



IN THIS ISSUE >>>

World's largest minority needs to be included in the MDGs | Improving e-government through a citizen-centric approach | United Nations climate chief urges compromise at Cancún talks

Global dialogue on development: The world urgently needs a deal on climate change, Time to act on forests, Innovative approaches in educating women, girls and the marginalized

Trends and analysis: ICT to support achievement of the MDGs, Examining current trends in e-governance programmes, Advance international public policy issues for the Internet

Capacity development: Editing population and housing census data

Publications and websites | Comings and goings | Calendar

Feature Articles and Webcast

World's largest minority needs to be included in the MDGs

Over 650 million people in the world have a disability; they make up approximately 10% of the world's population and are the world's largest minority. AccordiUUn to UNDP, around 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. Worldwide trends, including the combination of population growth, population ageing and medical advances mean this group continues to grow.



The commitment of the United Nations to the rights of persons with disabilities was codified into an international human rights convention in 2006. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000, call on all stakeholders to take action towards achieving eight key developmental goals by 2015. The goals focus on reducing extreme poverty, improving health and education and environmental sustainability to improve the lives of the world's poorest populations. The Goals are also an expression of fundamental human rights, encompassing universally accepted human values and rights for all.

Although the MDGs do not currently make any specific mention of disability, the United Nations has since reiterated the commitment of the international community to promote the inclusion of disability in Millennium Development Goal processes where persons with disabilities are both development agents and beneficiaries.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities

In this context, the theme of the 2010 United Nations' International Day of Persons with a Disability, celebrated annually on 3 December, is "Keeping the promise: Mainstreaming disability in the Millennium Development Goals towards 2015 and beyond".

The Day aims to promote a better understanding of disability issues with a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities and the gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life of their communities. Events will be held worldwide to commemorate the Day with a particular focus on ways to

ensure that society and governments will make the MDGs more inclusive and will promote development for all.

Mainstreaming disability in the MDGs

The MDG country reports provided a mixed picture suggesting some progress in mainstreaming disability in development in the context of the MDGs, but also raised concerns that disability remains largely “invisible” in the national development priorities. Despite recent progress, comparative studies on disability legislation show that only 45 countries have anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws.

In addition, there remain significant gaps between policy and implementation. Persons with disabilities often face complex, multifaceted and multi-layered challenges. In addition to the difficulties stemming from the disability itself, issues such as poverty and gender discrimination may further hinder their integration into society.

In support of efforts by Governments and civil society to achieve the Goals, at the global, regional and country levels, the United Nations works in four activity areas: monitoring; analysis; awareness-raising campaigning and mobilization; and operational activities.

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The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators undertakes analysis to monitor progress towards realization of the Goals at the global and regional levels, which plays an important role for inclusion of disability in all MDG processes.

The impact of the multiple crises

Recently, successive crises have hit the world and contributed to a slowing in development progress in general. The United Nations have urged Member States not to use lack of resources as an excuse for failing to meet their targets. The organization has also called on numerous occasions for pro-poor policies to be implemented along with protection measures to ensure those with the least are not disproportionately affected.

However, cuts in public spending announced by many developed countries could lead to decrease in health and social services and the reduction or cutting of benefits and allowances and these fiscal austerity measures are especially likely to affect people with disabilities.

Furthermore, analysis of food crisis suggests that the underlying problem is one of poverty more than scarcity of food and people with disabilities are among those most at risk of being unable to afford to eat. In turn, malnourishment in itself increases the risk of members of affected populations developing disabilities in the first place.

With regard to natural disasters, including those climate change causes, the poorest and most vulnerable often suffer a disproportionately negative impact and persons with disabilities are at risk of becoming ‘invisible’ and excluded from relief efforts. In addition, these disasters can cause debilitating injuries and illnesses which then leave many people with long term disabilities.

Similarly, wars and conflicts remain not only a major cause of disabilities, but also leave persons with disabilities exceptionally vulnerable, through loss of care givers and poor access to aid and relief efforts. The United Nations has urged member states to use these crises as opportunities for a ‘fresh start’ – for example, after a natural disaster, a conflict or a recession to rebuild structures that are designed to be accessible to persons with disabilities.

The importance of data and statistics

The General Assembly has called on Governments to build a knowledge base of data and information about the situation of persons with disabilities, which could be used to facilitate disability-sensitive development policy planning, monitoring, evaluation and implementation. Particular attention is paid to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities. It has also urged Governments to cooperate and to avail themselves of the technical assistance of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The consensus is that focusing on the inclusion of disability in the current MDG indicators would be more effective in promoting the inclusion of disability data than proposing any new indicators related to disability. This will require identifying those indicators that could be meaningfully disaggregated by disability. Inclusion of disability into the specific Goals could be based on whether the goal is “overarching” and/or the availability of disability disaggregated data. Goals 1, 2 and 3 would meet these two criteria.

However, such an approach has some limitations, as available data may not always be adequate to reflect the relevance or importance of an issue. In such a case, when the scope of data and evidence are limited, efforts to identify additional data could be made to bridge the gap.

Within the United Nations system

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sets out legal obligations on States to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, it does not create new rights. It was adopted on 13 December 2006, and entered into force on 3 May 2008.

The Convention is a legally binding treaty, intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention reinforces and works in synergy with pre-existing international texts such as the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the World Programme of Action, neither of which are legally binding treaties.

United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability provides funding targeted towards building the capacity of non-governmental organizations to take part in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Fund is administered by the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, within DESA.

For more information: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

Improving e-government through a citizen-centric approach

E-government is becoming the norm in countries around the world. Information and communications technologies, like the Internet and mobile networks, have evolved from being just an office tool to a transformation agent for the public sector. However, many challenges lie ahead. Governments must now shift their strategies from being supply-driven to focusing on the needs and demands of the end-users.



The purpose of e-government is to meet citizens' needs anywhere, anytime. It is intended to reach as many users as possible while integrating service delivery across the public sector. Ultimately, e-government programmes are intended to enhance citizens' lives.

However, many difficulties are on the road as access to Internet, especially for the most vulnerable groups, remains a major hurdle.

About the United Nations E-Government Survey

The survey provides a benchmarking tool for the 192 Member States of the United Nations to assess their country's e-government development. The survey tracks the progress of the implementation of e-government programmes, and it measures and compares Member States' e-government development via the Global e-Government Development Index.

Over the years, the UN E-Government Survey has been referenced by several noteworthy publications, including the World Bank's ICT at a Glance report, OECD's Governance as a Glance 2009 publication, the World Economic Forum's report on Global Information Technology 2009-2010, the European Commission: Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report and the Economist EU: E readiness rankings 2009: The usage imperative.

The survey has also been mentioned in Vinnova (the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovative Systems): eGovernment of Tomorrow: Future scenarios for 2020, the National University of Singapore/Institute of Systems Science Report on Enterprise Architecture as Platform for Connected Government, and in the White Paper entitled "e-Government success: a Global Benchmark and Segmentation" by CS Transform.

Expert Group Meeting on e-Government Survey: Towards a More Citizen-Centric Approach

The Expert Group Meeting on 'e-Government Survey: Toward a more Citizen-Centric Approach' will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in December 2010. The purpose of the meeting is to provide a forum for discussion to allow experts in public administration to review and examine the Survey's methodology. They will review the methodology in light of current trends in e-government programmes.

The experts will also discuss some of the major challenges and emerging issues such as user take-up and training, universal accessibility of Internet or mobile connectivity, accessibility of services by vulnerable groups and multi-channel service provision. The experts will provide advice and recommendations on how to integrate these issues into the next edition of the UN e-Government Survey which will be launched in 2012.

E-government – enhancing citizen's lives

E-government programmes and services for citizens should increase value, promote awareness and transparency, and improve user experience. Incorporating e-government services

and solutions improves the ability of the public sector to address citizens' needs and promote development.

Simultaneously, the digital revolution enables users to evolve from information consumers to advisers and producers of solutions. This demonstrates that sound e-government solutions not only aid the policy-making process, but also enhance the lives of citizens.

For instance, Angola recognized that government services could not be conceived any longer without the integration of digital tools. Consequently, the country stepped up its efforts and created "Projecto Portal do Governo," an Internet platform that brings all government public information and services under the same portal. Currently, the system has 157 services, information on 31 government programmes and 28 official government forms. The platform not only provides useful and much needed information but also allows citizens to comment on issues, and contact government officials directly. This has enabled the development of a two-way communication system between citizens and the public sector.

While countries recognize that e-government is a critical driver for wealth, enables growth and facilitates policy-making, not all nations have the infrastructure, budget and capacity to keep up with the demands of the digital revolution. Although there have been significant advances in e-government since the first e-Government Survey in 2003, countries still face numerous challenges hindering the development and/or advancement of their e-government programmes.

Citizen-centric approach – the future of e-government

Taking into consideration the challenges for increased user take-up, countries now must re-think their strategies. Governments should gauge how they are enabling participation and promoting inclusiveness, creating a holistic approach to service, and how they are providing a two-way communications system that allows citizens to be aware, understood, and ultimately, participate in the process. Once countries are able to integrate the aforementioned components into their e-governments solutions, they've embraced a citizen-centric approach.

A citizen-centric approach to e-government is the ultimately way in which governments will not only meet users' demands but also engage them as decision-makers.

As a result, the 2012 Survey will reflect the changes in the e-government landscape, and will move beyond measuring supply-driven e-government services. In the preparation for the survey, new and fresh ideas are being considered for improving the set of indicators to assess user take-up and to evaluate if governments are taking the necessary steps to overcome the most pressing challenges.

For more information: <http://www.unpan.org/e-government>

UN climate chief urges compromise at Cancún talks

video



The United Nations Climate Change Conference opened in Cancún, Mexico on 29 November, bringing together 193 nations and calling for a balanced and concrete outcome to meet one of today's biggest challenges.

Addressing the media, Christiana Figueres, Executive Director of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said that "Cancun can launch a new era in the pace of global action on climate change, where each year brings increasingly effective answers to keep humanity on track to a safer future." She added that : "Cancun will not solve everything and the outcome needs to be pragmatic, but Cancun also needs to keep ambition very much alive."

Video: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php> (3:31 minutes)

Speaking notes:

http://unfccc.int/files/portal_francoophone/zzz_not_yet_migrated/application/pdf/101129_speaking_notes_pc.pdf

Full coverage: http://webcast.cc2010.mx/grid_en.html

Website: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

Global Dialogue on Development

The world urgently needs a deal on climate change

The United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Cancun, Mexico, from 29 November to 10 December, encompasses the sixteenth Conference of the Parties (COP) and the sixth Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP)

Negotiators from 194 nations will attend the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference with expectations of reaching a new climate accord at any time far lower than they were at Copenhagen a year ago. Reality bit in Denmark over how far the world was from a meaningful agreement on the next round of global action covering the period 2013 to 2020.

United Nations remains confident about progress

Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Planning Robert Orr told journalists at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 November that he did not expect the conference of parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to deliver a “final answer” on solving climate change but remained positive about the possibilities.

“Significant progress is possible in Cancun,” he said. “That is not to say that we expect all issues to be resolved.” “We need a package of decisions and outcomes. One or two [agreements] won’t an outcome create.”

Mr. Orr noted that Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon will attend the high-level segment of the talks, where he will urge countries to work towards a balanced set of agreements that move the climate change agenda forward across the board.

“He will urge governments to take decisions on those issues where there is consensus – on protecting forests, technology transfer, adaptation and the creation of a new fund to house long-term financing,” said Mr. Orr, adding that the Secretary-General will also be encouraging governments to make progress on more challenging issues.

Key focus of negotiations

The areas to be negotiated are the level of emissions reductions targets and how they are shared between rich and poor countries, funding from rich countries to poor to tackle climate change,

mechanisms to transfer clean technology to poorer countries, and a global mechanism to halt deforestation in poor countries.

Developing countries are demanding deeper emissions reduction targets from the developed countries, which are the nations putting most of the excess greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. The developing world wants a new, steeper set of targets from developed nations via the Kyoto Protocol, and from the US which is outside Kyoto.

Currently, the 2020 pledges in the Copenhagen Accord struck last year, from the developed world in particular, fall well short of the level needed to limit global warming to +2 degrees Celsius. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) says that the current level of pledges will lead to a 5 to 9 billion tons emissions overshoot by 2020. UNEP’s Executive Director Achim Steiner has called on the 140 nations now signed up to the Copenhagen Accord to lock in their commitments and build on them in Cancun.

Developed versus developing countries

On the big questions of targets for emissions reductions, however, the dispute between developed and developing countries in general, and the US and China in particular, has progressed very little if at all since Copenhagen.

The last UNFCCC negotiation session in the lead up to Cancun underscored the intractability of this issue with the two biggest emitter nations at loggerheads over the same old ground; the US coming good with substantial targets to reduce emissions and China being bound to meaningful curbs on its emissions growth and the transparent international verification of them.

These two nations must agree on these issues before the world can agree and before a global accord emerges. A resolution is not going to come at Cancun, but progress toward one is vital yet it is hard to see it happening.

Tackle the loss of forest

On forests, an agreement on Reducing Deforestation and Degradation and enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries, or REDD+, was close to agreement last year in Denmark, possibly only held back by the lack of an overall climate agreement. So an agreement to tackle the loss of forest that is responsible for at least 12 per cent of total world greenhouse emissions every year is one of the more likely success stories that could emerge.

There is still significant devilish detail to be worked out to agree a global REDD programme that is workable – with safeguards for forest communities and indigenous groups; financing mechanisms, and the balance between public funding and carbon

markets; and, the significant methodological questions around monitoring, reporting and verification.

“There are enough issues that are close to resolution that give us hope that an important outcome could be achieved in Cancún,” Mr. Orr said. “Negotiators need to remind themselves that the longer we delay, the more we will pay; both in terms of lives and in terms of money.”

For more information: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

Time to act on forests

Forest Day 4, coinciding with the 16th Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, will take place in Cancun, Mexico on 5 December

With the International Year of Forests on the horizon, forest and climate change issues will be a large part of the discussions at the Climate Change Conference. To help foster collaboration and action on the challenges facing forests, the fourth “Forest Day” (Forest Day 4) is being held on the theme “Time to Act”, highlighting the necessity of taking action to help preserve and sustainably manage the world’s forests, the biodiversity they embrace and the people who depend on them.

The event is being hosted by the Government of Mexico, through the National Forestry Commission, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and the Centre for International Forest Research (CIFOR).

The Forest Day 4 programme will feature of a variety of discussions on the role of forests in climate change and biodiversity, as well as forest finance issues and the challenges surrounding Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and sustainable forest management. Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), will address the plenary session of Forest Day 4 on “Global updates on forests and climate change”.

Each year, an estimated 13 million hectares (32 million acres) of forests are lost due to deforestation. Close to 80 per cent of the world’s terrestrial biodiversity reside in forest habitats, and global recognition on the role of forests is growing. “There is greater awareness of the benefits forests provide in stabilizing climate change, protecting biodiversity and in the livelihoods of billions,” says Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, Jan McAlpine.

Forests and forest soils store more than one trillion tons of carbon—twice the amount found in the atmosphere. As the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 transitions into the International Year of Forests 2011, Forest Day 4 will help to bridge the two years and

continue momentum towards greater action and awareness on the links between forests, biodiversity and climate change in 2011.

Sub plenary and learning events will also be a large part of the Forest Day 4 programme. The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat, DESA, is co-organizing a sub plenary session on “Biodiversity: Synergies in policy and practice” together with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). In addition, a learning event on “REDD+ and Forest Finance: The need for a 360 degree perspective on Forest Finance” is also being co-organized by the UNFF Secretariat together with UN Environment Programme and UN-REDD.

Last year, 1,500 people attended Forest Day 3 at COP15 in Copenhagen. This year, organizers are anticipating up to 2,000 participants.

For more information:

<http://www.forestsclimatechange.org/ForestDay-4.html>

Second Committee aims to complete its work beginning of December

The Committee is gearing up for the finalization of its work. As of 29 November, it has adopted 18 resolutions out of expected 41 resolutions

Under agenda item 17 on *Information and communications technologies for development*, L.56 on Information communications technologies for development was adopted and the Committee concluded the consideration of this item. Under agenda item 18 on *Macroeconomic policy question*, the Committee adopted L.44 on International trade and development [18(a)] and L.48 on International financial system and development [18(b)]. The Committee concluded its consideration of sub-item 18(a).

Under agenda item 20 on *sustainable development*, draft resolutions L.17/Rev.1 on Oil slick on Lebanese shores, L.28/Rev.1 on Protection of coral reefs for sustainable livelihoods and development, and L.35/Rev.1 on Global code of Ethics for Tourism were adopted. Under sub-item (b) on *follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*, the Committee adopted L.46 on Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations. Under sub-item (c) on *International Strategy for*

Disaster Reduction, draft resolution L.54 on International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon was adopted. Under sub-item (d) on *Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind*, the Committee adopted draft resolution L.51, and concluded its consideration of sub-item 20 (d). Under sub-item (h) on *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*, the Committee adopted draft resolution L.41 and concluded its consideration of sub-item 20 (h).

Under agenda item 22 on *Globalization and interdependence*, the Committee adopted draft resolutions L.20 on Towards a New International Economic Order and L.50 on Culture and development. Under agenda item 23 on *Groups of countries in special situations*, the Committee adopted L.55 on Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The Committee also adopted draft resolution L.47 on Groups of countries in special situations: specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked development countries. The Committee thus concluded its consideration of item 23 as a whole. Under agenda item 24 on *Eradication of poverty and other development issues*, the Committee adopted draft resolution L.10 on Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection. Under agenda item 25, *Operational activities for development: operational activities for development of the United Nations system*, draft resolutions L.14 on Operational activities for development of the UN System and L.19 on Renaming of the title of the Executive Board of the UNDP and UNFPA to include UNOPS were adopted. The Committee concluded its consideration of item 25 as a whole. Under agenda item 60 on *Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources*, draft resolution L.31 was adopted.

In order to complete its work on the rescheduled conclusion date of 1 December, it has been announced that the all draft resolutions must be submitted for processing at the latest by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, 24 November.

The Committee is currently considering its methods of work with the aim of adopting a decision before the conclusion of its work in order to make the work of the Committee more effective and efficient.

For more information:
<http://www.un.org/en/ga/second/index.shtml>

Innovative approaches in educating women, girls and the marginalized

In support of the 2011 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), a regional preparatory meeting for the West Asia region will be held on 9 December in Doha, Qatar

In the Arab region, many girls and women remain excluded from learning opportunities and only nine of the twenty two Arab States have achieved gender parity in primary education. For groups most at risk of suffering from inequalities, disparities and multiple combined forms of exclusion, lack of access to education and the poor quality of the education received, remain major challenges. The underlying causes of educational marginalization are diverse and often interlinked with inequalities and marginalization in other sectors.

The ECOSOC meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss innovative approaches and policy responses that have worked to address these multiple barriers. The meeting, which will be held in conjunction with the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), will include a ministerial working lunch to identify policy options and key messages from the region to be brought to the July 2011 ECOSOC AMR for the action of Ministers.

For more information:
<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/amr/index.shtml>

Principles of equity and social justice

International Human Solidarity Day will be commemorated worldwide on 20 December

In the Millennium Declaration world leaders identified Solidarity as one of the fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century and emphasized that “Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.” In the context of globalization and the challenge of growing inequality, the strengthening of international solidarity and cooperation is indispensable for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

The concept of solidarity has defined the work of the United Nations since the birth of the Organization. The creation of the United Nations drew the peoples and nations of the world together to promote peace, human rights and social and economic development.

The organization was founded on a basic premise of unity and harmony among its members expressed in the concept of collective security that relies on the solidarity of its members to unite “to maintain international peace and security”. It is in the spirit of solidarity that the organization relies on “cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character” as well (UN Charter).

Solidarity, as a central pillar of international cooperation, acquires new meaning in the face of globalization and growing interdependence. In particular, a globalizing world offers new opportunities to forge innovative alliances that can unleash the potential for broader and faster economic and social development.

Among the more important aspects of solidarity at the international level are assistance, development aid and cooperation. “For the global community aid represents a mechanism for expressing human solidarity and for extending opportunity. Whether motivated by human rights, religious values or wider ethical systems, aid’s role in eliminating mass poverty, hunger and avoidable child deaths is a moral imperative” (Human Development Report, 2005).

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/intldays/IntSolidarity/index.html>

Trends and Analysis

Monitoring the MDGs

18th Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on MDG indicators takes place in Geneva from 30 November-2 December

As part of the regular consultation with both national and international experts to review and discuss issues related to the MDG monitoring, the meeting will focus on localizing the MDG indicators, country capacity building and creation of appropriate frameworks for monitoring national development. It will also coordinate related technical cooperation activities in countries and plan the production of the global MDG monitoring outputs for 2011.

For more information:

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Capacity/Geneva.htm>

ICT to support achievement of the MDGs

2010 GAID Global Forum and Annual Meeting will take place on 5-6 December in Abu Dhabi

The Annual Meeting and Global Forum are major annual events of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) and bring together participants from the global ICT for Development community to engage in multi-stakeholder dialogues and debates around key and emerging issues in this field and foster partnerships and collaboration. This year's event will be organized by GAID and hosted by the Abu-Dhabi Systems and Information Center.

The theme of this year's Global Forum will be "Information and Communication Technologies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals – Moving from Advocacy to Action". Participants will include ministers, senior policy makers, business leaders, representatives of international organizations, civil society and academia active in the field of ICT for Development.

The Forum will be an opportunity to perform a collective "reality check" on the progress made thus far in using ICT to achieve the MDGs and what still needs to be done to ensure that ICT fulfill their vast potential for accelerating achievement of the MDGs. The main goal of the Forum is to identify concerns and priorities to move decisively and productively from advocacy to action.

The Global Alliance will also present, for further discussion and feedback, its major initiative - the MDG eNabler, a free web-based

set of ICT-based tools and resources designed to assist governments and all development practitioners in their work towards achieving the MDGs.

The Board of Directors and the Strategy Council of GAID will meet on 6 December, following the closing of the Global Forum. Among the principal items on the agenda for both meetings will be the discussion and adoption of the Plan of Action for 2011 and beyond.

For more information: <http://www.un-gaid.org/>

Examining current trends in e-governance programmes

Expert Group Meeting on the United Nations e-Government Survey 2012: Towards a More Citizen-Centric Approach will be held in New York from 6-7 December

The meeting, organized by DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), will provide a forum for discussion to allow the experts to review and methodically examine the Survey's methodology. They will review the methodology in light of current trends in e-government programmes.

The experts will also discuss some challenges or emerging issues such as: user take-up and training; universal accessibility of Internet or mobile connectivity; accessibility of services by vulnerable groups; multi-channel service provision; whole of Government (WOG) and one-stop service provision; and, assessing the environment. The experts will provide advice and recommendations on how to integrate these issues into the next edition of UN e-Government Survey.

For more information:

<http://www.unpan.org/Events/BrowseEventsbyCalendar/tabid/94/mctl/EventDetails/ModuleID/1532/ItemID/1646/language/en-US/Default.aspx?selecteddate=12/6/2010>

Advance international public policy issues for the Internet

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) follow up will take place in New York on 14 December

In its resolution 2010/2 of 19 July, the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General "to convene open and inclusive consultations involving all Member States and all other stakeholders with a view to assisting the process towards enhanced cooperation in order to enable Governments on an

equal footing to carry out their roles and responsibilities in respect of international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet but not of the day-to-day technical and operational matters that do not impact upon those issues.”

The consultations will focus on enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. The Council further requested that the consultations be undertaken “through a balanced participation of all stakeholders in their respective roles and responsibilities, as stated in paragraph 35 of the Tunis Agenda.” The consultations will consist of two parts: (1) submission of written comments, preferably; and, (2) a face-to-face meeting to be held in New York on 14 December 2010.

For more information: <http://www.unpan.org/dpadm/wsisfollowup>

Enhancing cooperation in international tax matters

Sixth Session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters took place in Geneva from 18-22 October

All participants agreed that the meeting fully succeeded in achieving the ambitious objectives of its busy agenda. The main areas of discussion included an update of the United Nations Model Tax Convention, a definition of “permanent establishment”, transfer pricing and an exchange of information on tax matters. Bilateral tax treaties between developed and developing countries, capacity building work in the tax area, tax treatment of services as well tax cooperation and climate change were also on the agenda.

Update of the United Nations Model Tax Convention

The Coordinator of the Subcommittee on the UN Model Tax Convention Update, Mr Robin Oliver (New Zealand), provided an overview of the amendments to both the text and the commentaries, as agreed by the Committee during the last few years (E/C.18/2010/CRP.1). The objective is to complete an update of the UN Model and related Commentaries in 2011. This Model is a centrepiece of the tax work undertaken by the Committee and its Secretariat at UN/DESA. As compared to the OECD Model, it favours capital importing countries, in majority of cases developing countries.

Dispute resolution

Following presentation by the Coordinator of the Subcommittee on Dispute Resolution, Ms. Claudine Devillet (Belgium), and ensuing discussion, it was agreed that two versions of Article 25 will be included in the text of the UN Model – one without binding arbitration and another one including such provision

(E/C.18/2010/CRP.2 & Add.1). The arbitration is between countries and does not directly involve the taxpayer.

The Committee also agreed that a Commentary was needed to explain why arbitration clauses may or may not be considered suitable in a particular treaty. This reflects concerns that arbitration procedures might require developing countries to seek extra-budgetary resources in foreign currency to pay for relevant proceedings, as well as concerns that arbitration proceedings might inherently favour developed countries in disputes with developing countries.

Definition of “permanent establishment”

The result of a long-lasting work on a revised Commentary to Article 5 of the UN Model Tax Convention (E/C.18/2010/5 & 6) was introduced by Mr. Ronald van der Merwe (South Africa). The agreed text preserves a strong source country taxation element favoured by most developing countries. Article 5 is the centrepiece of the UN Model Tax Convention, as it indicates the threshold requirement for a State (that there be a “permanent establishment” in that State) before it can tax profits from the economic engagement of persons from its treaty partner. The OECD Model has a higher threshold than the UN Model in many respects, as favoured by capital exporting countries.

Transfer pricing: a practical manual for developing countries

Transfer prices are used by parts of multi-national corporations in their internal dealings. Abuse or mispricing can lead to large-scale tax evasion or avoidance, to which developing countries are especially vulnerable. Based on a draft outline of a manual to assist developing countries in this area, as agreed by the Committee last year, several working draft chapters (introduction, business framework, legal background, transfer pricing capability in tax administration and transfer pricing methods) were presented (E/C.18/2010/CRP.4) by the Coordinator of the Subcommittee on Transfer Pricing, Mr. Stig Sollund (Norway).

It was agreed that new draft chapters will be posted for comments on the Tax Committee website, with a view to completing the manual by 2012. This body of work was suggested to the Committee by the Secretariat last year and has drawn great interest from all sectors.

Exchange of information on tax matters

The Secretariat provided an oral update regarding the consideration by ECOSOC of the draft Code of Conduct on Cooperation in Combating International Tax Evasion, which had been recommended by the Committee at its 2009 session. The Committee again invited ECOSOC to take action, as a matter of priority, on the draft Code.

Revision of the Manual for the Negotiation of Bilateral Tax Treaties between Developed and Developing countries

Following a brief overview outlining the history of the Manual by the Coordinator of the relevant Subcommittee, Mr. Bernell Arrindell (Barbados), several Members of the Subcommittee introduced draft chapters of the Manual (E/C.18/2010/CRP.10 & Add.1). The Committee's objective is to finalize the revision of the 2003 document by 2012. However, the work on this document has been moving quite slowly, due to its difficult history. Greater focus on a more practical approach to assist developing country treaty negotiators and administrators should lead to speedier progress over the next year.

Capacity building

The Coordinator of the Subcommittee on Capacity Building, Mrs. Ifueko Omoigui Okauru (Nigeria), provided an overview of the various focus areas and actors involved in capacity building work in the tax area (E/C.18/2010/CRP.11). The ensuing discussion focused on ways of improving cooperation between various actors. Several concrete activities were mentioned, including efforts to provide free access in targeted countries to some (online) training courses. A proposed website, developed in the context of a joint DESA/UNDP project on the South-South Sharing of Successful Tax Practices ("S4TP") was demonstrated for approval of the Committee.

The tax treatment of services

Professor Brian Arnold (consultant) presented a paper (E/C.18/2010/CRP.7 & Add.1) focusing on the increasing importance of the topic, the lack of a clear definition of services and an analysis of the principles underlying the current approach of the UN Model to services. He suggested a comprehensive revision to achieve greater consistency and effectiveness. This area is likely to show intense differences over who should tax the provision of services – either the country of the provider or receiver. Developing countries generally prefer the former approach. This work will likely continue beyond 2011.

Tax competition in corporate tax: use of tax incentives in attracting foreign direct investment

The issue was introduced by Mr. Stefan van Parys, representing the World Bank Group, and comments were made by Ms. Maria Amparo Grau Ruiz, Complutense University, Madrid, on the basis of a paper prepared by the Investment Climate Advisory Services of the World Bank Group (E/C.18/2010/CRP.13). The paper provided a framework for evaluation of the effectiveness of tax incentives in developing countries. This work completed the mandate given to the Secretariat and served to re-engage the World Bank in the UN Tax Committee activities.

Tax cooperation and climate change

The Secretariat presented a scoping paper (E/C.18/2010/CRP.12) focussing on areas where greater international tax cooperation might contribute to effective domestic responses to climate change, including issues arising under the UN Model, due to differing characterization and treatment of profits. OECD representative argued that such work in the UN forum was not likely to be productive, based on the OECD experience.

However, the members and observers of the Committee did not support the OECD position. It was agreed that the Secretariat, in cooperation with other interested institutions, will continue to explore this area. This work does not aim to advise on what tax regime a country should adopt, but rather seeks to examine where international tax cooperation can help make such a chosen regime as effective as possible by, for example, discouraging abuse and avoiding double taxation or unintended double non-taxation.

Next steps

As required, the Committee recommended to ECOSOC that its next, 7th annual session take place in Geneva from 24 to 28 October 2011. The proposed agenda will address the 2011 revision of the UN Model Tax Convention and its Commentaries, as well as the revision of the Manual for Tax Treaty Negotiations, the practical manual on transfer pricing, capacity building, taxation of services, cooperation in climate change, and a consideration of other items for future work.

ECOSOC will have before it a full report the Committee on its 6th session, which is due in January 2011. In the meantime, all background papers prepared for the session as well as presentations given at the session are made available on DESA's Financing for Development website.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/tax/sixthsession/index.htm>

Extending partnerships for e-government projects

First International Conference on Open Government Data took place in Washington D.C. from 15-17 November

DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) delivered a key note plenary address and had several opportunities for collaboration and the development of initiatives in the area of e-government with key strategic partners in the context of the conference.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) invited DESA to partner in a project to assist Latin American countries to develop e-government strategies.

In addition, the General Services Administration, US Federal Government and the US CIO agreed to explore the possibility of co-sponsoring with DPADM the “Americas CIO Forum” in 2011, thus launching an operational regional virtual network. They also agreed to share with DPADM their experience of working with various CIOs.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the www, in commenting on the UN e-Government Survey, noted that he would be keen to eventually see it follow an open data approach. He also expressed interest in having UN Member States join the W3C Consortium. (This would naturally depend on the key issue of national data sovereignty.)

The United Nations University (UNU) expressed interest in undertaking research with DPADM on the links between e-government and sustainable development.

The conference was organized by the US Government and was the first conference of this type. The audience included government officials (mostly from the US, but also from Australia, New Zealand and the UK). DPADM delivered the plenary keynote address on the featured theme “Open Government Data: Towards Adding Value and Measuring Success - Efficiency and Transparency X Privacy and Security”.

For more information: <http://www.data.gov/conference/>

Capacity Development

Editing population and housing census data

CARICOM Regional Workshop on Population and Housing Census Data Editing will be held in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda from 6-11 December

DESA Statistics Division is organizing a regional workshop on census data editing in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat to develop the capacities of the staff of National Statistical Offices of the CARICOM member countries with the techniques and procedures used in editing population and housing census data.

The training will develop a set of standard census data edit, which can then be customized and used as reference of good practices by countries. The standard census edits developed at the workshop will also be posted on the Statistics Division website for other countries to adopt as needed.

The expected outputs of the Workshop are: enhancement of the requisite data editing skills using the CPro software; improved knowledge-base in census data editing; improved capabilities to customize and use the standard census data edits; and strengthened capacity in general, in producing better quality census data and specifically greater timeliness in the dissemination of this data for decision-making. The workshop is timely as most of the CARICOM member countries will conduct their censuses in 2010 and 2011.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/newsletter/globalstat_unsd_calendar.htm

Publications and Websites

Technical reports

Pre-launch of the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2011

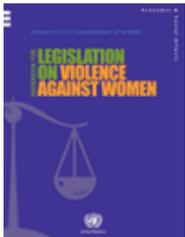
Chapter 1 of the flagship publication on “Global Outlook” will be launched on 1 December in New York.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) is a joint product of DESA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the five United Nations regional commissions. It provides an overview of recent global economic performance and short-term prospects for the world economy and of some key global economic policy and development issues. One of its purposes is to serve as a point of reference for discussions on economic, social and related issues taking place in various United Nations entities during the year.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/wesp.html>

Handbooks



Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women

In 2009, based on the work of the expert group meeting in Vienna, DESA’s Division for the Advancement of Women developed a Handbook for Legislation on Violence against

Women. This Handbook, with a foreword by Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, intends to provide all stakeholders with detailed guidance to support the adoption and effective implementation of legislation which prevents violence against women, punishes perpetrators, and ensures the rights of survivors everywhere.

It is specifically hoped that the Handbook will be of use to government officials, parliamentarians, civil society, staff of United Nations entities and other actors in their efforts at ensuring that a solid legal basis is in place for tackling the scourge of violence against women. This book is available in all six official languages.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-handbook.htm#handbook>

Statistical compilations



2007 Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook, Vol. I and Vol. II

The Yearbook is the forty-first in a series of annual compilations of statistics on world industry designed to meet both the general demand for information of this kind and the special requirements of the United Nations and related international bodies.

The Yearbook provides statistics on the production of about 600 major industrial commodities. Data are provided for a ten-year period and for approximately 200 countries and territories. The commodities have been selected on the basis of their importance in world production and trade.

This edition of the Yearbook is the third to provide data on the value of industrial production, in addition to quantities of industrial production that have been the scope of previous editions of the Yearbook. The Yearbook is therefore organized in two volumes: Volume I: Physical Quantity Data and Volume II: Monetary Value Data.

Annexes to the publication provide information to assist the user, including an index of commodities in alphabetical order, as well as a table of correspondence among the CPC-based commodity codes and the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), Rev.3.1, the Harmonized System (HS) 2002 and Prodcod 2002.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?id=431>

To download: <https://unp.un.org/Details.aspx?pid=20669>

2008 International Trade Statistics Yearbook, Vol. I and Vol. II



The Yearbook is issued in two redesigned volumes which were prepared at different points in time during 2009. Volume I has been compiled early in 2009 (in May 2009) to allow for an advanced release of an

overview of international merchandise trade in 2008 and for a much earlier publication of the available 2008 country (area) data. Overall, data for a total of 173 countries (or areas) are shown in Volume I.

Volume II which contains detailed tables showing international trade for 258 individual commodities (3-digit SITC groups) and eleven world trade tables covering trade values and indices has been compiled approximately six months after the submission of Volume I (in December 2009) as the preparation of these tables requires and benefits from the additional country data which, normally, become available later in the year.

Volume II contains updated versions of the two world trade tables A and D published in Volume I. The redesign of the International Trade Statistics Yearbook was aimed to provide a more analytical and condensed view of the exports and imports of individual countries (country trade profiles in Volume I) and of specific commodities (commodity trade profile in Volume II).

All tables and contents of Volume I and Volume II are made available electronically shortly after completion of the manuscript. The detailed information about the trade of particular countries by commodity and partner (values and quantities) contained in the tables and graphs for individual countries in Volume I and commodities in Volume II has been taken from the publicly available database UN Comtrade (<http://comtrade.un.org/>). Users are advised to visit UN Comtrade for any additional and more current information as it is continuously updated.

For more information: <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/first.aspx>



Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and MBS Online

The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics presents current economic and social statistics for more than 200 countries and territories of the world. It contains over 50 tables of monthly and/or annual and quarterly data on a variety of subjects illustrating important economic trends and developments, including population, prices, employment and earnings, energy, manufacturing, transport, construction, international merchandise trade and finance.

Vol. LXIV - No. 10, October 2010

This month, the following tables, which are featured in the MBS on a quarterly or annual basis, are presented along with the regular recurrent monthly tables: Retail price indices relating to living expenditures of United Nations officials; Civil aviation traffic: passenger km and cargo net ton km; Total exports and imports by countries or areas: volume, unit value, terms of trade and purchasing power of exports, in US dollars.

For more information: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mbs>

Discussion papers

Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects

The monthly briefing No. 25 was released on 12 November and emphasizes that surges in private capital flows pose challenges to emerging economies and enhance tensions over currencies. It also addresses the deeper fiscal austerity measures in European countries, particularly in the United Kingdom. In addition, the Briefing highlights that industrial production growth is slowing worldwide, a sign that the global economic recovery will weaken further in the remainder of the year. Finally, it stresses that the heavy floods in Central and West Africa threaten food security.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/esa/policy/publications/dpad_wespmbn.html

Comings and Goings

Comings

The following staff members were promoted in November:

Odd, Anderson, Statistician, Statistics Division

Madhushree Chatterjee, Senior Programme Officer, Strategic Planning Unit, Office of the Under-Secretary-General

Gabriela Guevara, Budget Assistant, Capacity Development Office

Leah Kennedy, Public Information Assistant, Development Policy and Analysis Division

Joshua Kneidl, Information Systems Officer, Statistics Division

Clare Menozzi, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division

Romain Perez, Sustainable Development Officer, Division for Sustainable Development

Yacob Zewoldi, Chief of Section, Statistics Division

Goings

The following staff members retired in November:

Marcela Guimaraes, Administrative Assistant, Executive Office

Calendar

December

65th session of the General Assembly

- Second Committee
5 October - December
<http://www.un.org/ga/second/>
- Third Committee
5 October - December
<http://www.un.org/ga/third/>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Cancun, Mexico, 29 November - 10 December
<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

18th Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on MDG indicators

Geneva, 30 November-2 December
<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Capacity/Geneva.htm>

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

3 December
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

Forest Day

Cancun, Mexico, 5 December
<http://www.forestsclimatechange.org/ForestDay-4.html>

2010 GAID Global Forum and Annual Meeting

Abu Dhabi, 5-6 December

<http://www.un-gaid.org/>

CARICOM Regional Workshop on Population and Housing Census Data Editing

St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, 6-11 December
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/newsletter/globalstat_unsd_calendar.htm

Expert Group Meeting on the United Nations e-Government Survey 2012: Towards a More Citizen-Centric Approach

New York, 6-7 December
<http://www.unpan.org/Events/BrowseEventsbyCalendar/tabid/94/mctl/EventDetails/ModuleID/1532/ItemID/1646/language/en-US/Default.aspx?selecteddate=12/6/2010>

Regional preparatory meeting for the West Asia region

Doha, Qatar, 9 December
<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/amr/index.shtml>

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) follow up

New York, 14 December
<http://www.unpan.org/dpadm/wsisfollowup>

International Human Solidarity Day

20 December
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/intldays/IntSolidarity/index.html>

January

9th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests,

New York, 24 January - 4 February
<http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html>

DESA News is an insider's look at the United Nations in the area of economic and social development policy. The newsletter is produced by the Communications and Information Management Service of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with DESA Divisions. DESA News is issued every month. Please click [here](#) to send inquiries.