

## Check against delivery

**ECOSOC AMR:**

**Panel 2 - The role of ECOSOC in achieving sustainable development**

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My introductory remarks will cover two areas:

1. How we as the UN can best help countries to move towards a sustainable development path; and
2. A few words on the unique role of ECOSOC and especially the first Development Cooperation Forum as an opportunity for a global and multi-stakeholder dialogue.

### **1. How we as the UN can best help countries to move towards a sustainable development path**

#### **CONTEXT**

- Following the 1992 Earth Summit there were high expectations that we were heading to a genuinely new paradigm for development. Most countries around the world embarked on measures to shift to a more sustainable development path.
- Unfortunately, however many of these attempts were frustrated and persistent challenges to sustainable development continue to haunt efforts around the world. There continue to be competing social, economic and environmental priorities and, for different reasons, the environment continues to lose, even when this directly jeopardises future prospects for development. Most trends continue to take us in the wrong direction – think of the imagery captured from space in the GEO Report. Capacity and resource constraints in developing countries continue to be a major impediment to progress.

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- One hope from the Earth Summit was that environmental issues would achieve full importance in development decision-making. This is the essence of *Ensuring environmental sustainability- Millennium Development Goal 7* as a cross cutting issue to all development sectors which impact the achievement of the other *Millennium Development Goals*.
- There are too few successful examples of fully integrating the distributional social benefits and value of environmental services into the economic equations.
- Few countries have been able to make the fundamental and systematic organizational and management changes needed. In too many cases, a somewhat ambiguous concept of sustainability has been attempted by adding onto existing policies and processes rather than going for a more integrated approach, looking at it from a perspective of society as a rules-based system. Three fundamental deficits include international governance, exclusion, and laws of nature.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO**

In UNDP's view there are three major ways by which ECOSOC can help:

1. Leading in transparency and measurement
2. Generate new ideas, new mechanisms to stimulate increased financial flows for sustainable development
3. Foster global learning through the sharing of experiences in sustainable development achievements, and most importantly, look for better solutions to our shared challenges.

## ***1. Transparency, measurement and information***

Transparency creates incentives for change and strengthens participation of other stakeholders (NGOs, community groups, business circles, other authorities) with effective mechanisms of information disclosure and consultations; reporting on results, and other processes to ensure accountability. The development of country capacities for measurement, monitoring, statistical analysis and effective information management is a much valued UN role. A recent UNDP review of MDG experiences revealed weaknesses in the current systems.

Yet, we have found that countries with a clear, evidence-based and widely shared vision of how they want to manage their environmental resources, together with mechanisms to track progress are those that are making achievements in sustainable development.

A reliable and transparent tracking of progress towards environmental sustainability provides essential public judgment incentives, complementing financial and normative incentives to pursue environmental sustainability. Institutional incentives include clear priorities as well as appropriate verifiable and time-bound targets and corresponding indicators of progress.

## ***2. Foster mechanisms to stimulate increased financial flows***

Progress in sustainable development requires effective policies, institutions and financing. Predictable financing is essential. Too few policies have been established and too few resources have been allocated to facilitate the true integration of environment into a sustainable model for development. As a result we frequently kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, rather than protecting

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them and creating new ones. Dealing with issues such as climate change clearly requires additional resources.

Three actions are critical for financing climate change a) encourage the right market conditions globally and nationally, b) mobilize financing additional to existing ODA promises to improve mitigation and adaptation efforts, and c) direct the financial benefits generated by carbon markets to the people who need them most. Climate change impacts on human communities and economic sectors cannot be ignored.

The carbon market is already playing an important role in shifting private investment flows to mitigate climate change and support development. However it cannot work alone, and major improvements are needed. In order for markets to work *for* human development, the UN needs to encourage additional support and the right policies to create conducive conditions for planning and quality investments in key economic sectors. Bringing concrete ideas for the negotiation process will be critically important, based on experience of what works around the world. This is an exciting agenda, calling for innovative approaches.

### ***3. Foster global learning through the sharing of experiences in sustainable development achievements***

While effective country responses – policies, institutional capacity and investments – need to be tailored to specific country conditions, there are common principles and quality standards that have emerged from different experiences. UN-supported South-South exchanges and peer review mechanisms have shown to be conducive to global learning and overall progress. They hold tremendous promise.

Awareness of sustainability and its implications has grown tremendously, and now that climate change is recognized as a

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global threat, the concept of sustainable development is being increasingly cited with respect to dealing with the threats of climate change. In addition, millions of small and large decisions relating to sustainable development have created significant change throughout the world. The 16 years since the Earth Summit, therefore, should not be seen as years of failure, but years that have provided conditions that can be built upon to re-energize the concept of sustainable development. We desperately need to re-energise it and multiply action that can make it real. ECOSOC can help, by ensuring that all nations learn from what works in other countries.

In rethinking the way we work within the UN, ECOSOC can play a central role in supporting the UN agencies to ensure that their sustainable development efforts are made according to the Paris Declaration principles of national ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability. The numerous UN guidelines should be critically reviewed to develop comprehensive guidance linking the processes of domestic ownership of national development strategies with respecting the Paris commitments on development effectiveness and UN Reform. Good practice examples at country level exist and should be highlighted.

ECOSOC can leverage the United Nations' impartiality to play a critical role in building the political accountability of both donors and recipients to the Paris principles, by monitoring their commitments and intensifying and regularizing the participation of developing countries in both the conceptual and the operational aspects of the aid effectiveness discussion.

## **2. The role of ECOSOC and especially the first DCF as an opportunity for a global and multi-stakeholder dialogue on key challenges**

- The ECOSOC is the right forum for the UN to discuss global development policies and to attempt to ensure that policies for development, for instance in areas of aid, trade, investment and capital flows, the environment, migration, technology and intellectual property rights are at best - coherent and at least - not contradictory. Lack of consistency in policies or in country interventions has been harmful to sustainable human development. Progress in sustainable development requires effective policies, institutions and financing.
- Contradictions matter and are harmful. Not meeting commitments to scale up ODA within a defined timeframe, for example, can set back national development planning efforts and disrupt development processes. As does failure to secure a fair trade deal. As does failure to reach agreement on strong global action to curb carbon emissions.
- The value added of the ECOSOC DCF is to enable a broader multi-stakeholder dialogue to inform the ECOSOC inter-governmental process and promote the building of a shared updated global vision on sustainable development that is broad in scope, balanced, yet bold in ambitions and impatient in its call for action. Because it is founded in reality, not ideology or narrow interest.

Global agreements and resolutions will remain empty words unless they are translated into a sustainable country development strategy that is well resourced and supported. The UN development agencies with their programming and operational mandates, and as per the latest TCPR resolution, can significantly

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support the integration of global sustainable development principles, agreed upon at the ECOSOC, into policy-making and development cooperation at country level.

In fact, and speaking for UNDP, our principal role in this changing world must be to support our partner countries in accessing and making the best possible use of existing and emerging development resources. It must be about capacity development for sustainable development effectiveness, according to the priorities of each country. This is our mission. This is what we are busy doing around the world. This is what we must become ever better at, day in and day out, together with our partners, in the coming years. And what about ECOSOC? It will take a lot of commitment and hard work to address the three deficits I spoke about earlier, which are essential for sustainable development: international governance, exclusion, and laws of nature. It will take work at many levels. ECOSOC could play a large, agenda-setting role in all three respects.