



Economic and Social Council

Commemoration of 70th Anniversary

Friday, 22 January 2016, 10am-1pm

ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York

Informal summary

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened a Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council to commemorate the 70th anniversary of its first meeting, on Friday, 22 January 2016 in New York. The Special Meeting shared insights on the past achievements of ECOSOC and offered directions on the way forward in the new era. Speakers included the Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Narendra Damodardas Modi, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Jan Eliasson, former Presidents of the Council and other stakeholders. The Special Event engaged high-level representatives of Member States and other stakeholders who have been involved with the Council's work.

ECOSOC was established as one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, created by the Charter in 1945. The Council was mandated to offer direction to, and undertake coordination of, the economic, social, and cultural activities of the United Nations, with responsibility for advancing international economic and social cooperation and development. The first meeting of the Council was convened on 23 January 1946, in London, United Kingdom.

The current focus of the Council includes support to the recently adopted United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with the integrated follow-up of the major UN conferences and summits. The new Agenda is built upon 70 years of United Nations engagement in advancing development. It represents a remarkable evolution in international cooperation and the accumulation of knowledge and experience in development since the Organization was established through today.

The Special Meeting yielded the following key messages and recommendations.

❖ *Milestones and perspectives*

- In the aftermath of the Second World War, ECOSOC was entrusted with advancing international economic and social cooperation and development. It has contributed significantly to the development of global norms and has grown and evolved. The Council has played a significant role in reviewing implementation of the United Nations development agenda, formulating policy recommendations and promoting policy dialogue.
- ECOSOC has a sufficient mandate from the United Nations Charter, yet there has been a lack of political will and means for it to live up to its full potential. Some challenges have included

ECOSOC's ambiguous role vis-a-vis the General Assembly, its limited resources and inability to convene senior officials from the national level.

- ECOSOC should be given full responsibility for the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR); its role should be one in which ECOSOC functions more strongly as a “board of boards”. The former ECOSOC National Voluntary Presentations should evolve into peer reviews supported by the regional commissions.
- The establishment in 2005 of ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum and Annual Ministerial Review National Voluntary Presentations, and the creation of the High-level Political Forum with its vital role in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, are key ECOSOC milestones.
- ECOSOC has led the way for engaging civil society and other stakeholders in the work of the UN. This should be deepened.

❖ *ECOSOC and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

- The breadth and depth of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, containing the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, requires new ways of working together for their implementation. ECOSOC has a pivotal role in support of the realization of the 2030 Agenda.
- The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs require Member States to formulate integrated policies addressing the economic, social, environmental and cross-cutting dimensions of sustainable development. There is a need to ensure synergies across multiple sectors. Policy integration to holistically address national and global development challenges should be at the center of ECOSOC'S work in providing guidance to Member States and UN system.
- The 2016 ECOSOC theme is “Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results”, which reflects the Council's commitment to addressing the tasks ahead. The entire ECOSOC system, including the functional and regional commissions, committees, and expert bodies, will need to be mobilized for the achievement of sustainable development. They will serve as a harmonized, coherent and effective platform for delivering concrete results.
- The High-Level Political Forum, meeting under ECOSOC's auspices, must consolidate its role as the global review platform for the SDGs, linking the global commitments to national action.
- The new ECOSOC forum on financing for development follow-up, created by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, will be convened for the first time in 2016. It will be an essential component of global review of results.
- Through the ECOSOC Dialogue, the Council has a vital role to spearhead intergovernmental deliberations on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system. The impact and effectiveness of development activities undertaken by the UN system can be increased considerably if implemented in a coordinated and integrated way.

- Measuring results will be key for realizing the 2030 Agenda. National implementation is the basis for follow-up and review. The national, regional and global levels will need to be linked and inter-connected. The ECOSOC regional commissions are well placed to facilitate these links.
- ECOSOC must deepen its engagement with Member States and other stakeholders to meet the growing expectations for transforming the world for the benefit of humankind. The Council will support enhanced partnerships with all stakeholders, within and outside the UN system. For example, ECOSOC’s Youth Forum serves as a notable example of advancing youth issues and engaging them in development dialogue.
- Further streamlining of ECOSOC’s work would be needed to ensure coherence and efficiency. ECOSOC could also be more responsive and nimble, increasing its effectiveness in responding to disasters and crises. A full-time Presidency is worthy of consideration, as it would allow the President to fully devote his or her time to furthering the work of ECOSOC in advancing the 2030 Agenda.
- The UN Secretariat will also need to rethink how to further align its main functions in support of the new Agenda. All intergovernmental processes serviced by the UN Secretariat will need to be coordinated in support of implementation, follow-up and review.