



## Aide-Mémoire

### Expert Group Meeting on “Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)”

27 – 29 May 2015  
UNCC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

#### I. Purpose of the meeting

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on “**Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008 – 2017)**” under the theme “**Full employment and decent work for all**” and the inter-agency Plan of Action for the decade from 27-29 May 2015, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as part of the preparations for the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

The Expert Group Meeting is intended as a continuation and follow-up of the Inter-agency technical meetings on “*Broadening coherence and collaboration for rural development through employment and decent work*” held in Rome in November 2011 and “*Building employment and decent work into sustainable recovery and development – the UN contribution*” held in Turin in November 2010.

The meeting is convened in the context of General Assembly resolution 69/234 in which the General Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its seventieth session, under the item “Eradication of poverty and other development issues”, the sub-item entitled “Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017)”, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventieth session a report on the implementation of this resolution.

The objective of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is to support, in an efficient and coordinated manner, the follow-up to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, relating to the eradication of poverty and to coordinate international support to that end.

#### II. Background

Poverty eradication continues to be the greatest global challenge facing the world and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for Africa and the least developed countries. Poverty also remains a challenge in middle-income countries. Recent World Bank estimates indicate that at the global level, the world has achieved the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015. In 1990, nearly half of the world's population lived in extreme poverty; by 2010, that had been reduced to 22 per cent. However, with the Millennium Development Goals coming to an end this year as well with a few years remaining before the conclusion of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), concern remains that progress remains uneven and the number of people living in extreme poverty in some countries is continuing to increase, with women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous groups constituting the majority of the most affected groups, especially in the least developed countries and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Understanding the trends and factors driving them is important in helping to achieve more broad-based success and to avoid any potential reversal.

Furthermore, despite robust economic growth over the past few decades, many parts of the developing world remain trapped in a cycle of decent work deficits. Prolonged years of jobless growth have led to unprecedented unemployment, underemployment and growing inequality, especially amongst the burgeoning youth population. Informal or precarious jobs, with no guarantee of rights or social protection are often the only options available. Further, households below the poverty line have continued to suffer from declining wages and earnings, coupled with volatile prices of food and fuel. These impeding incidences undermine the prospects to achieve development goals and threaten social cohesion.

Mounting concerns over the labour market have generated a shift in the policy discourse to one that places a firm emphasis on decent work as an outcome of growth and means for achieving sustainable development. An important example of this shift is the decision by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals to include decent work and social protection floors as part of its proposed set of goals for achieving a transformative Post 2015 agenda. As negotiations continue, the challenge remains to identify a comprehensive financing strategy that responds to development priorities - a task to be taken up during the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 13-16 July 2015.

A sound financing and investment strategy is critical to ensure countries succeed in meeting labour market demands and achieving sustainable development. The demand for decent jobs in Africa is perhaps more acute than in any other region. The ILO projects that for the period 2014 to 2024, 12.6 million young people will enter the African labour market per year. The challenge is not to create just any jobs, but to reorient strategic priorities in such a way that national growth strategies generate more high quality, decent jobs based on an accelerated productive transformation and upgrading of existing jobs.

In addition to focusing on full employment and decent work, attaining the objectives of the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty also hinges on efforts aimed at promoting rural development and of sustainable agriculture in particular. Therefore,

efforts to fight poverty should include enhanced international cooperation in support of agricultural and rural development, including supporting smallholder producers in the least developed countries. It is essential to take stock of how farmers are linked to markets, how institutional and infrastructural designs have thwarted the ability of small farmers and rural landless workers to reduce their risk and increase their resilience and ability to make better decisions around resource management and livelihood strategies.

Therefore, to end poverty, countries must continue to expand decent work and full employment opportunities for all. They should take action to combat climate change and natural disasters, promote agricultural development and industrialization, fight disease epidemics, and tackle inequality. Countries must also build peaceful and inclusive societies, strengthen governance and institutions and promote the rule of law. Hence, initiatives such as The Global Jobs Pact and the Social Protection Floor represent unique opportunities to address the causes and challenges of poverty through integrated, coordinated and coherent strategies at the national, intergovernmental and inter-agency levels.

### **III. Objectives, Key Questions and Methodology**

The objective of the meeting is to prompt debate on: (i) what lessons have been learned in implementing the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty at the country, regional and global levels that can be leveraged to better deliver the goals of poverty eradication and employment creation; (ii) how can the United Nations system organizations contribute in an effective and coherent manner to promoting employment and decent work related issues in the context of implementing the Second UN Decade as well as of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals; (iii) how can full employment and decent work be effectively mainstreamed into the activities of the United Nations system organizations<sup>1</sup>; (iv) how can more coherent UN policy responses to employment and decent work challenges be promoted at the country level through agency specific programming; and (v) what good practices can be shared that relate to programmes and policies that address inequalities for the benefit of those living in extreme poverty as well as promote the active participation of people living in poverty in the design and implementation of such programmes and policies. The meeting will also serve as a platform to identify policy choices and possible trade-offs that could arise from an integrated approach.

To accomplish these objectives, the meeting will bring together experts, policy makers, representatives from the UN system, as well as from the private sector and civil society organizations. Presentations by the invited experts will focus on the following questions:

- i. What have we achieved so far?
- ii. What lessons have we learnt from our achievements and/or lack of progress?

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<sup>1</sup> See Joint Inspection Unit. 2015. "Evaluation of mainstreaming of full and productive employment and decent work by the United Nations system organizations", Summary Report: JIU/REP/2015/1

- iii. How do we accelerate progress? In particular, how can we deliver on the financing, technical support, and partnerships that are necessary to eradicate poverty as well as achieve the other MDGs?
- iv. How can countries effectively adopt policies that are consistent with the Global Jobs Pact as a general framework within which each country can then formulate policy packages specific to its situation and national priorities in order to promote a job-intensive recovery and sustainable development?
- v. How can countries and their development partners ensure greater coherence among macroeconomic, trade, and social policies for poverty eradication and job creation?
- vi. What lessons can be drawn from the experiences of the United Nations development system [and its development programmes and projects] in fighting poverty through the development of national capacities?
- vii. What kind of investments and policies are needed to address the global challenge of youth unemployment and give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work?
- viii. What kind of investments and policies are needed to promote empowerment of the poor and people living in vulnerable situations, with a view to eradicating poverty, improving access to finance and credit, removing barriers to opportunity, and enhancing productive capacity?
- ix. How to build coherence and collaboration among agencies (and other actors invited to the meeting), based on comparative advantages?

The meeting will be a three-day event that will allow a robust exchange of ideas that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Second Decade among focal points of the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and other representatives from the United Nations system, regional organizations, government officials, independent experts, and civil society. The interaction will help sharpen policies as well as encourage greater inter-agency convergence and collaboration within the United Nations system in sharing knowledge, promoting policy dialogue, facilitating synergies, mobilizing funds, providing technical assistance in key areas underlying poverty eradication, the decent work agenda, and strengthening system-wide policy coherence on poverty, employment, and rural development issues.

#### **IV. Expected outputs**

The meeting will produce the following outputs:

- i. Expert papers on the theme of the meeting will be prepared;
- ii. A final report of the meeting will be produced, highlighting progress and challenges on poverty and employment issues, as well as key recommendations to be included in the Secretary-General's Report to be submitted to the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

#### **V. Organizational and administrative matters**

The Expert Group Meeting will be organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development of UN-DESA. The meeting will be held at United Nations Conference Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and is scheduled to take place from 27-29 May 2015.

A total of **10-15 experts** will be invited to participate at the meeting. The Division for Social Policy and Development of UNDESA will be responsible for identifying experts from Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America, and Europe and Central Asia. The Division for Social Policy and Development of UNDESA will meet the travel and per diem costs of all the invited experts from outside the UN system.

The invited national and independent experts will be required to submit their national presentations and written papers (5-10 pages in length, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by 18 May 2015. All papers and presentations should be sent to Mr. Amson Sibanda ([asibanda@un.org](mailto:asibanda@un.org)) copy to Mr. Joshua Del Duca ([delduca@un.org](mailto:delduca@un.org)). Participants are expected to arrive in Addis Ababa on 26 May 2015 and to stay throughout the duration of the meeting.

In addition to the invited experts, the following will participate:

- i. Staff members of the Division for Social Policy and Development as organizers of the meeting and to provide administrative/logistical support;
- ii. Representatives from the African Union Commission;
- iii. Local participants from the government of Ethiopia, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations;
- iv. Representatives from the United Nations Regional Commissions;
- v. Other participants invited as observers/discussants by the United Nations, including representatives from the United Nations systems, regional development banks and World Bank.

All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary. The invited experts will lead-off discussions of each session by presenting papers which will then be followed by in-depth plenary discussions. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants will outline the major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. A final report will be produced after the meeting.

## **VI. Documentation and the Language of the meeting**

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents and materials related to full employment and decent work, and poverty eradication. The national presentations as well as the papers from the independent experts will be made available on the web site to be created for the meeting.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will be provided in English.