

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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I - NOTEWORTHY ANNOUNCEMENTS

A - ECOSOC

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will hold a [Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis](#) on 20 May 2008. The meeting will bring together Member States, the UN system, civil society, including the private sector, to discuss a range of policies relevant at the national and international levels, which could minimize the negative impacts of the current crisis.

The focus will be on stocktaking of the current situation and the main challenges for individual countries and the international community. How can the international community be mobilized to respond effectively? How can we ensure a more coordinated and coherent approach both by the UN system and the broader international community?

The President of the Council intends to issue, in his personal capacity, a Presidential Statement at the end of the meeting, in which he will propose a set of policy actions over the short, medium and long-term that could minimize the negative impacts of the current crisis.

- In pursuance of the [Development Cooperation Forum's \(DCF\)](#) mandate to strengthen global development partnership to reach the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) is organizing a [Stakeholder Forum, "The role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness"](#), to be held in Rome, Italy on 12-13 June 2008. This preparatory event for the 2008 DCF is being organized in cooperation with the Government of Italy, and in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and CIVICUS, respectively. The Forum will focus on three main issues: (a) formulating and supporting national development strategies: *the role of national and local stakeholders*; (b) cooperating at the local level: *recent trends in decentralized development cooperation*; and (c) monitoring and oversight of aid quality: *how to develop national and local capacities*. The perspectives shared at the Rome Forum will be used as a substantive input for the first biennial DCF in 2008 as well as a background document for a Roundtable on *Decentralized Cooperation*, to be organized during the 2008 DCF.

B - ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies

- The principal function of the [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) is to monitor compliance with the rights provided for in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the 158 States parties to the Covenant based on reports prepared by them.

On [28 April - 16 May 2008](#), the Committee met in Geneva to examine the level of compliance of France, Benin, Bolivia and India. The Committee will issue its conclusions and recommendations for improved implementation of the Covenant by these States parties at the end of the session on 16 May. The meeting was attended by numerous non-governmental organizations, some representing large coalitions of national NGOs, who contributed voluminous information to the Committee, as well as UN agencies and individual scholars and students of human rights.

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The session will be followed by meetings of the [pre-sessional working group](#) of the Committee on 23 May 2008. The working group will conduct a preliminary review of, and develop lists of questions on, various State party reports to be examined at future sessions. Lists of issues are a way for the Committee to help States parties to supplement their reports with the necessary information to enable the Committee and the State party to address the main human rights concerns of relevance under the Covenant during their face-to-face dialogue at a future plenary session.

- The [International Narcotics Control Board](#) will organize its ninety-second session from 19 to 30 May 2008 in Vienna. At that meeting, the Board will review the worldwide supply and demand of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical purposes, discuss the growing problems of chemicals used in illicit manufacture of drugs as well as treaty compliance in more than 200 countries and territories.

Outgoing [President Emafo](#) will brief the Board on events that took place since the last session in February. These events include the 51st session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the annual meeting of the INCB President with the Secretary-General and a briefing for Permanent Missions in New York chaired by ECOSOC President Ambassador Leo Mérorès (Haiti). The Board will also examine drug control situations in Ethiopia, Pakistan and Ukraine following its missions to these countries, and review ways and means to further strengthen its dialogue with Member States with a view to supporting greater efforts by Governments to address escalating drug problems effectively. The Board will elect a new President and Bureau at the May session. The Chairman of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Eugenio Maria Curia (Argentina), is expected to address the session.

INCB was established by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs to monitor Governments' compliance with the international drug control treaties. Its 13 members are elected by ECOSOC to serve in their individual capacities for a term of five years.

- The [eleventh session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development \(CSTD\)](#) will take place from 26-30 May 2008 in Geneva. The Commission will undertake a review of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes at the regional and international levels. It will also address two substantive themes: 1) Development-oriented policies for a socio-economically inclusive information society, including policies relating to access, infrastructure and an enabling environment; and 2) Science, technology and engineering for innovation and capacity building in education and research. For further information on the CSTD and its eleventh session, please visit: <http://www.unctad.org/cstd>

II– OUTCOME PAST EVENTS / ACTIVITIES

A - ECOSOC

- The [Special High-level Meeting](#) of ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) took place on 14 April 2008 in New York. The meeting, on the overall theme of “*Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, including new challenges and emerging*

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Issues” was an integral part of the intergovernmental preparatory process for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Doha, Qatar from 29 November to 2 December 2008. Following [opening remarks by the President of ECOSOC](#), United Nations [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed](#) the meeting. Statements were also made by the heads of relevant intergovernmental bodies and other senior officials. After the opening plenary, the meeting split into three simultaneous round tables which addressed: 1) *new initiatives on financing for development*; 2) *supporting development efforts and enhancing the role of middle-income countries, including in the area of trade*; and 3) *supporting development efforts of the least developed countries, including through trade capacity-building*. In the afternoon, two consecutive events were held: the thematic debate on *Building and sustaining solid financial markets: challenges for international cooperation and a special event on Financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation*. Each of the debates began with keynote presentations followed by an informal interactive dialogue among all participants. For more information, please download the [informal summary](#) of the meeting.

- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held an [Informal Preparatory Meeting, "Land and Vulnerable People in a World of Change"](#) on 17 April 2008. The meeting, which was chaired by the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Léo Mérorès of Haiti, was well attended by delegations, representatives of the United Nations system, and civil society.

“If we are to make any headway in our efforts to achieve the MDGs by their targeted dates, the international community must strengthen the rights of the poor to land, property and natural resources”, said [Mr. Mérorès](#).

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs [Sha Zukang](#), who also participated in the meeting insisted that “[i]n order to properly address the current global food crisis, as well as put in place an enabling environment for a longer-term solution that will promote rural development, we need to craft the right policy responses. In my view, and in the view of the experts from the Food agencies of the UN system and the World Bank, we need to refocus our development efforts on agriculture. Refocusing on agriculture means that we also have to refocus on land – its use, its quality, its ownership, and access to it”.

The panel focused on current global trends and their impact on the livelihoods of poor rural people, in particular those without secure land access or tenure and those struggling to survive on degraded and dry lands. The issues of climate change, land tenure, the role of indigenous people and sustainable agricultural policies were also addressed.

- “If left unchecked, there is a real risk that climate change may roll back hard won progress on achieving the United Nations development agenda”, [Mr. Léo Mérorès](#), President of the [United Nations Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#), told its members at a Special Event in New York on 2 May 2008 on “[Achieving the MDGs and coping with the challenges of climate change](#)”. Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs [Mr. Sha Zukang](#) urged participants to reject a “gloom and doom” attitude. Instead, he emphasized the effectiveness of existing tools if combined with a healthy dose of political will. The meeting was moderated by New York Times science writer [Andrew Revkin](#).

In the first panel on “*Learning to cope with climate change*”, [Mr. Andrew Simms](#) from the UK-based New Economics Foundation (nef) called for a new development model, better

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measures of progress and a shift from relying on unequal global growth towards serious redistribution in order to tackle poverty in a carbon-constrained world. [Professor Ogunlade Davidson](#), Dean of the University of Sierra Leone and a co-chair of one of the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, stressed that global warming is unequivocally the result of human activities and that governments need to play a central role in mitigating its negative effects. He said climate policy alone will not solve the climate change challenge and that many other policies must be considered, including taxes, subsidies, trade policies, access to modern energy, bank lending policies and insurance policies.

During the second panel on “*Reducing the world’s carbon footprint*”, [Professor Ji Zou](#) of the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Renmin University, China, highlighted the relevance of climate-sound technologies as “the only way out for developing countries”. Developing, diffusing and deploying such technologies required an innovative mechanism for international technology cooperation as part of an international climate regime. [Ms. Leena Srivastava](#) from the Energy and Resources Institute, India, discussed the challenges of emerging economies such as India in putting their economies on a low carbon development pathway whilst consumption grows. She stressed the need to enhance access to clean energy resources, push technology frontiers forward, and promote clean infrastructure expansion while at the same time ensuring their affordability. Lastly, [Mr. Mark Goldfus](#) of Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. argued that “thoughtful government action can create market incentives for business that, in turn, attract capital to finance green technologies – all of which can help make our planet cleaner, safer and healthier.”

B - ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies

- The [Commission on Population and Development](#) held its forty-first session in New York from 7 to 11 April 2008. The Commission’s theme “Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development” generated considerable interest and debate. The Commission recognized that urbanization has a major impact on many aspects of life, is unavoidable and will lead to a world in which the majority of mankind will be urban dwellers. However, urgent action is necessary to combat poverty in both urban and rural areas in order to minimize detrimental effects of urbanization. The Commission adopted a resolution on national, regional and international action on the subject of population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development and decided that the theme of its forty-third session, to be held in 2010, would be “Health, morbidity, mortality and development”. For more information, please visit the [documentation section](#) of the 2008 Session of the Commission on Population and Development.
- The seventh session of the [Committee of Experts on Public Administration](#) took place in New York from 14 to 18 April 2008. The Committee concentrated on the substantive theme of capacity building in governance and public administration and addressed four urgent issues: (a) Capacity building lessons from economies in transition, (b) Capacity building for MDGs, (c) Capacity building for post-conflict reconstruction, and (d) Capacity building for disaster management and preparedness. In addition, the Committee covered agenda items related to the preparation of the United Nations’ first compendium of governance and public administration terminology, the public administration perspective on the theme of the 2008 Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council: Sustainable development, and the review of the activities of the United Nations Programme in public administration and finance. The session was marked by the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the said programme, which has set the agenda on public administration

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while promoting knowledge sharing and innovation since its creation by the General Assembly in 1948. A report (E/2008/44) on the seventh session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration will be submitted for consideration to the 2008 General Segment of the annual session of ECOSOC.

- The [Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice](#) held its seventeenth session in Vienna from 14 to 18 April 2008. A report (E/2008/30) on this session will be submitted for consideration to the General Segment of ECOSOC in July 2008. The Commission held a thematic discussion on aspects of violence against women that pertain directly to the Commission and adopted a decision entitled, “Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women”. The Commission approved the agenda and workshop topics for the twelfth UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which will be held in Salvador, Brazil 12-19 April 2010. It also recommended draft resolutions for adoption by ECOSOC on the following areas: Protection against trafficking in cultural property; international cooperation in preventing and combating illicit international trafficking in forest products; and strengthening prevention of urban crime; as well as adopting resolutions on efforts in the fight against trafficking in persons; and strengthening the rule of law and capacity of prosecution services.
- The [Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#) held its seventh session from 21 April to 2 May 2008 at United Nations Headquarters. The substantive output of the session included the following: the Forum’s recommendations under the session’s main theme “Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges” strongly promote the participation of indigenous peoples, who contribute the “smallest ecological footprints” on Earth, in all future negotiations on climate change, as well as their protection from mitigation measures that may have adverse effects on their livelihoods and their future as peoples. The Forum urged all parties to consider alternative systems beyond the perpetuation of highly-centralized fossil-fuel-based energy supplies and large-scale bioenergy and hydropower dams. The Forum also called for an increased support for renewable, low-carbon and decentralized systems and recommended that States abandon old, centralized electricity grids, which are not suitable for the challenges of climate change.

The Forum expressed its profound concern about serious violations of human rights of indigenous peoples around the world and also extended its support to Bolivia and the incoming Government of Paraguay towards their efforts to end the slavery-like conditions of the Guarani people in the Chaco region of Latin America. Given that the seventh session was the first after the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Forum decided to take a leading role on the promotion of the implementation of the Declaration. It decided to hold an international expert group meeting before the eighth session to formulate concrete proposals. Following a meeting it held in Siberia in July last year, the Permanent Forum also decided to appoint Special Rapporteurs among its members to study the impact of corporations activities on indigenous peoples and promote indigenous peoples’ rights within this context.

As a result of its regional focus this year on the Pacific region, which is comprised largely of small island states, including the traditional lands of many indigenous peoples, the Forum has issued comprehensive recommendations on a variety of sectors, including climate change, and underlined the need for increased attention by UN bodies and the UN system.

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Following a half-day discussion on indigenous languages, the Permanent Forum issued recommendations intended to raise the prestige of indigenous languages, including through supporting efforts towards standardization, establishing indigenous universities and promoting the use of indigenous languages in public administration.

In a methodological shift, the Forum has decided to alternate between policy years and follow-up years and to annually examine in depth the work of six UN agencies. At next year's session, follow up discussion will be devoted to economic and social development, indigenous women, and the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. The regional focus will be on the Arctic. The implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be a standing item. The special theme for 2010 (policy year) will be "Indigenous Peoples' development with culture and identity: Articles 3 and 23 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples".

III – NEWS

- [Secretary-General Ban calls for 'reinvigoration' of agriculture](#)
14 May 2008 – As the world faces a food crisis, agriculture requires "reinvigorating" to produce enough food to feed the burgeoning global population, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today.
- [Water and sanitation vital to achieving other development goals, UN official says](#)
13 May 2008 – Improving access to safe drinking water and decent sanitation worldwide will be critical to resolving many other challenges relating to sustainable development, such as desertification, rural health and ensuring that agriculture in poor countries is more effective, a United Nations official said today.
- [Indigenous peoples have crucial role in climate change debate – UN forum](#)
5 May 2008 – Indigenous peoples have an important role to play in the global response to climate change, given their knowledge and experience with impacts of the phenomenon, and should be included in the international debate on the issue, a United Nations gathering on indigenous affairs concluded.
- [Climate change could imperil poverty goals, ECOSOC hears](#)
2 May 2008 – The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should send a strong message that efforts to achieve the anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could be reversed if climate change is not addressed, its President Léo Mérorès told Council members today.
- [Indigenous peoples most affected by climate change, Assembly President says](#)
1 May 2008 – Indigenous peoples are "most directly affected by environmental degradation caused by climate change," and are "the stewards of some of the most precious biologically diverse regions of the world," the President of the General Assembly said today.
- [Mayors gather at UN to discuss practical steps for dealing with urban problems](#)
24 April 2008 – Mayors and other representatives from some of the world's biggest and most rapidly growing cities have been meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York over the past two days to examine how they can harness innovative forms of technology to overcome the environmental problems caused by the relentless expansion of urban areas.

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- **Thousands gather as annual indigenous forum kicks off at UN Headquarters**
21 April 2008 – The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues meets at “a historic crossroads,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the opening session today as some 3,300 participants from around the world converged on UN Headquarters in New York for the two-week event.
- **UN Economic and Social Council to hold meeting on emerging food crisis**
16 April 2008 – The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has announced plans to hold a meeting of the Council early next month to discuss how to respond to the growing food crisis around the world.

IV– More Information

For further information, please contact ecosocinfo@un.org