



2008 ECOSOC Coordination Segment –Panel IV

“Coherence: Strengthening the normative and operational link in the work of the UN on rural employment” – **Wednesday, 9 July, 10:00am – 12:30 pm**

Concept Note

Background

The UN conferences and summits have addressed a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting poverty and development and produced consensus on a rich body of norms to deal with these issues. The functional commissions of the ECOSOC have a critical role in translating this normative work, commonly referred to as the UN development agenda, into policies for their implementation and in reviewing and adjusting these policies to respond to emerging challenges. While this work provides substantive guidance to the work of the UN system for the implementation of the UN development agenda, it does not always translate into coherent and comprehensive programmes and operations of the UN funds, programmes, and specialized agencies. The coordination segment of the ECOSOC, which assesses the role of the UN system in promoting the implementation of the UN development agenda, provides an opportunity to strengthen the link between the normative and operational arms of the UN and further enhance UN system-wide coherence.

Objective of the round table on coherence

The proposed round table on coherence will provide an opportunity for the ECOSOC Membership to review how and to what extent the UN system has embraced the policy

directives of relevant functional commissions in its programmes and operations. In particular, the round table will be a useful platform for the chairs of functional commissions and governing bodies of UN funds, programmes, and specialized agencies to discuss ways to harmonize their work and ensure that policy guidance generated through inter-governmental deliberations effectively translates into a coherent UN system approach to implementation.

The 2008 coordination segment – which focuses on the role of the UN system in implementing the 2007 Ministerial Declaration on “*Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development*”- provides a unique opportunity to address the issue of coherence, since strengthening the UN system support to the eradication of poverty and hunger requires comprehensive approaches encompassing a broad range of policy areas, from rural and agricultural development, enterprise development, employment generation, sustainable development to science and technology, trade, etc. that have been addressed and continue to be addressed by the UN functional commissions.

Focus of the round table

In order to ensure a focused and action-oriented discussion, the round table on coherence could be held every year and focus on different policy areas related to the implementation of the UN development agenda. This year, the round table could focus on rural employment to eradicate poverty and hunger in the context of the follow up to the World Summit for Social Development. The choice of rural employment is significant for two reasons: 1) promoting productive employment in the rural and agricultural sectors is critical to the reduction of poverty and hunger since rural population continues to account for more than 50 percent of the world’s population with high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and 2) addressing UN system policy coherence on rural employment will provide an opportunity to review the UN system follow up to the World Summit for Social Development in view of last year’s ECOSOC resolution E/2007/2 on the role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work

for all as well as other relevant policy guidance formulated by the UN functional commissions.

The chairs of functional commissions relevant to rural employment will have an opportunity to highlight and discuss the policy directives of their commission that relate to rural employment. For example, the 46th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD) has laid out a comprehensive policy framework to achieve full employment and decent work in the context of poverty eradication strategies that encompasses macroeconomic policies, enterprise and rural development, education, training and skills, social protection, and regulatory policies.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has stressed the need to create the conditions for sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) to satisfy the demands of growing population for food and other agricultural commodities through a combination of agricultural, environmental and macroeconomic policies to improve capacities, initiatives and innovations of farmers, increase their access to resources and technologies, and foster fairer conditions of employment in agriculture.

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) has stressed the role of science and technology in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. In this context, the Commission observed that in most of the least developed countries, the poor were usually rural small-scale subsistence farmers, as in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions, or urban people engaged in the informal sector. It called for innovative strategies that combined the benefits of conventional science and technology, such as those of the green revolution, with the potential growth enabled by new and emerging technologies, such as information and communication technologies and biotechnologies. In its upcoming 11th session, the Commission will examine development-oriented policies for a socio-economically inclusive information society, as well as science, technology and engineering for innovation and capacity-building in education and research.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) concerned with promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, at its 52nd session in 2008, has stressed the need to fund active labour market policies that integrate gender perspectives in the realization of the employment goals in all sectors, and promote women's entrepreneurship and private initiative.

The chairs of the governing bodies of UN system organizations whose work concerns rural employment will have an opportunity to highlight how and to what extent they have taken into account or will take into account the decisions/resolutions of the Commissions relevant to rural employment in their decisions on programmes and operations related to the implementation of the WSSD.

In particular, round table participants should address the following questions from the perspective of their institutions:

- How can the policy decisions/resolutions of relevant commissions promoting social equality, employment opportunities for the rural poor and other vulnerable groups, and environmental protection be better integrated into UN system programmes and operations for rural and agricultural development?
- How can UN system decisions to fund national effort to increase agricultural productivity in developing countries be balanced with those to support the social sectors in order to ensure a human-centered development?
- How can provisions on gender equality and the empowerment of women and on social inclusion, especially of vulnerable groups, be integrated into UN micro-credit programmes to promote employment opportunities in the rural areas?
- How can provisions concerning the use of science and technology for development be best adapted to UN programmes and operations aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, upgrading human resources skills in rural areas, and ensuring environmental sustainability?

Participation

Round table participants will include the chairpersons of the Commission on Social Development (CSocD), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), and the chairpersons of the governing bodies of FAO, WFP, UNDP, and ILO. The round table will be structured as such to enable all participants, especially the chairs of the governing bodies of the UN system agencies to address the questions above.

Document

The following documents will be made available to all participants: the present concept note; the outcome of the 46th session of the Commission for Social Development on “Promoting full employment and decent work for all”; and the conclusions of the 97th session of the International Labour Conference on “Promoting rural employment for poverty reduction”.