DESA News

Newsletter of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Video

UN forum on indigenous issues calling for respect of values

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls Member States to promote development while respecting the values and traditions of indigenous peoples at the opening of the annual forum, held in New York from 19-30 April.

"The loss of irreplaceable cultural practices and means of artistic expression makes us all poorer, wherever our roots may lie," Mr. Ban told the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. This year's theme at the forum was "Development with Culture and Identity."

"I call on all governments, indigenous peoples, the UN system and all other partners to ensure that the vision behind the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples becomes a reality for all," the Secretary-General added.

http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/specialevents/2010/se100419am.rm?start=00:24:00&end=00:29:55 *(6 minutes)*

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Affordable transportation and safer use of chemicals

In developing countries, the lack of adequate transport infrastructure and affordable transport services contribute to poverty and pose major obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Similarly, the

increasing production and consumption of chemicals in those countries strain their capacity for sound management.

Both transportation and chemicals are essential for sustainable development in developing countries and thus both thematic issues will be on the forefront at the 18th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-18), which will take place from 3-14 May at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The review session will

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also focus on waste management (hazardous and solid waste), mining, and the 10 year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production.

Major obstacles to transportation

Inadequate transport infrastructure and lack of access to affordable transport services are often cited as factors that perpetuate poverty while posing major obstacles to countries' progress towards the achievement of the MDGs, particularly in rural areas. According to World Bank estimates, more than 1 billion people living in rural areas still do not have access to adequate transportation and 98 per cent of them are in developing countries.

Within the developing countries, rural communities are particularly affected by transportation problems. Physical isolation is a strong contributor to poverty and the marginalization of rural communities. Small-scale and subsistence farmers, women and children are particularly affected. A disproportionate burden is placed on rural women, especially those living in regions of sub-Saharan Africa, who spend a major part of the day in travel and transport just to meet household subsistence needs.

Rural roads are characterized by light traffic (fewer than 50 vehicles per day) and include engineered roads and bridges, as well as trafficable tracks and trails. The main purpose of people taking trips in rural areas is to buy provisions, sell crops/products, pursue education, process agricultural products, fetch water, collect fuel wood, access medical care, visit family and friends, commute to places of work and obtain official documentation. The most commonly used transport modes remain motorcycles, bicycles, barrows, carts, small boats and walking, often with goods loaded on the back or head. Owing to low population densities in remote rural areas, adequate public transport services are rarely available.

However, as demonstrated by the success of the large-scale rural roads project sponsored by the Government of India and the World Bank, basic rural transport infrastructure and services can significantly improve rural farm and non-farm incomes. The impact of rural road programmes on rural employment and income generation can be ensured through the use of appropriate technologies, local contractors, local workers and local materials. Disaster relief and food-for-work types of transport infrastructure project can also contribute to rural poverty reduction. For example, in Sri Lanka, through the Community bus project in Ratnapura district, people in three villages enjoy newer bus and improved road conditions as they continue to benefit from cheaper and more reliable access to the local school, health centre and market.

Transport and mobility are essential preconditions for sustainable development. Globally increased urbanization and motorization over the past several decades have resulted in an unprecedented rise in emissions, leading to degradation in living conditions worldwide and accelerating the process of climate change. Global population growth contributes further to these trends. Appropriate policy interventions can establish affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound transport systems.

It is crucial that multimodal systems emphasizing low-energy modes of transport are developed and that increased reliance is put on public transport systems. Transport is the largest end-use of energy in developed countries and the fastest growing one in most developing countries. Furthermore, adequate, efficient, and effective transport systems are important for access to markets, employment, education and basic services critical to poverty alleviation.

Chemical consumption increase demand for sound management

The increasing production and consumption of chemicals in developing countries and countries with economies in transition strain those countries' capacity for sound management of chemicals. Sound chemicals management is frequently given low priority in development plans and is consequently under-resourced. In developing countries, two of the major problems in terms of chemical usage for sustainable development are lack of sufficient scientific information for risk assessment, and lack of resources of assessment of chemicals for which data are at hand.

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One of the obstacles in reaching the goal of sound management of chemicals in developing countries is the widening gap in capacity between developed countries and others. For developing countries and countries with economies in transition, thus, one of the most important instruments for the prevention and control of illegal international traffic in chemicals is information-sharing.

While the responsibility to protect citizens from chemical risks rests mainly on national Governments, awareness of transboundary and global dimensions of the issues began to emerge by the early 1980s. These concerns were triggered by evidence of ozone depletion, the transboundary impact of acid rain and trade in hazardous materials, often to bypass strengthened regulations and restrictions in developed countries.

The possibility of dumping wastes in developing countries, many of which did not have appropriate technical, financial or institutional resources to manage the impact, led to a new round of action, this time at the international level, to regulate international trade in hazardous substances. Over time, these policy initiatives led to the incorporation of relevant provisions in trade agreements, and provisions for capacity-building, technological cooperation and information-sharing.

Countries need to make greater efforts to integrate fully the objectives of sound management of chemicals into national budgets and development cooperation. The link between chemical safety and sustainable development needs to be fully reflected in the funding decisions of bilateral development cooperation agencies.

In many instances, national legislation and policies on chemicals need to be reviewed, updated and strengthened. Where appropriate legislation is in place, there is a need to reinforce coordination mechanisms with international support and training on enforcement and compliance.

Recommendations

Integrated urban and rural transport planning, as well as supportive fiscal and regulatory policies, paired with the development of new technologies and greater international cooperation, are key factors for achieving a transport sector that meets the requirements for sustainable development.

In the field of chemicals management, national legislation and policies need to be updated. Lack of public awareness of potential health and

environmental risks and lack of resources and human capacity to manage and reduce risks are challenges of increasing urgency. There is also an urgent need to strengthen cooperative action on emerging policy issues such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, and e-waste to achieve a sustainable chemical sector.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd18.shtml

E-government to create opportunities for all

The current global financial and economic crisis is putting tremendous pressure on governments to do more with less. Although financial markets stabilized in 2009 due to massive and internationally coordinated government intervention, the real economy is still in a state of shock with high rates of unemployment and tremendous squeeze on government revenues in many countries. E-government – once a bold experiment and now an important tool for public sector transformation – has progressed to the point where it is now a force for effective governance and citizen participation, both at national and local levels.

With the Millennium Development Goal time horizon of 2015 quickly approaching, it is no longer a question of whether we can afford information and communications technology in health, education, environmental protection and a multitude of other areas, but where to deploy them first and how rapidly gains can be realized.

The "2010 United Nations e-Government Survey: Leveraging e-government at a time of financial and economic crisis" presents various roles for e-government in addressing the ongoing world financial and economic crisis. The public trust that is gained through transparency can be further enhanced through the free sharing of government data based on open standards.

The United Nations global survey of e-government presents a systematic assessment of the use and potential of information and communication technology to transform the public sector by enhancing transparency, efficiency, access to public services and citizen participation in all countries and at all levels of development. By studying broad patterns of e-government around the world, the report identifies leading countries in e-government development. It also suggests a way forward for those

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that have yet to take advantage of its tremendous power.

E-government at times of financial and economic crisis

Governments are deploying new information and communications technology in response to the global financial crisis. The effect of the crisis on the public sector has been profound. For governments, currently, the most critical issue is how to rebuild trust in a system of financial weaknesses and governmental responses that have proved so highly untrustworthy. Electronic government technologies have the potential to deliver creative options for policy-making processes as well as for the debates that surround them. E-government can act as a means of enhancing the capacity of the public sector, together with citizens, to address particular development issues.

According to the survey, the watchword of e-government is 'citizen-centric practice'. For a country to be assessed favorably in relation to other countries, there needs to be solid evidence of an approach to e-government development that places citizens at the centre. On-demand access to information, services and social networks on the Internet through a personal computer is no longer considered cutting-edge in developed regions but a norm that many people take for granted.

The same may soon be true of the more advanced middle income countries. Cellular telephones and personal digital assistants have the potential to play the same role for developing countries if governments are able to come to terms with the changing face of technology and innovate with a citizen-centric mindset. For example, alerts sent through short message services ('text messages') are being used to notify citizens that a request for assistance has been processed.

The value of e-government will increasingly be defined by its contribution to development for all. Citizen-centricity, inclusiveness, connected government, universal access and use of new technologies such as mobile devices are the benchmarks against which electronic and other innovative forms of public service delivery will be assessed.

E-service delivery and the MDGs

The world economic crisis has savaged government finances. The situation calls for greater agility, efficiency and reach of public services, especially in

the sectors of health, education, gender, environment and employment, which are important in their own right and central to achievement of the MDGs.

Poverty eradication is one of the most urgent and compelling development goals. The World Bank estimates that an additional 53 million people in developing countries will fall into poverty on top of the 130 million to 155 million who became poor due to the impact of the food and oil crisis in 2008. Therefore, enhancing employment opportunities is an important and urgent issue for the international community.

E-service delivery can contribute to efforts to address poverty, employment and the impacts of the financial and economic crisis. Governments can provide online public information services to job seekers and online vocational and technical training and entrepreneurial skills development for those who have lost or are at risk of losing their job as well as to vulnerable groups.

In addition, they can provide ICT-based assessment, tracking and monitoring of the activities of the unemployed through the various parts of the employment services system, which is useful in the current situation. These potential solutions need to be innovative and geared towards pro-poor services for poverty eradication and employment, especially in rural areas, where the majority of populations in developing countries live.

Women and e-government

Including women in economic development is an issue high on the current agenda of the international community. Access to the labour market has much to do with economic empowerment for women. Women are often in vulnerable employment and overrepresented in insecure, part-time and short-term jobs, including particularly, in the agricultural sector. As regards to women's unemployment, the MDG Report 2009 highlights its critical importance and notes that the crisis may hold back progress towards

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gender equality by creating new hurdles to women's employment.

E-government can be effectively leveraged for women's economic empowerment and employment in the crisis. Employment-related e-government solutions include online provision of information on job opportunities for women, in particular for women who can use skills for the global digital economy beyond the limits of their local economy; online skills training for female jobseekers; and online distance learning.

E-government can also enhance information service delivery for much-needed women's economic empowerment. It can help women to weather the crisis by disseminating information on income-generating opportunities, and by alerting women to other relevant information services.

Women need information about microenterprise loans and other forms of capital for female entrepreneurship, as well as local, regional and global market information and market pricing information. Indeed, uninterrupted flows of microfinance are key to the economic empowerment of women, especially in a time of decreased lending.

E-government can provide information about financial and other forms of assistance provided by governments, international donors and nongovernmental organizations. In addition to these information services, women need to know about online business training and support for women-headed microenterprises, online marketing assistance and online financial services.

A number of conditions would facilitate the delivery of information to women, including: public access like mobile Internet kiosks, especially in rural areas; free access to training on the use of technology; technological solutions that promote targeted access to women, such as voice recognition for people with little or no formal education, graphic interfaces and touch screens; and the provision of information that rural women in developing countries need in an accessible language and format.

Further recommendations

Short of devaluing currencies or defaulting on public debt, governments are finding themselves with few options as they try to balance diminished revenues and increased expenditures. E-government can play there a very important role. Just as technology has always been an important determinant of productivity in the broader economy, so too is the application of

information technology in the rate and quality of public service delivery. In a time of economic stress, improved communications and faster response times can make a critical difference to those most at risk.

For example, social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, as well as blogging software and mobile technology, allow governments to tap into the collective knowledge of society quickly and directly. In this way, citizens move from being passive consumers of government services to advisers and innovators contributing ideas that are in better accord with their individual and group needs.

Global collaboration is needed to succeed. With the leadership of United Nations Member States, e-government can become a global priority, creating opportunities for all.

For more information:
http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/global_reports/10report.htm

Global dialogue on development

Focusing on transport, chemicals, waste, mining and consumption

Achieving green growth through better management of materials throughout their life cycle will be central to this year's session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-18) that will take place in New York from 3-14 May

The Commission starts a new two-year cycle that will review themes of waste management, transport, chemicals, mining, and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production. It will also discuss sustainable development in Small Island Developing Countries.

Transport

Transport is the largest end-use of energy in developed countries and the fastest growing one in most developing countries. Furthermore, adequate, efficient, and effective transport systems are important for access to markets, employment, education and basic services critical to poverty alleviation.

However, current patterns of transportation development are not sustainable and may compound both environmental and health problems. There is, therefore, a need for urgent action, ranging, inter alia, from the promotion of integrated transport policies and plans, the accelerated phase-out of leaded gasoline, the promotion of voluntary guidelines and the development of partnerships at the national level for strengthening transport infrastructure, promoting and supporting the use of non-motorised transport and developing innovative mass transit schemes.

During the Commission's ninth session in 2001, countries agreed that international co-operation is required in order to ensure transport systems support sustainable development. Countries stressed the importance of efficient and affordable transport systems for poverty alleviation and the need to mitigate adverse externalities to health and the environment. Support for greater use of public and non-motorized transport was expressed.

Chemicals

A substantial use of chemicals is essential to meet the social and economic goals of the world community, and these can be used with a high degree of safety when best practices are followed. Two of the major problems, particularly in developing countries, are lack of sufficient scientific information for the risk assessment, and lack of resources of assessment of chemicals for which data are at hand.

Gross chemical contamination, with grave damage to human health, genetic structures and reproductive outcomes and the environment, has been continuing within some of the world's most important industrial areas, and restoration will require major investment as well as the development of new techniques.

This session thus will focus on expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks, harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals, and prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products among others.

Solid and hazardous waste

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, Governments reaffirmed the importance of solid waste management. They called for priority attention to be given to waste prevention and minimization, reuse and recycling. They also called for the development of environmentally sound disposal facilities, including technology to convert waste into energy.

"Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes" is crucial for sustainable energy efficiency. Effective control of the generation, storage, treatment, recycling and reuse, transport, recovery and disposal of hazardous wastes is, according to Agenda 21, "of paramount importance for proper health, environmental protection and natural resource management, and sustainable development."

The session will try to preventing or minimizing the generation of hazardous wastes as part of an overall integrated cleaner production approach; and eliminating the export of hazardous wastes to countries that prohibit such imports among other objectives.

Solid wastes include all domestic refuse and non-hazardous wastes such as commercial and institutional wastes, street sweepings and construction debris and, in some countries, human wastes. Hazardous waste is frequently intermixed

with other waste, posing particular management challenges.

Mining

Minerals are essential for modern living, and mining is still the primary method of their extraction. To date, it appears that the main constraints to sustainability in the mining sector derive from the ever-increasing demand for mined resources, the consumption of resources (mostly energy and water) needed to extract and process metals, and the increasing pollution generated by the extraction process.

This holds true for both large-scale, often multinational corporate, operations as well as for small-scale or artisanal ventures. Mining will, therefore be a focus of CSD deliberations and one of the five themes reviewed during CSD-18/19 biannual cycle.

Partnerships Fain and Side Events

The Partnerships Fair will provide registered "Partnerships for Sustainable Development" with the opportunity to showcase progress, network, identify partners, and create synergies between complementary initiatives and finding opportunities for replicability and scaling up.

As CSD-18 will review progress in the areas of Transport, Chemicals, Waste Management (Hazardous & Solid Waste), Mining, and the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption & Production Patterns, the Secretariat is particularly encouraging partnerships working in these areas to take advantage of the CSD Partnerships Fair activities to share their experiences.

Side events sponsored by major groups, governments, UN agencies and other international bodies have already an established place at the sidelines of the official meetings of CSD.

The side events provide an informal opportunity for a broader exchange of information, experience and diverse views, and will be organised during the lunch and evening breaks of the 18th session of CSD.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd18.shtml

Addressing vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States

CSD-18 SIDS Day on 10 May will serve as prep com for the Mauritius Strategy +5 High-level Review in September 2010

In accordance with UN General Assembly Resolutions, a high level meeting is to be convened during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly to carry out a five-year review of the progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI).

The high-level event is preceded by three regional review meetings, one for each of the SIDS regions. The outcomes of these review meetings will inform SIDS Day during CSD-18, which will serve as the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the high level review in September 2010.

SIDS Day will also consider progress towards the sustainable development of SIDS within the framework of the thematic cluster under review by the Commission.

The Secretary-General's Report "Review of Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy" (E/CN.17/2010/9) will be presented at SIDS Day. The objective of the report is to provide an initial global synthesis of the national and regional MSI+5 reviews, in order to inform deliberations of member States at the SIDS Day during the 18th session of the Commission for Sustainable Development. Based on the recommendations expressed by member States, a refined report will be submitted for the consideration of Member States at the 65th session of the General Assembly in September 2010.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_sids/sids_csdspecdayipm_18.shtml

Securing commitment to sustainable development

First Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD 2012) will be held from 17-19 May in New York

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At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, the international community adopted Agenda 21, an unprecedented global plan of action for sustainable development. Ten years later, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation was adopted highlighting concrete steps for better implementing Agenda 21. However, the progress has been slow in achieving internationally agreed goals, and challenges remain in achieving the goals of the three pillars of sustainable development, particularly in the context of the current global crises.

On 24th December 2009 the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution A/RES/64/236, agreeing to hold the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in 2012 - also referred to as 'Rio+20' or 'Rio 20'.

The Conference will aim at securing renewed political commitment to sustainable development, assessing the progress and implementation gaps in meeting already agreed commitments, and addressing new and emerging challenges.

The Member States have agreed on the following two themes for the Conference: green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction, and institutional framework for sustainable development.

The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee will discuss the substantive themes of the Conference and pending procedural matters, and will also elect the Bureau.

The Conference will bring together a range of participants, including heads of State and Government, national delegates and leaders from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses and other major groups to focus the world's attention and direct action toward addressing difficult challenges our planet is facing, including reducing poverty, conserving our natural resources, overcoming financial and economic crisis.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/rio20/index.shtml

High demand for consultative status of NGOs

2010 Resumed Session of NGO Committee will be held in New York from 26 May to 4 June to examine

applications for consultative status and consider reclassifications and quadrennial reports

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is a standing committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established by the Council in 1946. The main tasks of the Committee are the consideration of applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by NGOs, the review of quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs in General and Special categories and the implementation of the provisions of Council resolution 1996/31 and the monitoring of the consultative relationship.

The Committee 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.

At the 2010 resumed session, the Committee will have before it 104 new applications from NGOs seeking consultative status with ECOSOC and 145 deferred applications, as well three reclassifications. The Committee will also consider 214 quadrennial reports from NGOs in Special and General consultative status.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/

Rural women are critical to poverty reduction

On 22 April, the Economic and Social Council convened a Global Preparatory Meeting for both its Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) to be held during the Council's 2010 substantive session

Chaired by the President of the Council, H.E. Mr. Hamidon Ali (Malaysia), the morning session focused on the theme of the AMR: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women", and featured a panel discussion on the issue of "Who feeds the world in 2010 and beyond?--Rural women as agents of change and champions of global food security".

The meeting was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development,

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with support from the World Food Programme and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as well as a number of other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Panelists included H.E. Ms. Florence Chenoweth, Minister of Agriculture of Liberia, Ms. Carol Kramer-LeBlanc, Director for Sustainable Development, Office of the Chief Economist, United States Department of Agriculture, Ms. Myrna Cunningham, Director, Center for Indigenous People's Autonomy and Development and Ms. Carmen Griffiths, Coordinator, GROOTS, Jamaica, and was moderated by Ms. Marcela Villarreal, Director, Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The meeting highlighted the critical contribution of rural women to poverty reduction, food security and economic and social development. Panelists stressed that, on a global scale, women make up a substantial proportion of the agricultural workforce and produce more then half of all the food being grown. It was noted, however, that they face tremendous challenges; women farmers often suffer from ill health, have less access to land and financial resources, experience limitations on their mobility outside of their homes, and are often not included in community-level decision making or in decision making within producers' organizations.

Panelists underlined the fact that gender equality and women's empowerment is no longer purely a moral issue. Their increased access to resources such as land, credit, technology, training and marketing can lead to improved agricultural productivity and production. Women's education was underscored as a critical prerequisite. Increases in incomes and overall improvements in women's lives in turn have an immediate positive impact on the well-being of household members, particularly on the nutritional status and education of children.

The panel called the Council's attention to the need for concrete, priority actions to support the role of rural women as major stakeholders and agents of change. In particular, it urged the development of appropriate legal frameworks and a policy environment that allows tapping into the agricultural productivity potential of this critical 50% of the overall population.

Other highlighted recommendations included the adoption of a comprehensive approach to rural women's empowerment that addresses access to resources, safety nets, health education and the issue of violence against women in an holistic fashion; to promote country-led investment plans in agriculture that prioritize women, including their specific technological needs; to adopt cross-cultural planning tools that can help address and integrate women's needs and their ethnical diversity into policy-decision; to make visible the contribution of rural women's to the economy by ensuring gender-sensitive collection and desegregation of data; to ensure rural women's participation and representation in all policy decisions regarding agriculture and food security; and to develop a strategic agenda and adequate government institutions that can effectively promote gender equality and empowerment of women. The adoption of these recommendations were pivotal for strengthening the role of women in agricultural development.

The afternoon session focused on the preparation of the second biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) of ECOSOC to be held end of June in New York as part of this year's high-level Segment. The objective of the event was to brief Member States on the preparatory process and expectations for the 2010 DCF. Representatives from Austria and Finland informed about preparatory High-level Symposia with the objective to promote principles for more accountable and transparent development cooperation.

Delegates underscored the forum's unique value as a multi-stakeholder forum for global dialogue on the effectiveness and coherence of development cooperation. Its scope should go well beyond calling for development actors to honour their commitments, notably by focusing on other aid management issues, the real impact of aid and a renewed partnership for development around MDG8 and its sub-goals in a changing environment and post-crisis context. The SG Report to the DCF is in preparation and a synthesis report on the mutual accountability review undertaken in collaboration with UNDP will be available shortly.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/gpm2010.shtml

www.un.org/esa/desa

Towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment

54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women was held in New York from 1-12 March

Thousands of government officials and representatives from civil society and the media converged at UN Headquarters in New York to assess what progress has been achieved, since the historic Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the comprehensive global policy framework to achieve the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women – covers twelve critical areas of concern: women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl-child.

The contributions of senior UN Officials, including the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary-General of DESA, the President of ECOSOC and the Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, placed strong emphasis on implementing commitments and ensuring that all opportunities would be seized in 2010 to give new impetus to the promotion of gender equality and women's enjoyment of their human rights. The Commission was also introduced to the new Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict by the Secretary-General.

The event allowed Member States, along with representatives of non-governmental organizations and many UN entities, to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the Platform for Action in a series of high-level round tables and interactive panel discussions, and in many parallel events organized by Member States, entities of the UN system, and civil society. The participation of civil society was impressive, with 3440 representatives from 463 NGOs from all regions of the world attending.

On 2 March 2010, the Commission adopted a Declaration on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, in which Governments reaffirmed the Platform for Action and pledged to undertake further actions towards its full implementation. The Declaration represents a strong political message to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Commission also adopted seven resolutions. They cover the following areas: women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS; the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts; the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women; women's economic empowerment; eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity through the empowerment of women; ending female genital mutilation; and strengthening the institutional arrangements of the UN for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women by consolidating the four existing offices into a composite entity.

Moderator's summaries for all panel discussions highlight main issues and recommendation, and four of these will be transmitted to the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review. This outcome will also contribute to the High-Level Plenary on the MDGs that will be held in September 2010 in the context of the 65th session of the General Assembly.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html

www.un.org/esa/desa

Trends and analysis

Improving environment statistics

Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators will be held in Geneva from 3-4 May, jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and DESA's Statistics Division

The Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators has been established to foster collaboration of national statistical offices and environmental ministries and agencies in the improvement of environment statistics. The meeting will review the Guidelines on the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

The meeting will discuss the indicators revised on the basis of the conclusions of the first meeting and will consider further indicators for revision based on countries' experience with their application. It will also look into the possibility to include new indicators to fill in gaps in the coverage of some of the priority subject areas.

For more information: http://unece.org/stats/documents/2010.05.environ.htm

Third Parliamentary Forum on Shaping the Information Society

The forum will discuss ICT and the Global Economic Crisis: Current Situation and Future Perspectives in Geneva from 3-5 May

The event, co-organized by DESA, IPU and ITU through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament will focus on key issues relevant to the crisis recovery such as the investments in high-speed Internet networks, e-government and competitiveness and social and economic costs of cybercrime. It will also discuss liberalization of telecommunication and ICT markets and promoting competition and national responses to regulation challenges.

The outcome is expected to support the Parliamentary Forum to better delineate the political role and responsibilities of parliaments in their legislative and oversight functions on the above issues, to identify good parliamentary practices and to draw recommendations for action by legislatures.

For more information: http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/ICT10.htm

Improving collection and dissemination of statistical data

Conference on Data Quality for International Organizations will be held in Helsinki from 6-7 May

The Conference will be held immediately after the Q2010 European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Helsinki, 4-6 May 2010) under the auspices of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA). Eurostat and DESA's Statistics Division are organizing this fourth CCSA conference dedicated entirely to quality issues, which will be hosted by Statistics Finland.

The purpose of the conference is to provide statistical experts from international or supra-national organizations with a forum to discuss specific data quality issues related to their work and exchange experiences regarding the various quality mechanisms developed for improving the collection and dissemination of data.

The main focus of this year's conference will be on how international support for the development of national quality assurance frameworks can be provided, therefore, the discussions will also reflect upon the programme review on National Quality Assurance Frameworks carried out by Statistics Canada for the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission (see document E/CN.3/2010/2).

For more information: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/cdqio-2010.htm, and http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2010.htm

Challenges in implementing the Mauritius Strategy

Inter-regional Meeting on the Mauritius Strategy +5 Review will be held in New York on 8 May

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The purpose of the meeting is to provide a forum for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to evaluate in the Pacific, AIMS and Caribbean regions national and regional challenges in implementing the Mauritius Strategy.

The meeting will also discuss common priorities for action and finalize a global synthesis report for consideration by CSD-18, acting as the preparatory committee for the high-level review of the Mauritius Strategy in September 2010. Major groups are invited to nominate representatives to the Inter-regional Meeting.

The review meetings held in the Pacific, AIMS and Caribbean regions produced three regional synthesis reports. These regional reports are based on National Assessment Reports by SIDS, as well as inputs from UN Agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-SIDS countries and major groups.

For more information:
http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/interregional_meeting.shtml

Coordinating geographic information management

Second Preparatory Meeting of the Proposed United Nations Committee on Global Geographic Information Management will be organized by DESA's Statistics Division in collaboration with the UN Cartographic Section in New York on 10-11 May

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and initiate the preparation of a report, for the approval of ECOSOC, on global coordination of geographic information management, including the consideration of a possible creation of a United Nations global forum for the exchange of information among countries and other interested parties.

The meeting will also focus on sharing best practices in legal and policy instruments, institutional management models, technical solutions and standards, interoperability of systems and data, and sharing mechanisms that guarantee that geographic information and services are easily and timely accessible.

Bringing together official representatives from member countries as well as representatives from relevant professional organizations, the meeting will

also offer the possibility to the participants to discuss the terms of reference and the modalities of work for the global forum and the Committee of Experts.

For more information:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/meetings/10-11_may2010/

Evaluating censuses for the 2010 World Programme

Workshop on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses: Census Evaluation and post Enumeration Surveys, for Countries in the ESCAP Regions will be held in Bangkok from 10-14 May

DESA's Statistics Division, in collaboration with UNESCAP, is organizing a Regional Workshop for countries in the region on census evaluation in the context of the 2010 World Programme for Population and Housing Censuses.

The purpose of the workshop is to present an overview of the various methods of evaluating censuses with a focus on the post enumeration survey (PES) methodology. More specifically, the workshop will cover elements of the PES with regard to planning and implementation, frames and sample design as well as methodologies for evaluating content and coverage errors. It will also cover matching procedures, imputation of missing values and tabulation and dual system of estimation.

The workshop will also offer the possibility to the participants to present and discuss the experience of their countries on different aspects of census evaluation and the post enumeration survey.

For more information:
http://unstats.un.org//unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/default.htm

Supporting the Word Summit on Information Society

Internet Governance Forum, Multistakeholder Advisory Group and WSIS meetings will be held in Geneva from 10-14 May

IGF Planning Meeting

A planning meeting of the Internet Governance Forum will take place from 10-11 May, preparing the programme of the fifth annual IGF Meeting to be held in Vilnius Lithuania on 14-17 September 2010.

Open to all interested stakeholders, the meeting will focus on the selection of workshops and their relationship with the main sessions. More than 80 workshop proposals have been submitted to the IGF Secretariat.

Meeting of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG)

The main task of this meeting on 12 May is to review the MAG's functioning and to make proposals for improvements in view of a possible renewal of its mandate.

WSIS Forum 2010

On 12 May, DESA will convene the Fifth Facilitation Meeting on Implementing the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. Participants will exchange information and discuss progress in implementing 3 of the 11 WSIS Action Lines:

- Action Line C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICT for development;
- Action Line C7. ICT Applications – eGovernment; and,
- Action Line C11. International and regional cooperation

The purpose of the Fifth Facilitation Meeting, which is open to all stakeholders from the public and private sectors, civil society, and international organizations, is to inform participants of the meetings on the respective sub group's activities and to provide a platform to exchange information and experiences.

The meeting will also identify the proprietary areas for implementation within the Action Lines and create synergies among different stakeholders for more effective knowledge sharing and collaboration in order to ensure the implementation of WSIS at the international, regional and national levels.

For more information: http://www.intgovforum.org/ *and* http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2010/forum/geneva/

Furthering the partnership between DESA and OECD in e-Government

In recognition of the United Nations E-government Survey, DPADM/DESA was invited by OECD to participate in the OECD Workshop on E-Government Indicators that took place on 29-30 March at the OECD Headquarters in Paris

The United Nations E-Government Index is the official OECD indicator for global e-government readiness in the OECD publication *Government at a Glance 2009*. The workshop deliberations resulted in support for the development of a framework for the second stage e-government indicators that support policy-making, especially back-office indicators, performance (outcomes and outputs) indicators, and economically-oriented indicators.

The participants highlighted the need to fine-tune the framework and the methodology, and to adopt a commonly agreed upon terminology. Subsequent to the meeting, DESA through DPADM accepted an invitation by OECD to become a Member of the newly established virtual taskforce of e-government indicators specialists.

For more information: http://www.unpan.org/DPADM/MajorPublications/UNEGovernmentSurvey/tabid/600/language/en-US/Default.aspx

www.un.org/esa/desa

Capacity development

Analyzing census data

Egypt National Seminar on Census Data Analysis will be held in Cairo from 17-19 May

The main objective of the seminar is to provide an opportunity for the staff members of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), in collaboration with the Cairo Demographic Center and Cairo University, to further collaborate on the analysis of data from the 2006 census in Egypt on selected topics.

The seminar will cover an overview of calculation of the wealth index, gender analysis and use of the CensusInfo software for data presentation and dissemination. After the seminar, participants are expected to produce thematic analytical reports, based on analysis generated during the seminar.

For more information:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/default.htm

Developing economic statistics

Seminar on the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Western Asia Region will be held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman from 23 to 26 May

The System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA) is an updated version of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA). It is the fifth version of the SNA, the first of which was published over fifty years ago.

The 2008 SNA was prepared under the auspices of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA), which consists of five organizations: the Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), DESA's Statistics Division and regional commissions of the United Nations Secretariat and the World Bank. The 2008 SNA is published jointly by these five organizations.

DESA's Statistics Division, in collaboration with the UNESCWA and the GCC Secretariat, is organizing this regional seminar to help develop a programme for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) for countries in the ESCWA region. The seminar is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman.

The purpose of the seminar is to initiate the formulation of an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics with the objective of developing comparable economic statistics for member states in the ESCWA region as a whole to monitor the integration of their economies. It is expected that this initiative would lead to a multi-year programme to move the countries over to the 2008 SNA and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics.

For more information:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/sna2008.asp

Providing e-services to governments

Meetings with delegations from Governments of Oman, Norway and Columbia to discuss e-government activities

Meeting with a delegation from the Government of Oman

The ongoing activities of the Government of Oman in delivering e-services and the ranking of Oman in the United Nations E-government Survey were the topics of a meeting between a delegation from Oman and DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) on 14 April.

The Omani Delegation was led by the Chief Executive Office of the Information Technology Authority (ITA), Dr. Salim Sultan Al Ruzaiqi, while Ms Haiyan Qian led the DPADM team.
The Government of Oman noted that the United Nations e-Government Survey was one of the instruments used in their pillar of "Global ranking" within their national policy to promote investment within the country.

DPADM presented the methodology of the 2010 UN Survey as well as a proposed plan of action to support the Government. The Government of Oman agreed with DPADM's plan of action and requested

an advisory mission to take place at the end of June 2010.

Meeting with Norwegian Government Delegation

A high-level delegation from Norway of 20 government officials came to the United States for a Study Tour to examine the United States' e-government strategies, policies and e-services and met with the Director and the e-Government Branch to share their e-government activities and to learn more about the United Nations e-Government Survey.

In the pilot dissemination of statistical data of the 2010 Survey on the Divisional website, Norway was ranked 6th globally as compared to 3rd in the 2008 Survey. There are two specific reasons why Norway dropped slightly in the rankings, namely: lower e-participation and transaction services as compared to the upper echelon countries such as the Republic of Korea, the U.S. and Canada.

After a presentation by the Director, the delegation from Norway observed that their own assessment of their e-government services and participation closely matched the results of the 2010 Survey. In addition, they also noted that their Government lagged behind in terms of mobile services.

On the positive side, Norway was ranked 7th globally in the online service index, which indicates that its national portal and ministry sites had a wealth of information for its citizens as well as numerous e-services. As a high-income country, Norway benefited from its investment in infrastructure, education and e-services. Its Internet penetration and broadband access of users was one of the highest in the world.

As part of the dialogue, DESA, through DPADM, and the Delegation from Norway agreed in principle to cooperate and to provide possible technical advisory services to developing countries on e-government issues.

Meeting with the Director of the e-Government Programme in Colombia

At the request of the Government of Columbia to the Director, the e-Government Branch were assigned to meet with the Director of the e-Government Programme in Colombia, Ms. Diana Parra Silva, who requested DESA's cooperation in the field of e-government development.

The following cooperation possibilities have been requested: DESA to assist the Government of Colombia (GoC) in developing their next e-Government Strategic Plan, Capacity Development and training activities to enhance vision, processes and direction setting for e-government development in Colombia. The GoC requested DESA to plan a diagnostic mission to address the issues above and confirmed that they already have funds that would be made available for the development of these activities.

They also suggested a meeting between Mr. Sha, Under-Secretary-General of DESA and the Minister responsible for Information and Communications during Mr. Sha's visit to Colombia from 22-26 March. It was noteworthy that Ms. Parra Silva said at the end of the meeting: "we do not need money; we need your brains". DPADM has already submitted talking points for this meeting to the Under-Secretary-General.

For more information:
http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/

www.un.org/esa/desa

Publications and websites

Technical reports

United Nations E-Government Survey 2010

The survey on the theme "Leveraging e-government at a time of financial and economic crisis" presents various roles for e-government in addressing the ongoing world financial and economic crisis. The public trust that is gained through transparency can be further enhanced through the free sharing of government data based on open standards. The ability of e-government to handle speed and complexity can also underpin regulatory reform.

While technology is no substitute for good policy, it may give citizens the power to question the actions of regulators and bring systemic issues to the fore. Similarly, e-government can add agility to public service delivery to help governments respond to an expanded set of demands even as revenues fall short. Since the last edition of the survey, in 2008, governments have made great strides in development of online services, especially in middle-income countries.

The costs associated with telecommunication infrastructure and human capital continue to impede e-government development. However, effective strategies and legal frameworks can compensate significantly, even in least developed countries. Those who are able to harness the potential of expanded broadband access in developed regions and mobile cellular networks in developing countries to advance the UN development agenda have much to gain going forward.

For more information:
http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/global_reports/10report.htm
To download:
http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un-dpadm/unpan038851.pdf

Statistical compilations

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.

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Quarterly and bimonthly features in this issue:

18. Fuel imports, developed economies: unit value and volume indices; value
19. Indicators on fuel imports, developed economies
30. Registration of new motor vehicles
37. External trade conversion factors
39. Manufactured goods exports: unit value indices, volume indices and value
51. Selected series of world statistics

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

2007 Energy Balances and Electricity Profiles

The publication contains energy balances for 118 developing countries, showing energy production, trade, conversion and consumption for each fuel used in the country; and electricity profiles for 194 countries, providing detailed information on production, trade and consumption of electricity, net installed capacity and thermal power plant input for selected developing and developed countries.

This publication is a source of overall consumption statistics of energy commodities in all sectors and of detailed information on production, trade and

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consumption of electricity, net installed capacity and thermal power plant input and efficiency.

For more information:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?id=417
To order: https://unp.un.org/Details.aspx?pid=19952

Outreach material

Population Facts

Four facts sheets were published by DESA's Population Division in March and April. Details are provided below.

The first, *Speeding Progress on the Millennium Development Goals*, highlights the role that family planning could play in helping achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Providing family planning is a cost effective solution to achieving the MDGs. There is considerable scope for expanding family planning programmes, particularly in least developed countries where there are high levels of unmet need for contraception which are the result of barriers to accessing supplies and services.

Health Workers, International Migration and Development, is the second of the fact sheets. It outlines the shortage of heath workers that exists in many countries. These shortages are particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa and, within countries, are experienced primarily in rural areas. A significant proportion of health workers in OECD countries are immigrants and emigration is contributing to shortages of health workers in some developing countries. However, the fact sheet points out that these shortages are not due primarily to migration of heath workers. Codes of practice in the ethical recruitment of health workers, particularly by developed countries, are discussed.

The Age Distribution of Deaths is the third of the fact sheets and provides an overview of how the pattern of death by age is changing. In high- and upper-middle-income countries, 78 per cent of deaths occur at age 60 or over and 40 per cent at age 80 or over. In sharp contrast, just 35 per cent of deaths in low-income countries occur at age 60 or over and the proportion at age 80 or over is a low 9 per cent. In low-income countries, there are almost as many deaths among children as among the elderly. As countries develop there is a shift in deaths from

communicable diseases, which are most likely to affect the young, to non-communicable diseases, which occur primarily at older ages.

The fourth fact sheet, *Sex Differentials in Mortality*, reviews data on the differentials in mortality between males and females. In most countries, male mortality is higher than female mortality at all ages and male life expectancy is lower than female life expectancy. In Africa, the differences between female and male mortality are smaller, and although both sexes suffer from very high mortality risks male mortality is higher. Excess female mortality, particularly among children, is high is some parts of the world such as China and India. Male mortality is especially high relative to that of females in Eastern Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/population/
To download:
http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts_2010-1.pdf
http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts_2010-2.pdf
http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts_2010-3.pdf
http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/popfacts_2010-4.pdf

www.un.org/esa/desa

Comings and goings

Comings

The following staff members were promoted in April

Shaoling Chen, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Claire Fellini, Editorial Assistant, Division for Sustainable Development

Meriam Gueziel, Senior Staff Assistant, Office of the Under-Secretary-General

Joscelyn Jones, Research Assistant, Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination

Valerian Monteiro, Dektop Publishing Assistant, Development Policy and Analysis Division

Dolores Tanpinco, Technical Cooperation Assistant, Division for Public Administration & Development Management

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Calendar

May

Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators
Geneva, 3-4 May
http://unece.org/stats/documents/2010.05.environ.htm

Third Parliamentary Forum on Shaping the Information Society
Geneva, 3-5 May
http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/ICT10.htm

18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development
New York, 3-14 May
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd18.shtml

Conference on Data Quality for International Organizations
Helsinki, 6-7 May
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/cdqio-2010.htm

Inter-regional Meeting on the Mauritius Strategy +5 Review
New York, 8 May
http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/interregional_meeting.shtml
CSD-18 Small Island Developing States Day
New York, 10 May
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_sids/sids_csdspecdayipm_18.shtml

Second Preparatory Meeting of the Proposed UN Committee on Global Geographic Information Management
New York, 10-11 May
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/meetings/10-11_may2010/

Workshop on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses
Bangkok, 10-14 May
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/default.htm

First Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development
New York, 17-19 May
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/rio20/index.shtml

Egypt National Seminar on Census Data Analysis
Cairo, 17-19 May

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/default.htm

Seminar on the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Western Asia Region
Muscat, Oman, 23-26 May
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/sna2008.asp

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
New York, 26 May – 4 June
http://esango.un.org/paperless/Web?page=static&content=committee

June

Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with NGOs, civil society and private sector
New York, 14-15 June
http://esango.un.org/irene/index.html?page=viewContent&nr=7222&type=8&section=8

2010 Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council
New York, 28 June – 22 July
http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/

Observances

International Day of Families
13 May

This year's Day focuses on the impact of migration on families around the world. It highlights both positive aspects of migration for the well-being of families and challenges faced by family members who either migrate or are left behind in countries of origin. The panel discussion, organized by DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development and the Department of Public Information, will focus on policies and initiatives supporting migrants and their families such as those promoting family cohesion and family reunification. The observance of the Day will also serve as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of the existing instruments protecting migrants and their families as well as the role of civil society in support of pro-family migration agenda.

For more information:
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/idf10.html

www.un.org/esa/desa

www.un.org/esa/desa