

Draft Concept Note

Regional consultation for Asia and the Pacific in support of the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review

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Background

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a key function of the Economic and Social Council established by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. It was mandated as an instrument to track progress and step up efforts towards the realization of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals, by the 2015 target date.¹

Over the last five years, the ECOSOC AMR has assumed an important role to assess and review progress (or lack thereof) in the implementation of these goals. General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/16, of 20 November 2006, entitled “*Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council*” provides general guidance on the AMR. The Report of the President of the General Assembly adopted on 30 June 2011(A/65/286), in the context of the review of implementation of resolution 61/16, provides further guidance.

The AMR process features three main elements: national voluntary presentations, country-led regional reviews and a global review, based on a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General. These elements are complemented by an innovation fair; and, prior to the session, by a global preparatory meeting and e-forums on the theme of the AMR.²

The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva and focused on poverty and hunger (MDG1). The following AMR sessions focused, respectively, on goals related to sustainable development (MDG7) in 2008; health (MDG 4, 5, 6) in 2009; gender (MDG3) in 2010; and education (MDG 2) in 2011.

All AMR sessions are preceded by multi-stakeholder regional consultations.³

The theme for the 2012 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review is “*Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the MDGs*”.

Objectives and expected value-added of the meeting

¹ A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c).

² For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr.shtml>

³ In 2007, the Government of Brazil hosted a regional consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean on the “*Key challenges of financing poverty and hunger eradication in Latin America*” (Brasilia, 17-18 May). In 2008, Bahrain hosted a regional meeting for Western Asia on “*Sustainable Urbanization*” (Manama, 1-2 June). In 2009, there were five regional ministerial meetings hosted respectively by: Sri Lanka for South Asia on “*Financing Strategies for Health Care*” (Colombo, 16-18 March); China for the Asia Pacific on “*Promoting Health Literacy*” (Beijing, 29-30 April); Qatar for Western Asia on “*Addressing Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries: Major Challenges to Sustainable Development in the 21st Century*” (Doha, 10-11 May); Jamaica for Latin America and the Caribbean on “*HIV and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*” (Montego Bay, 5-6 June); and Ghana for Africa on “*e-Health*” (Accra, 10-11 June). In 2010, Senegal hosted a regional meeting for West Africa on “*Women and Health*” (Dakar, 12-13 January).³ In 2011, the following four consultations were held: in Qatar, on “*Innovative Approaches to Reaching Women, Girls and the Marginalized in the Arab Region*” (Doha, 9 December 2010); Thailand, on “*Education and the Millennium Development Goals*” (Jomtien, 24 March 2011); Togo on “*The right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity*” (Lomé, 12 April 2011); and Argentina, on “*Key Education Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: Teachers, Quality, and Equity*” (Buenos Aires, 12-13 May 2011).

Objectives

The objectives of the country-led regional consultation is to share national experience in promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work in the Asia and the Pacific region, and identify good practices and lessons learned on how these efforts are contributing to realize sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and achieving MDGs. Additionally, the consultation will support preparations for and enable countries to engage at an early stage in the process leading to the AMR session to be held during the ECOSOC high-level segment in New York, in July 2012.

The initiative can also support the global review through bringing national and/or regional experience in this area. The outcome of the meeting will be an important contribution to the global analysis that will support the Council's deliberations in July. It will feed into the preparation of the Secretary General's report on the AMR theme.

The expected value-added of the meeting includes:

- In-depth analysis on opportunities and challenges in promoting productive capacity, job creation and inclusive development in the region, especially those that could best be addressed through regional cooperation
- Exchange of good practices and lessons learned among countries
- Promotion of stakeholder engagement – governments, the civil society, including, NGOs, academia and the private sector, and UN entities – early on in the AMR process
- Provision of an opportunity to prepare the launch of new partnership initiatives at the AMR July 2012 session in New York.

Proposed Focus

The proposed focus of the meeting is: “Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work in Asia and the Pacific: a regional approach to sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and achieving the MDGs”. Considering the slow global economic recovery, particularly in the developed economies, growing inequality, and volatile food and energy prices, this theme aims to gain a better understanding of how the Asia and Pacific region can sustain growth and MDG progress by increasing productive capacity and aggregate demand while addressing issues of equity and inclusiveness. Specifically, the meeting could address the following questions:

- How to take more coherent and integrated approaches to achieve sustained growth that is accompanied by enhanced job opportunities and productive capacity in the region?
- What are the specific challenges that countries in the region face in reducing inequality and enable more equitable distribution of development gains to enable more inclusive development?
- What are specific policies, strategies or interventions in the region that have successfully addressed these challenges and can serve as good practices to promote sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and progress on the MDGs?

Modalities of the meeting

Format

The is being jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), in cooperation with the Government of Japan.

It will be held as a half-day event, in conjunction with the 15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization, planned from Sunday, 4 to Wednesday, 7 December 2011 in Kyoto, Japan at the Kyoto International Conference Center (ICC Kyoto). To facilitate the participation of selected number of attendees of the ILO AP meeting, the AMR meeting will take place on Wednesday, 7 December 2011 from 3:00 to 6:00 pm, after the closing session of the ILO meeting.

The meeting will consist of two plenary sessions. The first session will be devoted to a discussion of good practices and lessons learned from the region with regard to promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work in the Asia and the Pacific region. Among others, countries which have gone through the AMR process in the past would have an opportunity to share their progress on the MDGs and this year's theme. Civil society organizations, trade unions, employers, and United Nations organizations, will also be engaged. The second and concluding session will be devoted to a discussion on regional approaches to achieve sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and the MDGs, and will propose key messages and policy recommendations to be transmitted to the 2012 ECOSOC AMR.

Documentation

A substantive background document on the theme of the meeting, to be prepared in advance of the event, will lay the basis for discussion. ESCAP and ILO will provide support in the preparation of this document. As a follow-up to the meeting, an analytical summary will be circulated (see below).

Participation

Participants in the meeting will be primarily those attending the ILO regional meeting in Kyoto. Target participants would include: 1) Policy makers from the countries in the region entrusted with the implementation of national development strategies; 2) Representatives of multilateral institutions and key donors working on the theme of the meeting; and 3) Representatives of civil society, including NGOs, Trade Unions, academia and the private sector.

Outcome

The meeting is expected to have the following main outcomes.

Firstly, an analytical summary of the meeting, which will capture the lessons that can be learned from the experiences presented. This will be prepared by UNDESA. The summary will be submitted and circulated at the main AMR session during the ECOSOC

high-level segment. A Ministerial level representative of the host country will be invited to present a report of the meeting to the July 2012 AMR session in New York. Similarly, the case studies presented would be made available at the AMR session, as well as disseminated through the ECOSOC website (through an open database).

Secondly, the meeting will provide an important opportunity for key policy makers to develop new partnerships – North-South and South-South, Triangular – which could be announced at the AMR session in July 2012.

Finally, the event will identify follow-up actions to be undertaken by the relevant stakeholders in the region in furtherance of the particular theme.