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Feature Articles and Webcast

Rio+20: from environment to sustainable development

To grasp the background and stakes of Rio+20, it is useful to have a look at the Stockholm-to-Rio continuum of the Conferences, and to go through some key milestones in the long march that gave birth to international agreements on sustainable development. How did we move from Environment to Sustainable Development, what are the consequences of this move, and where are we going now?

1972 – Principles and Institutions

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held from 5–16 June in Stockholm, Sweden, was the first major international meeting addressing environmental issues in the context of human development. The Conference adopted a Declaration of 26 Principles. Principle 5 stated that “non-renewable resources of the Earth must be employed in such a way as to guard against the danger of their future exhaustion and to ensure that benefits from such employment are shared by all mankind.” The Meeting adopted an «Action Plan for the Human Environment” and led to the foundation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as to the establishment of Environment departments. The world counted barely 10

ministries of environment in 1972 and ten times more a decade later. Two Heads of Government have attended the Conference: Prime Ministers Olof Palme of Sweden and Indira Gandhi of India, who famously declared that “Poverty is the worst form of pollution.”



1987 – Agenda for Action and Sustainable Development

The World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Norwegian Premier Gro Harlem Brundtland, was convened by the UN General Assembly in 1983 to formulate a long-term agenda for action. Its final report, entitled Our Common Future, introduced and popularized the concept of sustainable development to meet today’s needs without threatening the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs. The Brundtland Report stressed that “a world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes.”

1992 – The Earth Summit

The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held from 3-14 June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It culminated in its three last days with the Earth Summit attended by 108 Heads of State and Government. The Summit adopted a set of 27 principles entitled the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Principle 15 called for a precautionary approach to protect the environment under uncertainty. The Summit also adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive action plan to implement sustainable development. Significant binding Conventions on climate change (UNFCCC) and biodiversity (CBD) were open to signature in Rio and later came into force for the States who ratified them. The Summit called for the negotiation of a convention on desertification and drought, adopted a non-binding Statement of Forest Principles and recommended that the General Assembly establishes a Commission on Sustainable Development to monitor post-UNCED progress. Nearly 20,000 people took part in the Conference and Summit, including various economic and social sectors of civil society, giving birth to a new multi-stakeholder implementation paradigm. The Summit had enormous media coverage.

1994-1997 – Follow-up Conferences

In 1994 in Barbados, a global conference attended by 125 States and territories (46 of which were small island developing States and territories) adopted the United Nations Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, also called Barbados Programme of Action. A special session of the UN General Assembly called Earth Summit +5 was held in New York from 23 to 27 June 1997 to appraise implementation of Agenda 21, and other commitments made at the Earth Summit and adopted a “Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.” Based upon the Earth Summit Forests Principles and a chapter of Agenda 21, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established in 2000 the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), a subsidiary body aimed at promoting “the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end”.

2002 – Review and sectorial plans

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg (South Africa) to review the results of UNCED a decade later and reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development. Attended by nearly one hundred world leaders, it adopted a Declaration and a Plan of Implementation including agreements on oceans and fisheries protection, sanitation, freshwater, energy and poverty. The Johannesburg process also initiated a new type of voluntary

multi-stakeholder initiatives called “Partnerships for Sustainable Development.” Some 300 such partnership agreements were launched during the Summit. Participation of the civil society was also massive.

2005-2007 – Adoption of non binding instruments

An international meeting was held in Mauritius in 2005 to review the Barbados Programme of Action. The 129 participating Member States unanimously adopted the “Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.” After years of intense negotiations, the 7th Session of the UN Forum on Forests adopted in 2007 the “Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests”, the first international instrument for sustainable forest management ever adopted by UN Member States.

2012 – Rio+20 – Focus areas and voluntary commitments?

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June 2012, aims at bringing about real change by setting a new development agenda and galvanizing progress towards a sustainable future — the Future We Want. The Conference focuses on two themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the institutional framework for sustainable development. The Conference will adopt an outcome document expected to notably highlight seven areas needing priority attention, including decent jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster preparedness.

Following the strides made on poverty eradication through the Millennium Development Goals, Rio+20 is expected to agree to defining sustainable development goals that would mobilize the international community, promoting action and monitoring progress. At Rio+20, governments, major groups and other civil society sectors, including business and industry, are also expected to launch new voluntary commitments and initiatives for sustainable development which will be compiled in a registry of commitments as part of the legacy of the Conference. More than 50,000 people are expected to participate to the Conference and over 500 side events are planned.

For more information:

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.html>

Euro zone debt crisis: a danger for the global economy

A report entitled «World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2012» notes that despite some scattered signs of improvement in recent months, the global economic situation is still challenging. Projections are revised downwards as compared to forecasts presented in the WESP 2012 Report in January. Global employment remains the most pressing challenge. The report will be launched on 7 June.

Released by UN DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD), the WESP report notes that the debt crisis in the euro area (especially in Greece) remains the biggest threat to the world economy. An escalation could trigger severe turmoil in the financial markets and a sharp rise in global risk aversion, leading to a contraction of economic activity in developed countries.



Following a marked slowdown in 2011, WESP warns that global economic growth will likely remain tepid in 2012 with most regions expanding at a below-potential pace. A further sharp rise in energy prices may also stifle global development.

Four major weaknesses continue to conspire against robust economic recovery:

- i) Deleveraging by banks, firms and households, which continues to restrain normal credit flows and consumer and investment demand;
- ii) Unemployment remains high, a condition that is both cause and effect in preventing economic recovery;
- iii) Fiscal austerity responses to rising public debts deter economic growth and make a return to debt sustainability all the more difficult; and

iv) Bank exposures to sovereign debt perpetuate fragility in the financial sector, which in turn spurs continued deleveraging.

Even if further deepening and spreading of the debt crisis in the euro area can be avoided, economic activity in the European Union is expected to stagnate in 2012.

The jobs crisis continues

Global employment remains the most pressing challenge. Employment-to-population ratios remain below 2007 levels, except in Brazil, China and Germany.

In the United States, despite recent improvements, the unemployment rate remains well above pre-crisis levels, at over 8 per cent. In the euro area, it increased to a historic high of 10.9 per cent in March 2012. It reached alarming heights in the debt-ridden euro area countries: in Spain it had jumped to 24.1 per cent in March 2012 (up 8.6 in 2007), 21.7 per cent in Greece (up from 8), 13.5 in Portugal (up from 8.5), and 14.5 per cent in Ireland (up from 5). In developing countries, in contrast, employment rebounded more strongly.

Policy recommendations

Breaking out of the vicious cycle of continued deleveraging, rising unemployment, fiscal austerity and financial sector fragility requires more concerted and more coherent efforts on several fronts of national and international policy making.

On the fiscal front, it is essential to change course in fiscal policy in developed economies and shift the focus from short-term consolidation to robust economic growth with medium- to long-run fiscal sustainability. Premature fiscal austerity carry the risk of creating a vicious downward spiral, with enormous economic and social costs.

Fiscal austerity has already pushed many European countries further into recession. This is particularly relevant for the debt-ridden euro area economies. Euro area countries have fallen back into recession, following fiscal retrenchment over the past two years. Clearly, the efforts at regaining debt sustainability through fiscal austerity are backfiring in low growth and high unemployment.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/index.shtml> (The report details economic forecast region by region)

“The old model is broken. We need to create a new one”

“Worldwide, more than 400 million new jobs will be needed over the next decade. That means that policy-makers must get serious, now, about generating decent employment,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the high-level thematic debate on The State of the World Economy and Finance and its Impact on Development, held on 17 May. “It is time to recognize that human capital and natural capital are every bit as important as financial capital,” he added.



The event lasted two days and was organised around four thematic roundtable discussions, each focusing on different issues, such as combating unemployment, debt sustainability and managing inflation, improving trade and investment, and increasing transparency and predictability in the financial sector. It was organised to attract heads of governments, finance ministers, as well as heads of organizations, regional and central banks, so that they can share experience and offer views on ways to resolve the economic crisis and improve global financial situation. Set up as an informal setting, the high-level debate encouraged a lively exchange of differing ideas on global economic and financial issues. “Let us face the facts: the old model is broken. We need to create a new one – a new model for dynamic growth,” said Ban Ki-moon.

In his opening statement, Mr. Ban particularly emphasised the importance of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to establish sustainable development goals that build on the Millennium Development Goals after 2015, and especially the framework for more sustainable consumption and production. “This is the moment for world leaders to rise above their differences; the moment to show political will and true global leadership. The choice is between the crises of yesterday – or the

opportunities of tomorrow. This is a once-in-a-generation moment. Let us seize it.”, said Mr. Ban in conclusion of his remarks.

Among the speakers at the event were the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso; the President of Columbia University, Joseph Stiglitz; Paul Volcker, the former head of the United States Federal Reserve; Ahmad Mohamed Ali Al-Madani, President, Islamic Development Bank; Haruhiko Kuroda, President, Asia Development Bank, and the Deputy Secretary-General of OECD, Rintaro Tamaki.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/66/Issues/worldfinancialcrisis/wfec.shtml>

Global Dialogue on Development

What is going to happen in Rio?

Rio+20 side events (13-22 June): More than 500 side events organized by Governments, Major Groups, UN system and other international organizations are scheduled, some are expected to be attended by Heads of State or Government.

Rio+20 Voluntary Commitments (13-22): Because Rio+20 is a conference about implementation, all participants at the Rio+20 conference and various side events are encouraged to make voluntary commitments to deliver concrete results for sustainable development. Commitments are invited from various stakeholders businesses, other Major Group organizations, associations, academic institutions, philanthropic organizations, UN entities, partnerships involving more than one stakeholder, and Member States.

Third Meeting of the Rio+20 Preparatory Committee (13-15 June): This will be the final round of negotiations on the Outcome Document before its adoption by the official Conference. The document entitled “The Future We Want” includes the following components: an introduction on “Our Common Vision”, and chapters respectively entitled “Renewing Political Commitment”, “Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”, “Institutional framework for sustainable development,” “Framework for action and follow-up” and “Means of Implementation”.

Sustainable Development Dialogue Days (16-19 June): At the invitation of Brazil, civil society representatives, including from private sector, NGOs, scientific community and other major groups will convene to discuss ten topics (poverty, crises, unemployment/migrations, patterns of production/consumption, forests, food, energy, cities/innovation and oceans. The resulting recommendations will be conveyed directly to the world leaders present at the Summit.

Partnerships Forum (20-22): five high-level sessions designed to offer an opportunity for Governments and other stakeholders to showcase best practices, practical experiences and concrete contributions in implementing sustainable development. The sessions address entrepreneurs/grassroots, food/health, gender, partnerships brokering and partnerships’ contribution to “The Future We Want.”

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (20-22 June): 20 years after the 1992 Earth Summit, world leaders, along with thousands of participants from the private sector, NGOs

and other groups, will gather to shape how the world can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection. They will secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges.

For logistical information on Rio+20 events:
<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/logistics.html>

NGOs to obtain consultative status with ECOSOC

The 2012 Resumed Session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) took place from 21 to 30 May in New York.

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations is a standing committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established by the Council in 1946. It reports directly to ECOSOC, and the two reports of its annual regular session (usually at the end of January) and resumed session (in May) include draft resolutions or decisions on matters calling for action by the Council.

The main tasks of the Committee are:

- The consideration of applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by NGOs;
- The consideration of quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs in General and Special categories;
- The implementation of the provisions of Council resolution 1996/31 and the monitoring of the consultative relationship;
- Any other issues which the ECOSOC may request the Committee to consider.

This session aimed to consider new applications for status by NGOs and applications deferred from earlier sessions. It also reviewed quadrennial reports of NGOs in general or special consultative status. The Committee is expected to meet again on 8 June 2012 to adopt its report of the session. This session’s recommendations will be sent to the Economic and Social Council for its approval in July 2012.

For more information: <http://csonet.org/?menu=105>

Impact of the ‘Doctrine of Discovery’ on indigenous peoples

The concluding session of the 11th Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues addressed the “Doctrine of Discovery” issues, on 18 May in New York.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues concluded its eleventh session with the approval of a set of nine draft recommendations, highlighted by a text approved on the special theme, the ongoing impact of the Discovery Doctrine on indigenous peoples and the right redress. That fifteenth century Christian principle was denounced throughout the session as the “shameful” root of all the discrimination and marginalization indigenous peoples faced today.

The Permanent Forum noted that, while such doctrines of domination and “conquest”, including terra nullis and the Regalian doctrine, were promoted as authority for land acquisition, they also encouraged despicable assumptions: that indigenous peoples were “savages”, “barbarians”, “inferior and uncivilized,” among other constructs the colonizers used to subjugate, dominate and exploit the lands, territories and resources of native peoples.

According to the text, signs of such doctrines were still evident in indigenous communities, including in the areas of health; psychological and social well-being; conceptual and behavioural forms of violence against indigenous women; youth suicide; and the hopelessness that many indigenous peoples experience, in particular indigenous youth.

In his closing remarks, Grand Chief Edward John, Chairman of the Forum, welcomed the adoption of the recommendations, saying it was indeed necessary to redress the many issues that had emerged over the years the doctrine had been in place. There was a pressing need for indigenous peoples to rediscover and to celebrate their own cultures and heritage. The challenge now was to enter a new area in which the effects of the doctrine of discovery did not continue to be felt by indigenous peoples in the countries in which they lived, he said.

For more information: <http://goo.gl/vTS9j>

Trends and Analysis

A more flexible classification for time-use statistics

An expert group meeting will take place in New York from 11-13 June to finalize the Trial International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS).

The purpose of the trial classification is to assist countries interested in embarking on time-use studies by providing the structure of a classification which could be adapted to national circumstances and facilitate international comparisons. This trial international classification can be used by both developing and developed countries in their time-use surveys.

Classification of activities for time-use statistics was first flagged at the 28th session of the Statistical Commission in 1995. By 1997, the UN Statistics Division had convened its first expert group meeting to prepare a draft classification.

Based on the experience of countries who used or adapted this classification, as well as on recommendations from a second expert group meeting organized in 2000, a revised version was issued and published in the 'Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use: Measuring Paid and Unpaid Work (United Nations, 2005)' entitled 'UN Trial International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS)'.

This June expert group meeting, organized by the UN DESA's Statistics Division, will bring together around 20 national and international experts to discuss and agree on several topics including:

- the updates of the current categories;
- the consistency of ICATUS with the new international standards classification;
- the treatment of more complex aspects (categories such as "looking for work" or "waiting");
- the mapping (correspondence tables) between ICATUS and other existing classifications.

The final agreed classification will be presented to the UN Statistical Commission for endorsement in 2013, after review by the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications.

For more information: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/newsletter/globalstat_unsd_calendar.htm

Gaps in the rights of the elderly

An expert group meeting centered on the gaps in the human rights of the elderly will be held in New York from 29-31 May.

The meeting, hosted by UN DESA Social Policy and Development Division and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, will debate the nature of gaps in international human rights provisions relating to the rights of older persons and identify the protection measures required to address them.

Attended not only by the expert delegates themselves, the meeting is open to representatives of Member States and civil society organizations as observers and aims at informing the debate from a substantive human rights perspective by addressing urgent and relevant gaps in the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights of older persons. More specifically, the meeting aims to debate the nature of gaps in international human rights instruments as they relate to the rights of older persons, in particular normative gaps, and to identify protection measures required to address them.

Outcomes from the expert group meeting will feed into the third working session of the General Assembly open-ended working group on ageing. The third working session will continue to focus on strengthening the protection of human rights for the elderly and will be held from 21-24 August 2012.

For more information: <http://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/>

Youth and employment part of a sustainable future

The first Youth Forum took place on 4 May under the theme "Creating a Sustainable Future: Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities".

"Young people are the future of our societies. As such, they should also be part of solutions," the Vice President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Luis Alfonso de Alba, told participants at the first Youth Forum, hosted by ECOSOC. "Creating a sustainable future means empowering youth with better job opportunities – and it means giving young people a voice."

The forum, whose theme is "Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities," brought together young delegates and entrepreneurs, students and representatives of youth non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Participants took part in two interactive dialogues, the first one focusing on education and training, and the second on the creation of green jobs and the

conditions needed to create them. In her address to participants, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro stressed that youth are mobilizing like never before and that their ideas can help countries achieve their sustainable development objectives.

Currently, young people are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. In Europe nearly one in four young people are out of a job, and in North Africa and the Middle East youth unemployment is almost 30 per cent, the highest worldwide. Mr. de Alba highlighted that in addition to a high rate of unemployment, it is important to look at underemployment and vulnerable employment, as many young people are on precarious short-term contracts, or trapped in low-skill and poorly paid jobs.

The Forum was attended by youth representatives from around the world as well as Member States, representatives from the private sector, the academic community, and civil society organizations that are engaged in youth issues. Key messages and recommendations arising from the Forum will be presented at the Rio+20 Conference in June, and the Council's own High-Level Segment in July.

The event was organized by DESA (Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination in collaboration with Division for Social Policy and Development) and the Department of Public Information (UN Academic Impact).

More collaboration with the Economist Intelligence

A Seminar on the Economist Democracy Index methodology took place 24 April with Mr. Robert Wood, Senior Editor of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

The Economist Intelligence Unit offers forecasting and advisory services to its clients. It provides country, industry and management analysis worldwide. It is particularly well known for its monthly country reports, five-year country economic forecasts, country risk service reports, and industry reports.

In this event, hosted by the UN DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), Robert Wood presented the main features of the methodologies used by the EIU team for assessing and rating country risks and economic forecasts. He also explained how the political factors are taken into consideration on country analysis. This event was a great opportunity for the participants from the Division and other UN agencies to ask questions and exchange ideas. Mr. Wood expressed his intentions to further collaborate with the Division on public governance and also invited the EIU's team to consider e-government aspects in EIU's future analysis in regards to participatory governance and transparency.

Citizens' engagement in parliaments

DESA collaborated in a research project on citizen engagement of the oversight work of parliaments of Ghana, India and South Africa.

The research aims to explore how committees of parliaments utilize formal mechanisms of civil engagement to monitor public service delivery and strengthen accountability on public spending. It is conducted by the New York University's Wagner School of Public Service in collaboration with the Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM). Three teams of graduate students made field research in these countries in January 2012, and they shared their findings with the Division.

Research findings common to the three countries are:

- Public engagement often occurs through informal or ad-hoc channels and
- although principles of inclusion are enshrined in the countries' constitutions and laws, citizen engagement is difficult to track in public service oversight mechanisms.

The research also highlighted the role of civil society organization in bridging the gap between citizens and government, and how the Public Account Committees of Parliaments have very little interaction with the citizens.

The next steps in the DPADM /Wagner School collaboration will be the publication of a report of the findings and the launch of a new phase of research, an expanded research to include the countries with systems of government other than the Prime Minister-parliament, and an expanded research to include the representative function of parliaments, and focus on specific regions, including the Arab region.

Capacity development

Census software for more accessible data

'CensusInfo' is a central theme of UN DESA's Statistics Division's upcoming National Workshop from 25-29 June held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

CensusInfo is a platform for disseminating census data at various geographical levels. The workshop organized jointly by UN DESA's Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Cambodian National Institute of Statistics, will develop the national CensusInfo application with accompanying databases and customized features.

Fifteen professionals from the NIS will take part in the workshop which constitutes just one part of a broader series of national training workshops developed by UNSD. The workshop series is intended to build capacity and to put in place national CensusInfo applications for dissemination of population and housing census statistics using new technologies.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/newsletter/globalstat_unsd_calendar.htm#25-29June2012

Best practice on data dissemination

From 20-22 June, the Philippines will host a workshop dedicated to data dissemination and communication.

The workshop, part of a global series on the topic, has been organized under the broader umbrella of United Nations Development Account projects. This 3-days event will include discussions surrounding emerging trends overall, emerging trends in data exchange and data hubbing, strategies for web-based data dissemination, integrating statistical and geospatial information, the challenges associated with promoting data dissemination and lastly, emerging user needs and requirements.

The workshop will provide a forum for sharing national practices and experiences, provide a basis for assessing existing strategies and technologies used by national statistical offices and review innovative approaches and technological tools used to disseminate data.

Best practice shared through the course of the workshop, alongside ideas and recommendations generated through discussions will contribute towards the drafting of a technical report and/or the creation of a knowledge base on the UNSD website.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Dissemination/workshops/Dissemination_Philippines_w1/default.html

Boost of statistical systems in Arab countries

A Regional Seminar on International Trade Statistics, will take place 12-14 June 2012 in Amman, Jordan.

International statistical comparisons depend heavily upon a solid foundation of reliable, high-quality, trade statistics. The upcoming Seminar provides an important opportunity to share best practices and build the capacity of national statistical systems in Arab countries.

The regional seminar, a close collaboration between UN DESA's Statistics Division (UNSD), the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Department of Statistics of Jordan, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRI), will feature an opening statement and a roundtable discussion on future developments of international trade statistics.

It is expected the seminar will focus on the compilation of statistics surrounding international trade in services, and on linking trade and enterprise statistics in view of an increasing globalization of production of goods and services.

Lessons learned from the regional workshop on international trade in services statistics held in January 2011 will also be discussed alongside quality assurance and institutional arrangements and dissemination of statistics. For more information:

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

Presentation of Singapore's e-government strategy

On 27 April, the UN DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) had a presentation on Singapore's e-government.

A presentation on Singapore's e-government and e-governance strategy for the development highlighted Singapore's new coordination structure among government agencies in order to promote the whole of government approach and the citizen

centric service delivery. This presentation was made by the Government Chief Information Office (GCIO) of Singapore and his delegation of the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA). The participants learned how government engages other stakeholders including private sector, civil society and citizens at large for better coordination for the seamless services to meet citizen's needs most effectively.

Singapore ranked 10th in the e-government development index of the United Nations E-Government Survey 2012, and 2nd in e-participation index.

Publications and Websites

Technical reports



Launch on 7 June of the World Economic Situation and Prospects, Mid-2012

The latest report shows that despite some signs of improvement, the world economic situation and prospects continue to be challenging. After a slowdown in 2011, global economic growth will likely remain moderate in 2012, with most regions expanding at a below-potential pace. Due to restrained growth, the jobs crisis continues, with global unemployment still above its pre-crisis level and unemployment in the euro area rising rapidly.

The euro area debt crisis remains the biggest threat to the world economy. A worsening of the crisis would likely be associated with serious turmoil on financial markets and a sharp rise in global risk aversion, leading to a decrease in economic activity in developed countries, which would impact upon developing countries and economies in transition.

A further sharp rise in global energy prices may also have a negative impact upon global growth. National and international concerted policies should be put in place on many issues to break out of the vicious cycle of deleveraging, rising unemployment, fiscal austerity and financial sector fragility in developed economies. Breaking this cycle requires policy shifts away from fiscal austerity and towards more counter-cyclical fiscal stances oriented to job creation, which are better coordinated across the major economies and concentrated with continued expansionary monetary policies in developed countries, financial sector reforms and improved development assistance for low-income countries.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/publications/index.shtml>

Statistical compilations



Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and MBS Online

The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics has been released and presents current economic and social statistics for more than 200 countries and territories around the world. The Bulletin

contains over 50 tables of monthly and/or bimonthly, quarterly and annual data on a variety of subjects showing important economic trends and developments, including population, prices, employment and earnings, energy, manufacturing, transport, construction, international merchandise trade and finance.

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This month, the following tables, which are featured in the MBS on a quarterly or bimonthly basis, are presented along with the regular recurrent monthly tables: Retail price indices relating to living expenditures of United Nations officials, 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>



System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for WaterST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/100

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water, commonly referred to as SEEA-Water, is a framework for the organization of physical and economic information in support of water policy design and evaluation. The SEEA-Water is a subsystem of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which provides the internationally agreed framework for measuring the interactions between the economy and the environment in line with the concepts, definitions and classifications of the System of National Accounts.

After a thorough global consultation process, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) adopted the SEEA-Water. Along with its adoption, the UNSC also encouraged its implementation by the Member States.

The UNSC is a functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations that brings together the Chief Statisticians from the Member States. As such, the UNSC is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities, especially in setting statistical methodological standards and their implementation at the national and international level.



National Accounts Statistics: Analysis of Main Aggregates, 2010ST/ESA/STAT/SER.X/47

The publication is the forty-first issue of this publication and includes a summary of the main national accounting aggregates based on

official national accounts data from more than 200 countries and areas, covering 1970 through to 2010.

This issue also includes a section on the estimation methods used for compiling data and is prepared by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations in cooperation with national statistical offices. Tables include analysis of data on gross domestic product (GDP) by different structural components. They are classified into:

- 1) analysis of the level of total and per capita GDP;
- 2) analysis of the percentage shares of GDP by type of expenditure and gross value added by kind of economic activity;
- 3) analysis of economic development expressed in term of real growth of GDP and its components by type of expenditure and gross value added by kind of economic activity, and
- 4) analysis of price development reflected by implicit price deflators of GDP.



National Accounts Statistics: Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables, 2010, Part I, Part II, Part III, IV and Part V ST/ESA/STAT/SER.X/46

The publication contains detailed official national accounts estimates for 198 countries or areas of the World from 1999 to 2010. It is a valuable source of information on the state and structure of economies worldwide. The estimates for each country or area are presented in separate chapters and each country chapter also contains a write-up on the methodology and data sources used to compile the estimates. A summary of the SNA conceptual framework, classifications, definitions, is also included in the publication.

The publication contains statistics on gross domestic product by expenditure at current and constant prices and the relations among product, income, saving and net lending; value added by kind of activity at current and constant prices, and output, gross value added and fixed assets by industry; classification of consumption expenditure of general government, households, and non-profit institutions serving households according to purpose; production account through the financial account for the institutional sectors; and cross classification of gross value added by industry and institutional sector.

The time-series data can also be downloaded from <http://data.un.org/Explorer.aspx?d=SNA>



Populations and Vital Statistics Report, Series A Volume LXIV

The Population and Vital Statistics Report is now available in print. The report includes data for countries or areas based upon population size (total, male, and female) from the latest available census, and the number and rate of vital events (live births, deaths, and infant deaths) provided by national statistical authorities to the Demographic Yearbook of the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The publication also includes estimated mid-year population by major area and region for 2009 and 2010 which was prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Outreach material

Rio+20 Newsletter: Making it Happen

Volume 3, Issue 5 of the 'Rio+20: Making it Happen' newsletter includes two feature articles entitled 'Rio+20 Partnerships Forum: Seeking actions to build-up further cooperation' and 'Five more days to negotiate the Outcome Document: 29 May to 2 June' alongside information on registration for Rio+20, how to join the Rio+20 Dialogues, voluntary commitments, and much more.

For more information:

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/newsletter.html>

Enable Newsletter

The March issue of the 'ENABLE' newsletter is now available. ENABLE is prepared by the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (SCRPD) within UN DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development, with input from UN offices, agencies, funds and programmes, and civil society.

View full issue at:

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/newsletter/april2012.doc>

United Nations Youth Flash

The April issue of 'United Nations Youth Flash' is now available. UN Youth Flash is a service of the UN Programme on Youth to help keep the public informed about the work of the UN on youth issues. It is prepared with input from UN offices,

agencies, funds and programmes, and from youth organizations all over the world.

View full issue at:

<http://social.un.org/index/Youth/YouthFlashNewsletter/2012/May.aspx>

Working papers

Financial sector compensation and excess risk-taking—a consideration of the issues and policy lessons

This working paper assesses the ways in which the structure and scale of financial sector compensation can generate incentives for excess risk taking.

On balance, the asymmetries and skewed pay-off systems within the structure of financial sector compensation are widely believed to generate incentives for excess risk-taking. While illustrating this proposition with recent examples, the paper also argues that pay structures and scales may have interacted to increase the incentives for risk-taking. The increase in financial sector pay – especially variable pay – witnessed in major financial centres since the 1980s, likely served to strengthen their asymmetrical nature by increasing the size of gains relative to losses. Thus, pay structures and magnitudes need to be viewed together.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2012/wp115_2012.pdf

Financing small-scale infrastructure investments in developing countries

This working paper proposes a new approach for financing a frequently-neglected area in economic development, namely that of small-scale infrastructure. Small-scale infrastructure can be thought of as the “last mile” of infrastructure projects. While there is a need for more air and seaports, railroads and highways, in developing countries, these alone do not allow people and goods to reach their final destinations. Local feeder roads are needed to connect homes, farms and factories to the national transportation system. Likewise small crop bulking stations are needed to facilitate the storage of crops before they are sent to larger warehouses and processing facilities. Local markets are needed to provide the end of the retail distribution system. Small-scale power generators are needed to fill the gaps remaining in the national power grid. Small-scale processing facilities such as a powered hammer mills are needed to provide the first stage of processing for industrial value chains.

In most developing countries there is a shortage of long-term, local-currency financing for small-scale infrastructure projects at the local level. This working paper proposes the use of project finance as a means to attract financing from domestic banks and

institutional investors for small-scale projects. Donors can act as a catalyst by providing technical assistance to develop projects and credit enhancement to help overcome common challenges and attract commercial financing.”

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2012/wp114_2012.pdf

Mobile applications

UN CountryStats app: for iPhones and iPads (Download free of charge)

Adapted from the print version of the World Statistics Pocketbook, the UN CountryStats app for iPhones and iPads is available for download free of charge from the App store. Data on various key economic, social and environmental indicators for 216 countries and areas can be viewed in table format for each individual country, and comparisons of up to three countries at a time can be made, by indicator, and displayed as bar graphs.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?id=442>

Websites



ECOSOC new website

The Economic and Social Council launched a new website with multimedia content, graphics and useful resources about ECOSOC

upcoming events.

To browse: <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>

Launch of the Integrated Implementation Framework website

The Secretary-General will launch the website of the Integrated Implementation Framework (IIF): ‘Tracking Support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)’ at an informal meeting of the General Assembly on 6 June 2012 at 10:00AM in Conference Room 4 (NLB).

As a follow-up to the High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2010 and as announced by the Secretary-General at the G20 Leaders’ Session on Development in November 2010, the Secretary-General proposed an initiative to better track the commitments made in support of the MDGs. The IIF was endorsed by the United

Nations System Chief Executive's Board (CEB) and is currently being developed as a web-based tool. It will provide detailed information regarding the progress on commitments made at international forums and elsewhere towards the achievement of the MDGs. It will serve as a one-stop resource for policymakers, academics, researchers and civil society interested in what governments and the international community have done and are doing in support of the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. With less than three years left before the target year, the site will provide a reality check for all those involved and will hopefully assist in identifying remaining gaps.

The MDG Gap Task Force, which is chaired by DESA and UNDP and composed of agencies from the entire UN system and the OECD, has made significant progress in setting up the IIF in close collaboration with OICT.

Comings and Goings

Comings

Mr. Navid Hanif has been appointed to the post of Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, where he was Acting Director since September 2011 and also chaired the UN DESA Task Force on Peacebuilding.

In January 2010, Mr. Hanif became the Head of the newly established UN DESA Strategic Planning Unit and was also designated as the Secretary of the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs effective 1 August 2010.

During 2004-2009, he served as the Chief of the Policy Coordination Branch and led the process of designing and launching new functions of ECOSOC, particularly the Annual Ministerial Review.

In 2005, he was sent on a special one year assignment as a Principal Officer in the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General. He worked there as a member of the team for the 2005 World Summit, which adopted a number of new initiatives, including new functions for ECOSOC.

Before joining UN DESA in 2001, Mr. Hanif served for 6 years at the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN where he chaired and facilitated negotiations on a number of important resolutions, which led to the convening of major UN conferences.

Mr. Hanif holds Masters in International Political Economy from Columbia University, New York and Masters in English Literature from the Government College/University, Lahore.

The following staff members were also promoted in May:

Shaoling Chen, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Andres Campbell, Staff Assistant, Statistics Division

Daniel B. Eshetie, Associate Information Systems Officer, Statistics Division

Huanyu Liu, Economic Affairs Officer, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

Goings

The following staff member retired in May:

Mohan Peck, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Division for Sustainable Development

Calendar

June

Expert group meeting to finalize the Trial International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS)

New York, 11-13 June

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

Regional Seminar on International Trade Statistics for Arab countries

Amman, Jordan, 12-14 June

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

Regional Workshop on Data Dissemination and Communication

Manila, the Philippines, 20-22 June

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Dissemination/workshops/Dissemination_Philippines_w1/default.html

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Rio de Janeiro, 20-22 June

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.html>

United Nations National Workshop on CensusInfo for Cambodia

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 25-29 June

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

July

Substantive Session of ECOSOC

New York, 2-27 July

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>

International Day of Cooperatives

7 July

<http://social.un.org/index/Cooperatives/InternationalDayofCooperatives.aspx>

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.