

DRAFT Concept Note

**Regional consultation for Europe in
support of the 2013 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 General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/16 and A/65/286 provide general guidance on the preparation of the AMR.

The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva and focused on poverty and hunger (MDG1). The following AMR sessions focused on, respectively, goals related to sustainable development (MDG7) in 2008; health (MDG 4, 5, 6) in 2009; gender (MDG3) in 2010, education in 2011, and productive capacity, employment and decent work for sustainable and equitable growth (all MDGs) in 2012.

The theme for 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, to be held in July in Geneva is “*Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals*”.

Over the last six years, the ECOSOC AMR has assumed an important role to assess and review progress (or lack thereof) in the implementation of these goals. The Outcome of Rio+20, which recognized the role of the ECOSOC in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, has mandated the strengthening of this role in the broader context of the review of the implementation of GA resolution 61/16². The 2013 AMR will thus be an important opportunity for the Council to affirm its role and capacity to review progress towards sustainable development and contribute to the ongoing discussions on the Post-2015 development agenda and on influencing the shaping of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Science, technology and innovation have a cross-cutting role to play in addressing the interconnected challenges of sustainable development and providing effective solutions to the emerging problems of a post-2015 world- such as global growth, health, climate change, and food security. The effective use of STI in this context will require breaking down barriers between disciplines. In particular, it will require strengthening the connection between science and society and linking scientific knowledge to productivity, sustainable production, job opportunities, and competitiveness. The theme of the 2013 AMR is an important opportunity to explore this link and to identify ways to transform creativity and innovation into sustainable development assets.

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.³

¹ A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c).

² “Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”.

³ For more information, see: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunc/amr.shtml>

Objective and expected value-added of a country-led regional consultation in Europe

Objectives

The objective of a country-led regional consultation in Europe is two-fold: (a) to support the preparations of the AMR by enabling countries in the region to present and discuss regional priorities and strategies with regard to STI both as a sustainable development and development cooperation tool at an early stage of the preparation of the global review at the ECOSOC high-level segment; and (b) to facilitate an exchange among countries in the region of best practices and lessons learned on effective STI policies and strategies to achieve the MDGs and sustainable development in the region and in support of similar efforts being undertaken in developing countries.

The initiative can focus on the regional experience and challenges in using science, technology and culture to promote sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs (2013 AMR theme) in the region and around the world, and/or focus on one specific area/dimension relevant to countries in the region, such as the role of regional technology transfer – through regional technology transfer initiatives and infrastructures – to support SME innovation efforts within Europe and in developing countries. National governments, local entities/regions and the European Commission all have and play a role in this area. The outcome of such review would contribute to the analysis that will support the Council's deliberations in July as well as to the broader discussion on the post-2015 development agenda and the implementation of Rio+20 Outcome.

The expected value-added of the meeting includes:

- Examining in greater depth how European STI policies and strategies have contributed or contribute to achieve a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy that delivers high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion as set out in various Europe2020 strategic priorities;
- Examining the role of STI in European development cooperation policies and strategies to achieve sustainable development and the MDGs;
- Analyzing overall progress made by countries in the region to integrate the MDGs and the broader sustainable development agenda into national policies and development cooperation strategies and identifying specific challenges in both regards that could best be addressed through regional cooperation
- Exchanging experiences and lessons learned on good policies and practices
- Promoting stakeholder engagement -- governments, civil society, UN system institutions and private sector – early on in the AMR process
- launching new partnership initiatives at the AMR July 2013 session, in Geneva

Focus

- The focus of the meeting is to be decided in consultation with ECE, according to the guidance provided above and complementarity with the focus of the planned ECE session on “Enabling the shift to a sustainable future”.

Proposed modalities of the meeting

Format

The meeting is recommended to be held as a one day event, preferably in conjunction with the UNECE upcoming meeting on 9-11 April 2013, in order to attract high-level participants already present in Geneva. It would consist of an opening followed by four plenary sessions, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The first session would be devoted to a brief introduction of the topic by a distinguished speaker followed by a roundtable discussion on the theme contextualized to the reality in Europe and to its role in supporting sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs around the world through science, technology and innovation. The composition of the roundtable should aim to incorporate diverse perspectives to facilitate an interactive debate. The second session would be devoted to another key aspect of the theme. The third session would focus on the presentation of regional and country case studies, lessons learned and best practices. The fourth and concluding session would be devoted to a discussion of the main regional messages and policy recommendations to be transmitted to the 2013 ECOSOC AMR session.

Documentation

A substantive background document to be prepared in advance of the event on the theme of the meeting will lay the basis for discussion and raise issues for debate. UNECE would provide support in the preparation of this document in collaboration with relevant UN specialized agencies. As a follow-up to the meeting an analytical summary will be circulated (see below).

Participation

Target participants would include: 1. Senior-level policy-makers from the countries in the region entrusted with the implementation of national development strategies. 2. Representatives of multilateral institutions, including local governments, working on the theme of the meeting. 3. Representatives of private sector, including private philanthropic organizations, NGOs and other members of civil society..

Outcome

The meeting is expected to have the following main outcomes.

Firstly, a summary of the deliberations, which will capture the lessons that can be learned from the experiences presented. This will be prepared by UNDESA, in collaboration with UNECE. The summary will be submitted and circulated at the main AMR session during the ECOSOC high-level segment. A representative of the host country will be invited to present a report of the meeting to the July AMR session. 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, which could be announced at the AMR session in July 2013.

Finally, the event will identify follow-up actions to be undertaken by the relevant stakeholders within the region in furtherance of the particular theme and/or overall review of current policies and practices in the region.