

Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of ECOSOC

Overview of ECOSOC Milestones

ECOSOC achievements

- **Supporting implementation through review and follow-up:**
 - ECOSOC served an important role in assessing progress, through its Annual Ministerial Review and National Voluntary Presentations, on implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.
 - By convening a biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum, ECOSOC reviews trends, strategies, policies and financing of development and thereby strengthens the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations.
 - ECOSOC's role in follow-up and review of global development progress was strengthened by the creation of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) meeting under its auspices and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The HLPF meets under the auspices of ECOSOC on an annual basis to provide political guidance on implementation and follow up, and review progress on the 2030 Agenda and to support achievement of the SDGs by 2030.
- **Addressing the diversity of the world's sustainable development challenges:** ECOSOC serves to advance sustainable development for all through the work of the Council and the entire ECOSOC system – the functional and regional commissions, committees, and expert bodies – that provide normative, substantive and operational inputs to shaping the development agenda.
- **Engaging financial and trade institutions:** By convening High-level Meetings with the Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO and UNCTAD, ECOSOC engages the global multilateral financial institutions in support of the United Nations development agenda.
- **Advancing the humanitarian policy agenda:** Since 1998, the ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment has been addressing challenges, operational and normative progress on the humanitarian policy agenda. This involves coordinating the United Nations response to natural and man-made disasters.

The Segment supports greater coordination, inclusiveness, inter-operability and effectiveness.

- **Supporting transitions from conflict to peace and development:** ECOSOC has a long-standing mandate to strengthen the development-humanitarian nexus. This includes its launch, in 2002, of Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries Emerging from Conflict, which contributed to calls for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2006. ECOSOC hosts the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, which provides support and advice to Haiti's socioeconomic recovery, reconstruction and stability.
- **Responding to the global HIV/AIDS epidemic:** Established in 1994 by an ECOSOC resolution and launched in 1996, UNAIDS – the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS – leads the global response to fighting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. UNAIDS works with partners from many sectors of society and, uniquely for an international organization, includes associations of people living with HIV/AIDS in its governance and programmes.
- **Putting women at the heart of development efforts:** The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was one of the first functional commissions created within ECOSOC. Under the leadership of an all-female bureau, CSW has played a significant role within the United Nations intergovernmental system for drawing attention to women's rights. The work of CSW has resulted in a number of important declarations and conventions that protect and promote the human rights of women, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW (1979).
- **Connecting development and human rights:** The Human Rights Commission was one of the first functional commissions created within ECOSOC. It met for the first time in January 1947 and was charged with drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Commission was later transformed, in 2006, into the Human Rights Council.
- **Enhancing partnerships:** The annual ECOSOC Partnerships Forum brings together a wide range of stakeholders from government, the UN system, business, foundations, civil society and academia to promote partnerships in support of implementation of the United Nations development agenda.
- **Engaging civil society:** Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter, ECOSOC has been the gateway for civil society organizations to engage with the UN. Civil society has been central to progress on international economic, social

and environmental cooperation at the UN, from the small but critical number of organizations present at the founding conference in San Francisco in 1945, to the current 4,200 NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status.

- **Giving youth a voice:** Launched in 2012 and working closely with the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the ECOSOC Youth Forum remains the central annual platform inviting youth to voice their concerns, priorities and ideas in response to GLOBAL development challenges.
- **Convening ad hoc meetings on global emergencies:** The convening of ECOSOC ad hoc meetings, and events, such on the Food and Economic Crises in Post-Conflict Countries, or, on Ebola, have supported the global response to multilateral emergencies and crises.

Brief History of the Economic and Social Council

Creation

ECOSOC was created by the United Nations Charter in 1945 and established as one of the six principal organs of the [United Nations](#). The Council was mandated to offer direction to, and provide coordination of, the economic, social, cultural and related activities of the United Nations, with responsibility for advancing international economic and social cooperation and development. In particular, it was vested with the promotion of:

- ❖ higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
- ❖ solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems, and international cultural and educational cooperation; and
- ❖ universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

The first meeting of the Council was convened from 23 January to 18 February 1946, in London, UK, with Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar (India) as its first President.

Evolution of the ECOSOC system

A recurrent theme in deliberations of Member States on development over the past 70 years has been how to make the individual parts of the Organization work together effectively. This quest for improved coordination has become even more critical over time as the volume and scope of activities of the UN has grown. In 1945, in the aftermath of World War II, it was initially envisioned that development among Member States would best take place in well-defined and specific thematic or sector areas. This thinking

influenced the original design of the UN, which came to be organized around functional lines as a decentralized system, each with its own governance structure, fully accountable for the activities of the respective organization.

In response to the growing need for coordination, ECOSOC has expanded both in the scope, coverage of and impact of its work. The ECOSOC system is fundamental to the fulfilment of the Council's mandates. The system has continuously been enriched by the establishment of new subsidiary bodies in response to global trends and challenges.

These include its functional commissions, of which six were created in the first year of ECOSOC's existence in 1946, in the areas of statistics, population, social development, status of women, narcotic drugs and human rights (the latter evolving in 2006 into the Human Rights Council). Additional functional commissions have been created during the last decades, on crime prevention (1992), forests (2000) and science and technology for development (2002).

Furthermore, the ECOSOC regional commissions have continued to work towards specific and integrated responses to regional development challenges and priorities. The Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Europe (ECE) were created in 1947, followed by the Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1948. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia were established in later decades, respectively in 1958 and 1973.

The United Nations funds and programmes have a reporting relationship to ECOSOC. A number of them were established during the founding years of the organization, such as UNICEF in 1946, and others were created later on, such as UNDP in 1965, or more recently, in the case of UN WOMEN in 2010.

Similarly, ECOSOC has a relationship with the United Nations specialized agencies. Article 63 of the UN Charter stipulates that the Council may coordinate the activities of the specialized agencies through consultation with, and recommendations to, the agencies and through recommendations to the General Assembly and Members States. The ECOSOC relationship with, for example, ILO, FAO, UNESCO or WHO, has continued 70 years, subsequently joined by others in later years, such as by UNIDO in 1966.

ECOSOC has also created other entities, such as UNAIDS, which has led, since 1996, the global response to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, illustrating the Council's ability to react to and address emerging issues and crises. In recent years, other bodies, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues established in 2002 have been added to the ECOSOC System.

ECOSOC also grew in membership. While the General Assembly originally elected 18 members of the Council, the Charter was amended in 1965 and again in 1974 to increase ECOSOC membership first to 27 and finally to 54 current members, with membership based on geographic representation.

ECOSOC has also supported engagement by stakeholders since its creation: the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations was established by the Council as a standing committee in 1946.

Adapting to change

From the signing of the Charter until the early 1990s, ECOSOC's functions did not change considerably. During the Cold War era, the United Nations was considered a neutral platform for providing technical assistance to the newly independent states at a time of growing geopolitical tension and superpower rivalry. This led to the creation of many new entities during the 1960s, such as UNDP, which added further complexity to the coordination functions of ECOSOC. By end of the 1960s, a wide range of UN bodies, including specialized agencies, regional commissions and other Secretariat entities, were engaged in development.

This rapid expansion of engagement led to calls for a system-wide thinking that could promote greater synergy and coordination. The complexity eventually reached a level that demanded concerted efforts to enhance coherence. A step change in the approach pursued by Member States to promote enhanced coordination by ECOSOC marked the 1990s. ECOSOC reformed several times during the 1990s and 2000s, most notably resulting in it being able to work more effectively on issues of coordinated follow-up and review as well as to convene special sessions to address urgent development needs.

Restructuring began with the creation of ECOSOC's five week single annual substantive session to take place in alternate years in New York and Geneva, starting in 1992. The ECOSOC substantive session was comprised of four distinct segments: a high-level segment, which included and still includes a high level policy dialogue with the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), a coordination segment, an operational activities for development segment, and a committee segment consisting of two committees, the Economic and Social Committees. In 1994 these committees were subsumed into ECOSOC's plenary meetings and the committee segment was renamed the general segment.

Revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

As part of a broader revitalization within the United Nations, in 1996 ECOSOC changed its discussion and review format, introducing panel discussions and interactive debates with experts and stakeholders. The Council also began convening special sessions to address urgent developments in the economic, social and related fields to provide guidance and coordination. The Council also developed focused dialogues on chosen themes with the funds and programmes, the regional commissions and the relevant specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the World Trade Organization.

The outcome of the High-level Segment evolved from a Chairman's summary to agreed conclusions in 1997, Ministerial Communiqués in 1998 and 1999 and then, beginning in 2000, a Ministerial Declaration, which continues to today. During the 2014 and 2015 sessions, there were joint Ministerial Declarations of the High-level Segment and High-level Political Forum.

Introduction of the Humanitarian Affairs segment

ECOSOC's Humanitarian Affairs segment was held for the first time in 1998 as a result of further United Nations reform. The segment addresses the United Nations coordinated response to natural and man-made disasters, including earthquakes and hurricanes, hazardous waste accidents, famines, armed conflicts, ozone layer depletion and climate change.

2005 World Summit: The Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum

The *2005 World Summit* called upon ECOSOC to ensure follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Council was mandated, beginning in 2007, to convene substantive Annual Ministerial Reviews, including National Voluntary Presentations, to assess progress, drawing on the analysis of its functional and regional commissions and other international institutions in accordance with their respective mandates. From 2007 to 2015, the AMR has drawn on a combination of global and regional reviews, thematic assessments, and national voluntary presentations (NVPs) to deliver on the UN development agenda. The 68 NVPs have exhibited best practices, lessons learned and the challenges in national implementation for the achievement of the United Nations development agenda.

The Summit also mandated ECOSOC to convene a biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) to review trends in international development cooperation, including strategies, policies and financing, promote greater coherence among the development activities of different development partners and strengthen the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations. The first DCF was convened at the high-level segment of ECOSOC in 2008 and was given further functions vis-à-vis the High-level Political Forum meeting under the auspices of the Council and the new ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum.

Building on these functions, ECOSOC has advanced an integrated, coordinated and unified approach to follow-up and review.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: the new era

The recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is founded on 70 years of United Nations engagement in advancing development. It represents a remarkable evolution in international cooperation since the Organization was established in the aftermath of World War II. The new Agenda also represents an accumulation and advancement of United Nations knowledge and experience in development from the late 1940s through to today.

The implementation of the new Agenda requires a universal response. All countries will need to monitor and report on progress, with the United Nations likely to be called upon by Member States to facilitate implementation at the global, regional and country levels.

ECOSOC's work in support of the implementation and follow-up and review of the new Agenda will be broad. It will include advancing a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through an annual main theme as well as addressing specific areas and issues, such as financing for development, humanitarian affairs and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. This will involve the ECOSOC system as a whole and include development stakeholders and actors.

ECOSOC at a Glance

1945:

- Establishment of ECOSOC by United Nations Charter

1946:

- ECOSOC convenes its first meeting from 23 January to 18 February 1946
- Creation of six functional commissions: Statistical Commission, Population Commission (later re-named the Commission on Population and Development), Commission for Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Commission on Human Rights
- The ECOSOC Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is established

1947:

- Establishment of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- Establishment of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

1948:

- Establishment of the Economic Commission for Latin America (renamed in 1966 the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC))

1958:

- Establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

1965:

- The UN Charter is amended to increase ECOSOC membership from 18 to 27

1973:

- Establishment of the [Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia \(ESCWA\)](#)

1974:

- The UN Charter is amended to increase ECOSOC membership from 27 to 54

1977:

- ECOSOC instituted shorter and more frequent subject-oriented sessions

1991:

- ECOSOC begins convening a single five-week annual substantive session consisting of a high-level segment, a coordination segment, an operational activities and development segment and a committee segment
- ECOSOC High-level policy dialogue with the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was created within the High-level Segment

1992:

- Establishment of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCD)
- Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

1996:

- ECOSOC introduced panel discussions and interactive debates with experts and stakeholders
- Creation of UNAIDS

1998:

- The first Humanitarian Affairs Segment is held

1999:

- Ministerial Declaration was created as outcome of ECOSOC's High-level Segment

2000:

- Establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)
- Establishment of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII)

2002:

- Establishment of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

2003:

- The convening of the first Special High-level Meeting of ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO and UNCTAD (ECOSOC Spring Meeting)

2005:

- The 2005 World Summit Outcome mandated ECOSOC to convene an Annual Ministerial Review, with National Voluntary Presentations, and a biennial Development Cooperation Forum; ECOSOC becomes the main platform for follow-up and review of major UN conferences and summits

2006:

- Replacement of the ECOSOC Commission on Human Rights by the UN Human Rights Council

2007:

- The first ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) was held during the High Level Segment
- The first National Voluntary Presentations were held as part of the AMR

2008:

- The first Development Cooperation Forum is held

2009:

- The first ECOSOC Partnership Forum is held
- Special Event on Food and Economic Crises in Post-conflict Countries

2012:

- The first ECOSOC Youth Forum is held

2013:

- The Commission on Sustainable Development is succeeded by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) convened under the auspices of ECOSOC and the General Assembly
- ECOSOC institutes the adoption of a system-wide annual main theme and a July-to-July work programme cycle
- Creation of the Integration segment
- Establishment of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti
- ECOSOC Special Meeting on “Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines”

2014:

- The first High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC is held
- The first Integration Segment is held
- ECOSOC Special Meeting ‘Ebola – A Threat to Sustainable Development’
- The first ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system is held

2015:

- Creation of the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Forum through the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development
- A wider perspective of whole system of ECOSOC, its functional commissions and expert bodies
- ECOSOC to facilitate integrated and coherent review and follow-up on internationally agreed development goals and to engage the wide range of stakeholders, especially non-state actors

Major ECOSOC Mandates

- [United Nations Charter](#) (1945): Chapter IX: “International economic and social cooperation” and Chapter X: “The Economic and Social Council”
- [A/RES/32/197](#) (1977): “Restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations System”
- [A/RES/45/264](#) (1991): “Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related field's”
- [A/RES/48/162](#) (1993): “Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields”
- [A/RES/50/227](#) (1996): “Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields”
- [A/RES/53/12B](#) (1997): “Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform”
- [A/RES/60/1](#) (2005): “[World Summit Outcome Document](#)”
- [A/RES/61/16](#) (2006): “Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”
- [A/RES/67/290](#) (2013): “Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development”
- [A/RES/68/1](#) (2013): “Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”
- [A/RES/70/1](#) (2015): “Transforming our world: the 2030