamic research and extension services were also considered as essential to accelerating the

agricultural and rural development.

A number of participants expressed their optimism at the possibility of Africa coming out of this vicious cycle as a result of the commitment of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in increasing budgetary allocations on agriculture and rural development to at least 10 percent of the total national public expenditures by 2008 - commitments made in the context of NEPAD and initiatives taken to implement its Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).

Participants also underscored the need for stronger support for Africa from development partners, especially in addressing technical issues such as the lack of irrigation, pests, post-harvest losses, and poor infrastructure. A number of participants expressed the view that a supportive environment for national policies could be created at the international level if actions were taken to secure improved terms of trade for the continent’s agricultural products in the context of the Doha Round of trade negotiations. ■

ECOSOC Special Event “The Avian Flu” 3 November 2005



UN Photo/Mark Garten

Another Special Event of the Economic and Social Council on the “Avian Flu”, held on Thursday, 3 November 2005, was the second in a series launched by the Council in response to the new mandate given to the Council by the

2005 World Summit to “develop its ability to respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields” and to “support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies.”

The Special Event, chaired and opened by the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Munir Akram of Pakistan, was well-attended by delegations, representatives of the United Nations organizations, and civil society. It began with an opening statement by H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th Session of the General Assembly. This was followed by a panel discussion with the participation of Ms. Louise Fresco, Assistant Director-General for

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Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Dr. David Heymann, Representative of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO); Dr. David Nabarro, Senior United Nations System Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza; and Mrs. Margareta Walstrohm, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. An interactive dialogue among Member States followed.

The main message of the panelists was that there is still an opportunity to prevent the avian flu from becoming a pandemic, provided immediate action is taken to control the spread of the virus at source, that is, in animals. For this to happen, international collaboration is indispensable. In this light, participants underscored the need for strong and effective multi-lateral system.

A number of participants noted that developing countries lack adequate means and tools to put in place preparedness and response plans. It was against this backdrop that the President of ECOSOC called for the establishment of a global fund to take preventive action against a possible avian flu pandemic, including compensating farmers and producers for the costs of culling poultry. This appeared to be particularly relevant as it is estimated that the price tag for prevention at source, among animals, may reach \$425 million, while only \$30 million has been made available so far.

It was noted that the virus, which currently does not spread easily among humans, is having a huge effect on bird population as they migrate across the world. Once a new mutant flu virus is able to infect humans easily and spread rapidly, it could cause a pandemic and massive devastation. Indeed, one panelist noted that every country, every population is at risk for pandemic influenza whether or not it has sick birds. The likely damage to the trade and the international economy was considered to be high.

A number of lessons have been learnt from past experiences with new and re-emerging diseases. Firstly, if the diseases are

not quickly identified and controlled, they can have significant costs in terms of health, financial, trade and even security. Secondly, special attention needs to be paid to the needs of developing countries. Many developing countries, especially the least developed countries, already bore a heavy burden of disease, malnutrition, poor veterinarian and healthcare infrastructure and system. These countries needed both technical and financial assistance in designing and implementing preparation and response plans. In this context, the role of development cooperation thus remained critical in confronting global public health threats, especially when the international community was keen on ensuring that achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Thirdly, transparency and speed in reporting cases was crucial to marshal an effective and timely response.

A number of challenges were identified by the panelists. All speakers stressed the importance of developing national pandemic influenza preparedness plans as indispensable to success. Such plans should include measures such as early warning systems, surveillance for the disease in animals and humans, the implementation of biosecurity measures, use of effective vaccines, close monitoring and culling when necessary and incentives for farmers to report by providing them with compensation for losses incurred by culling. Cross-departmental involvement at the national level under the leadership of a high-level focal point within Government in liaison with experienced contingency planners was also highly recommended.

The communication between the United Nations system and governments and all stakeholders and the use of risk communication for creating global awareness including innovative communication techniques were also considered as vital.

Another essential element of the strategy to contain the virus was access to affordable anti-viral medicines. Presently, no pandemic vaccine was ready for commercial production and no country was likely to have adequate supplies until several months after a pandemic is declared.

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Resources should therefore be put into expanding production of anti-virals as well as seasonal flu vaccines to meet potential rather than current demand. Research and development into effective vaccines and investment in manufacturing capacity was, therefore, urgently needed as the lead time between the emergence of the virus and the production of the vaccine must be as short as possible to minimize the death toll. The issue of the appropriate use of intellectual property rights in ensuring adequate and affordable supplies of vaccines and medicines was also raised.

A number of participants pointed to the role of partnerships in effectively responding to avian flu. It was noted that private entities can help improve veterinary health surveillance, building capacity and improving impact. They can also engage community organizations in stimulating changes in behavior and can also assist with the mobilization of resources.

A larger role for regional organizations was considered as crucial, particularly in establishing regional coordination mechanisms for early warning and surveillance capacity building. A number of participants noted the establishment of an ASEAN Task Force on Highly Pathogenic Influenza in December 2004 as a best practice that could be replicated in other regions. The establishment of regional stockpiles for antiviral

drugs to allow for rapid deployment in the 24 hours following the infection was proposed by one country.

Participants stressed a central role for the United Nations system, supported by its technical agencies, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization, in the coordination of local, national, regional and global preparations for a potential human influenza pandemic. In this connection, the coordination function vis-à-vis development banks, donor agencies, private entities, non-governmental groups, humanitarian agencies and professional bodies was emphasized. The issue of the effective streamlining of coordination was raised so that excessive time was not diverted from operational issues. Delegations were assured that when the world is at imminent risk of pandemic influenza, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and the country inter-agency humanitarian team within countries will be mobilized and ready for response. ■

“The World Summit on the Information Society” **16 – 18 November 2005**



UN Photo/Mark Garten

From 16 to 18 November 2005 the Government of Tunisia hosted the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which presented an opportunity for a review of progress since the first phase of the Summit held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003. The Geneva phase helped develop a common vision of the Information Society and adopted a Plan of Action for its realization. The Tunis Summit focused on the key issues of Internet governance, financial mechanisms to bridge the digital divide as well as on implementation and follow-up process to the Geneva

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and Tunis outcomes. The Summit, which gathered delegations from 174 countries, including a large number of Heads of State and Government, adopted the *Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society*.

On the topic of Internet governance, the *Tunis Agenda* reiterated that the management of the Internet encompasses both technical and public policy issues and should involve all stakeholders and relevant intergovernmental and international organizations. The Summit asked the United Nations Secretary-General to convene, by the second quarter of 2006, a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the *Internet Governance Forum* (IGF). The Forum would have no oversight function and would not replace existing arrangements, mechanisms, institutions or organizations. The Forum's main objectives include discussing public policy issues, facilitating the exchange of information and best practices, advising all stakeholders in proposing ways and means to accelerate the availability and affordability of the Internet in the developing world, strengthening and enhancing the engagement of stakeholders in existing and/or future Internet governance mechanisms and identifying emerging issues.

On Financing ICT for Development, the *Agenda* recommended improvements and innovations in existing financing mechanisms to make financial resources become adequate, more predictable and sustainable. The Summit welcomed the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) established in Geneva as an innovative financial mechanism that will complement existing mechanisms for funding the Information Society.

As regards the implementation and follow-up to the WSIS, the *Tunis Agenda* reaffirmed the importance of the international cooperation of governments and the partnership of all stakeholders to succeed in the challenge of harnessing the potential of ICT as a tool at the service of development. The Summit decided to establish modalities for implementation and follow-up at national, regional and international levels. At the international level, the *Agenda* requested the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to oversee the system-wide follow-up of the Geneva and

Tunis outcomes. To this end, ECOCOC was also requested to review, at its substantive session of 2006, the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). The *Agenda* also stressed that WSIS implementation and follow-up should be an integral part of the United Nations integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and include both intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder components. In line with this, the United Nations ICT Task Force is finalizing its proposal to the United Nations Secretary-General for the creation of the Global Alliance on ICT for Development that will provide an open, global, multi-stakeholder platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue on the focused role of ICT in development.

Alongside the Summit a number of parallel events were organized including panels, discussions and workshops. The major parallel event was the ICT4All Exhibition which took place from 15 to 19 November. Open to both accredited participants of the WSIS and to general public concerned with ICT, the exhibition aimed to enrich the political core of the WSIS by providing a space to bring stakeholders together to share knowledge, showcase projects and solutions, and to encourage partnerships in the field of ICT.

At the ICT4All exhibition, the ICT Task Force set up its own pavilion where it showcased some of its major initiatives and publications aimed at promoting creative use of technology for improving the quality of life in developing countries. The pavilion also functioned as a meeting place for stakeholders in the ICT for Development arena, where they could discuss the future of the global multi-stakeholder policy discussion on ICT for Development issues. The ICT Task Force pavilion also hosted exhibits by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The ICT Task Force, along with its members and partners, and DESA also organized a large number of side events focusing on different topics related to the Information Society. ■

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NEW PUBLICATION

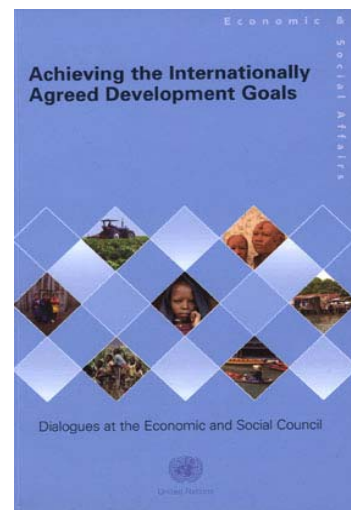
“Achieving the Internationally Agreed Development Goals: Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council”

**Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination,
Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

This publication presents the key debates that took place in the Economic and Social Council meetings on the theme of the High-Level Segment of 2005 "Achieving the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as the Implementing the Outcomes of the major United Nations Conferences and Summits: Progress Made, Challenges and Opportunities". It brings together the proceedings of the Economic and Social Council High-Level Segment session as well as its preparatory meetings.

An overarching view of the session was that the MDGs could be achieved only when supported by an effective implementation of the broad United Nations development agenda and by real commitment and political will. Another important focus was that ECOSOC must transform itself into an effective platform for policy dialogue, greater system-wide participation and more practical modalities for conducting the development dialogue. Accordingly, a coherent and effective monitoring and reviewing mechanisms should be put in place. Also, conscious efforts must be made to improve the coordination function of the Council.

Contributions in the publication, made by prominent individuals in the field, pointed out various crucial elements that must be addressed in order to achieve the MDGs. Some focused on the economic and financial approach, while others focused on the political side of the question. While the importance of political will and commitment, especially



regarding 0.7% ODA, was emphasized, many contributors brought out aspects of development that must be considered at the same time, such as education, health, global partnership, economic reforms, governance, environment, gender equality, transparency and accountability.

The publication is a useful overview of not only the steps to be taken, but also the progress made so far, remaining challenges and opportunities ahead of us, in terms of tackling the task of development and achieving the MDGs. Although the contributors agreed that a certain amount of progress has been made, they also agreed that the overall progress has been unsteady and uneven. Throughout the dialogues, it was obvious that the contributors were hoping for a more serious commitment and political will as well as some concrete comprehensive and constructive approaches in addressing the implementation of the MDGs, examples of which are shown in each chapter. ■

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