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N e w s f r o m

E C O S O C

Newsletter on the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Council

ECOSOC -- The 54-member Economic and Social Council serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and to the United Nations. It makes or initiates studies and reports; makes recommendations on international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters; and promotes respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Subsidiary bodies, commissions and committees of ECOSOC carry out its year-round work. ECOSOC strengthens cooperation within the UN system, coordinates the work of the specialized agencies and consults with non-governmental organizations. A substantive session of the Council is convened annually in July, and supplementary formal meetings as well as informal panels on topical issues are held throughout the year.

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Picture: UN Photo

ECOSOC concludes its 2004

Substantive Session, 28 June - 23 July 2004

The 2004 ECOSOC Substantive Session included a High-Level Segment (28-30 June), a coordination segment (1-7 July), an operational activities segment (7-12 July), a humanitarian segment (12-14 July), a general segment (15-22 July) and a concluding session (23 July).

Deliberations during the session addressed and adopted text on a range of sustainable development related issues, including rural development, information and communication technologies for development, human settlements, and protection against products harmful to health and the environment.

As part of the High-Level Segment, an Investment Promotion Forum was organized which included five roundtable discussions.

Roundtable A, on the theme of “Local private sector development: the role of Microfinance/Microcredit” was chaired by H.E. Mr. Mathieu Kerekou, President of Benin. The issues of risk assessment as well as the role of women in microfinance were highlighted. It was suggested to improve domestic and international regulations so as to strengthen the link between the formal banking sector with the micro-credit system. The roundtable was hosted by United Nations Credit Development Fund and International Labor Organization.

Roundtable B, on the theme of “Attracting foreign direct investment

(FDI) to Least Developed Countries (LDCs)” was chaired by H.E. Mr. Sam K. Kutesa, Minister of State for Finance, Planning and Economic Development of Uganda. One of the key outcomes of this roundtable was that the risk mitigation system should be extended beyond political risks now covered by agencies such as The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Possible innovative solutions were proposed ranging from promoting regional frameworks to establishing sophisticated local currency swap facility. Financial transparency in governmental and corporate action as well as support for local Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) development were also highlighted. The roundtable was hosted by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Roundtable C, on the theme of “The role of trade preferences for LDCs in promoting investment”, was co-chairs: H.E. Mr. Jakaya M. Kikwete, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania H.E. Ms. Paula Lehtomäki, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland. The importance of preferential market access regimes for LDCs, such as “Everything but Arms Initiative” of the European Union, “African Growth and Opportunity Act” of the United States and other similar instruments by bilateral partners provided opportunities to increase LDCs exports. More expanding south-south cooperation could identify best-practices as well as ensure that trade is an engine for sustained poverty reduction. The roundtable was hosted by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,

Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Roundtable D, on the theme of "Unleashing entrepreneurship: the role of partnerships in mobilizing resources for LDCs", was chaired by Mr. Poul Nielson, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid of European Commission. The consensus was that credit risk assessments should be strengthened so that credits can flow to domestic entrepreneurs. A model in South Africa, where a non-profit organization managed HIV/AIDS risk for borrowers in the banking system, was presented and received with interest. The importance of public private partnership such as the Global Compact Initiative were emphasized. The event was hosted by United Nations Fund for International Partnership and the UN Development Programme.

Roundtable E, on the theme of "Investment in Urban Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Human Settlements", was chaired by H.E. Dr. Shekou M. Sesay, Minister for Presidential and Public Affairs Office of the President of Sierra Leone. The issue that could contribute to sustainable development included expanding regional cooperation, promoting private sector involvement and strengthening the role of civil society and governance through decentralization. The roundtable was hosted by UN-Habitat.

In addition to the Investment Promotion Forum, fourteen roundtable breakfasts were organized on 29-30 June 2004. These roundtables highlighted key issues of concern for policymakers and were appreciated by all participants.

The High-level Segment concluded with the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration that reaffirmed the commitments contained in the Brussels Programme of Action and called for the world's 50 poorest nations to translate their goals into specific measures within their national development frameworks and poverty-eradication strategies. At the end of the session, the Council decided that the theme of its 2005 high-level segment would be "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities."

During the Coordination Segment panel discussions and roundtables focused on two themes. The first theme, which followed from last year's high-level segment theme, considered the coordinated and integrated UN system approach to promoting rural development in developing countries, particularly within LDCs. ECOSOC adopted text on this theme which called for enhanced coordination and cooperation among UN agencies, especially at the country level, and called on, inter alia: the UN system to further support capacity-building programmes for rural development through enhanced coordination and information exchange mechanisms; the UN system and regional organizations to further promote South-South cooperation in rural development; international and regional financial institutions to continue to enhance their support for national efforts for poverty eradication and rural development; and UN organizations dealing with development to strengthen their

cooperation in addressing and supporting the empowerment and the specific needs of rural women. ECOSOC also invited the UN system to further assist developing countries in their efforts to enhance access by the rural poor to productive assets, especially land and water.

The second theme of the coordination segment reviewed the implementation of agreed conclusions adopted in 1997 on mainstreaming gender perspectives into all policies and programmes in the UN system. Additionally, they explored ways to align the framework of the 1997 agreed conclusions with the outcomes of other conferences held since 1997, including the Millennium Summit. At the conclusion of the session, the Council decided that the theme of its 2005 Coordination Segment would be "Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration." The Council also decided to continue consultations on a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment, with a view to finalizing the programme before the next substantive session.

On adopted text concerning "Protection against products harmful to health and the environment," ECOSOC requested the Secretary-General to continue updating the electronic version of a consolidated list of banned or restricted products and printing the new data for those who may not have access to the e-version, particularly those in developing countries. The Council also urged governments to: participate fully in the process of developing a strategic approach to international chemical management by 2005; support developing countries in strengthening

their capacity for the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes by providing technical and financial assistance; and ratify and implement the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Conventions.

The Council deferred action on certain issues to its resumed substantive session, among them: the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010; international cooperation in tax matters; reports of coordination bodies; proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007; the Committee for Development Policy report; and a draft resolution in the Commission on Science and Technology for Development report.

The operational activities segment was held 7-9 July, and included three panels which alternated with the general debate.

The first panel, moderated by Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, focused on the international development agenda and the improvements of the operational activities of the UN system at the country level, highlighting in particular the main challenges affecting the effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the UN system.

The second panel also moderated by Mr. José Antonio Ocampo figured the dialogue with the Executive Heads of the UN Funds and Programmes (United Nations Development Program, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Population Fund and World Food Program). A series of issues were highlighted including follow-up to the Greentree Report, CCA/UNDAF process, greater involvement of the UN country

team in the national processes as reflected by a clearer linkage between MDGs and national priorities.

The third panel addressed the role of the CCAs and UNDAFs in country level coherence and coordination. The panel was moderated by Mr. Massimo D'Angelo, Chief of the Development Cooperation Policy Branch/OESC. The panel highlighted a number of issues affecting the successful use of these instruments, among others, differences in the level of understanding and commitments among UN system agencies and alignment with national planning, processes, and priorities, including the MDGs.

Overall, there was a general recognition of the efforts and progress made by the system in implementing the reforms since the last TCPR, especially in terms of coordination, coherence and effectiveness of the UN system in supporting national development efforts within the overall framework of the MDGs and the other internationally agreed development goals. Among the most significant achievements were the simplification and harmonization of procedures and processes - including new resources to facilitate joint programming; the introduction of a results-based approach at a system-wide level; further progress in the establishment of common premises and services and UN houses; and the strengthening of the resident coordinator system.

It was also confirmed that the reform process could not be an end in itself but should lead to a better channeling of resources and technical expertise of the UN system to developing countries in

support of their efforts to meet their development challenges.

The issue of resources remained critical especially as today's trends in resources registered an increase of ODA, which was unevenly distributed between core and non-core budgets at the expenses of the former. The quantity, but also and especially the quality of resources emerged as an important issue for debate.

The operational activities segment concluded with the adoption of resolution E/2004/L.15, which demanded the consideration of the issues related to the effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the UN system at the 2004 General Assembly debate on the TCPR.

ECOSOC Resumed Substantive Session

The Economic and Social Council held its resumed substantive session on Thursday, 16 September, during which it took action on three items that had been deferred from its July substantive session.

Issues adopted on 16 September 2004

Under Item 6: Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, the Council adopted a draft resolution on the International Conference on Financing for Development, which had been circulated by the facilitator Mr. Jose Briz from Guatemala. The adopted text encourages the Financing for Development Office (FFD) to continue to support the intergovernmental process entrusted with the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (ICFFD). The text also

encourages the Office to continue to organize, with the participation of all stakeholders, consultations and workshops on issues related to the mobilization of resources for financing for development and poverty eradication, and to organize workshops, panel discussions and other activities to promote best practices and exchange information on the implementation of the commitments and agreements made. Further, it encourages the regional commissions, with the support of regional development banks, and in cooperation with the UN funds and programmes, to continue to strengthen their efforts in addressing regional and interregional aspects of the ICFFD follow-up and to provide inputs to the high-level dialogue and the to the Spring meeting of ECOSOC. Finally, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on financing for development pertaining to the role of the private sector, taking into consideration the report “Unleashing Entrepreneurship” for consideration by the General Assembly under the relevant agenda items at its 59th session.

Under Item 7: Coordination, programme and other questions the Council took note of the reports under this item, including the report of the CPC on its 44th session contained in document A/59/16. The Council also took note of the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007 contained in relevant fascicles of document A/59/6.

Under Item 13: Economic and environmental questions - Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, ECOSOC took note of and referred to the General Assembly a short report of the Secretary-General (E/2004/83) which invited the General Assembly to

consider whether it wishes to continue undertaking a quinquennial review of the implementation of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, as called for in Article 34 of the Charter. The report suggests that monitoring the implementation of the Charter could be considered implicit in the overall framework of the review of the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of, and follow-up to, the major United Nations Conferences and summits, in particular the Monterrey Consensus. The report of the Secretary-General on this matter was before the ECOSOC because it is entrusted with the task of undertaking preparatory work for the General Assembly’s consideration of this matter.

Highlights of the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups

The Ad Hoc Advisory Groups were established by the Economic and Social Council, following the recommendation of General Assembly and its Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. Under this mandate two Ad Hoc Advisory Groups have been set up, on Guinea-Bissau and Burundi.

In June 2004, there was a joint mission to Guinea-Bissau by the Security Council and the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea Bissau. The joint mission underscored the nexus of development and security issues. The mission highlighted the promising developments in the economic, social and political situation of the country following legislative elections in March 2004, including improvement in the

management of public finances and a strong commitment to the partnership approach endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in 2003.

The Council also carried out an assessment of the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups (E/2004/82). Delegations noted that the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups were an innovative and non-bureaucratic mechanism to support countries emerging from conflict. As such, the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups can be considered another step forward in the United Nations endeavor to address postconflict situations in a comprehensive manner. The active participation of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa has greatly contributed to this collaborative approach. The Council also adopted resolution E/2004/59 of 21 July 2004 in which it commended the ad hoc advisory groups for their innovative and constructive work in support of the countries concerned and made suggestions to further improve their work.

On the occasion of the General Debate of the 59th session of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Henrique Pereira Rosa, Transitional President of Guinea-Bissau and H.E. Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, met with the respective Ad Hoc Advisory Group on their country in New York. The discussions focused on the positive work that was undertaken by the respective Ad Hoc Advisory Groups and on the future challenges of the country concerned. Furthermore, and as a token of appreciation, the Transitional president of Guinea-Bissau, offered a presidential degree to Ambassador

Dumisani Kumalo, Chairman of both Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries emerging from conflict.

Finally, and under a separate mandate, the Economic and Social Council decided to reactivate the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti. The activities of this Group will focus on a long-term development programme for this country

DPI/NGO Conference:

“The Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action”

The Fifty-seventh Annual Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) entitled “Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action” took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from the 8 to 10 of September. Organized by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) in partnership with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, the Conference is the principal NGO event held at the United Nations each year.

The Conference resulted in an excellent interactive opportunity for the creation of fresh ideas, renewed energy, and new alliances among participating NGOs; over 3,000 NGO representatives from 69 countries registered. The Conference greatly increased awareness and knowledge of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal 8: Developing global partnership for development. The most serious obstacles in the achievement of the Millennium Development goals were highlighted, among them the lack of political will, inadequate financial resources and corruption.

The objectives and views expressed during this Conference will feed the

discussion and proposals of the NGO forum held during the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC next July in Geneva.

Economic, Social and Cultural Importance of the World's Rice Consuming Population

During the DPI/NGO Conference "Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action" Hanifa Mezoui, the Chief of the NGO Section within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, aided in the presentation on the Economic, Social and Cultural Importance of the World's Rice-Consuming Population. This presentation was sponsored by The International Shinto Foundation.

The event highlighted the economic, social and cultural issues that impact the world's rice-consuming population. This workshop also addressed how successful promotion and cooperation requires engaging all aspects of society. Through this enhanced engagement, the link between NGOs and the progress of the UN Millennium Development Goals is strengthened.

The Benin Initiative: "Turning Assets into Useable Capital"

The High Level Segment 2004 substantive session of ECOSOC focused on the issue of resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the Least Developed Countries. The issue of domestic resource mobilization was also highlighted during this preparatory process for the High Level Segment. The government of Benin in collaboration

with Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Program, ILC and other organizations decided to launch an initiative for generating resources.

The President of Benin launched this initiative on "Turning Assets into Useable Capital" during the 2004 substantive session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The overall objective is to increase security and access to land, generate greater income and wealth for the citizens of Benin, by linking the reform process to register land and property, with efforts to improve the financial and regulatory enabling environment, explore the usefulness of tilting to obtain increased domestic resources for local growth. The President of Benin has invited Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and private sector to join the initiative.

The Government of Benin has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee. And an inter-agency meeting of all the partners is due to take place in Benin, either in mid October or early November, most specifically to: (i) define the parameters for this initiative, including whether the initial focus will be on urban property or rural, especially agricultural land; (ii) identify the limits of the parallel activities; and (iii) an opportunity for all the partners to meet and agree on the roles and concrete actions.

Wireless Internet for Underserved Communities in Latin America: The Mexican Experience

September 8-9, 2004, Monterrey, Mexico

The meeting on wireless internet, held in Monterrey, Mexico on 8-9 September, is part of a series of fifteen conferences that over the next year will take place throughout the world under the title 'Wireless Internet Opportunities for Underserved Areas and Local Communities.' The series, undertaken by the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force and the Wireless Internet Institute (W2i) in cooperation with UNITAR and underwriters such as Intel and IBM focuses on how wireless Internet can help countries in the region to define clear and attainable local objectives, establish consensus on favorable policies and regulations, build sustainable business models and share best practices among field practitioners, fostering universal connectivity in support of economic, social and educational development.

During the two days of deliberations panelists discussed the following topics: The panel on "*Ecology of Internet Distribution in Mexico*" examined the underlying barriers to universal connectivity and helped participants understand existing delivery methods, bandwidth cost components, infrastructure economics, and regulatory and competition issues. The second panel, "*Promises of Wireless Internet Technologies: new Generation of Products and Services*" included a general outline by W2i of available technologies and individual presentations of case studies and prospective applications including 802.11, 802.16 and 802.20, mesh networking with a focus on the needs of municipalities and local communities in Mexico. A further topic was "*Setting the Agenda for Local Government and Municipalities: Fostering Economic and*

Social Development, Job Creation and Poverty Alleviation with Wireless Internet Connectivity." This panel examined the different steps that local governments can take to deploy wireless networks and to use them to foster economic and social development in their communities. Finally, "*Regulatory and Legislative Implications in the Adoption of Wireless Internet Technologies*" were discussed as well as the implications of deregulation for backbone access and wireless operators, the landscape of the radio spectrum in Mexico, the role of local governments in developing supporting policies and the challenges in this regard for incumbent service providers.

Within the series and in the same regional context a Meeting on "*Wireless Internet for Underserved Communities in Latin America: the Brazilian Experience*" will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 9-10 November, 2004.

A book on the outcomes of the Monterrey and Rio conferences will be published, addressing technical and non-technical issues ranging from Wi-fi applications and models, to regulation, administrative obstacles and concerns related to telecommunications operators. The book will be published with the collaboration of the United Nations ICT Task Force, the Technology of Monterrey and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Highlights of the 59th Session of the General Assembly general debate relating to Economic and Social Issues

The general debate was marked by a renewed call for multilateralism, strengthening the rule of law and

enhanced cooperation and coordination among the international community in the area of development as well as peace and security. Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to build a strong United Nations which would take the lead in ensuring lasting peace and sustainable development. Delegations were unanimous in their support for reform of the United Nations to enable the Organization and its main bodies to address the new challenges of the millennium effectively.

Globalization

The world faced many challenges in the current millennium including terrorism, transnational crimes such as drug trafficking as well as trafficking in human beings, rampant poverty, hunger, disease, poor health and a lack of basic social services, illiteracy and alarming rates of environmental degradation. In an era of increasing globalization, Member States asserted that such challenges could be addressed effectively only through collective global action and called upon the international community to work in harmony to build a better world for all.

Many delegations felt that globalization had yielded unequivocally positive results. Yet the continued imbalance in the distribution of its benefits, the progressive widening of the gap between developed and developing countries and the worsening economic conditions in several countries in the South and the related adverse effects on the environment would accentuate discontent and frustration. Such problems could even lead to violence and instability.

Highlighting the links between peace and security and development, Member States urged the international community to reaffirm its commitment to development through a deeper and more comprehensive integration of the developing countries in the global economy. Delegations observed that a profound transformation was underway in international relations where, *inter alia*, intensifying globalization of economies, production, trade and information, on one side, and terrorism, violence, poverty and disease, on the other created contradictory trends and fragmentation. Global governance and multilateralism needed strengthening.

With globalization, the inter-linkages and inter dependence among the people of the world had increased as well as the movement of people across borders. Speakers stressed that migration facilitates the transfer of skills and knowledge and stimulates economic growth and development. Delegations urged all nations to cooperate in ensuring the protection of fundamental rights of migrant workers and called on them to exert every effort to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Delegations recognized that to make globalization fairer, the Millennium Declaration must be implemented and the international community must waste no more time in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. They welcomed the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and suggested that the United Nations system should study the report's recommendations before the review of the Millennium Declaration. Shifting away from a narrow focus of

markets, the Report's recommendations paid greater attention to people and their varied needs and interests.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

The fight against poverty was not only a form of prevention but the core of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These were reaffirmed as the central mechanism guiding the UN system's activities. Delegations voiced their concern over the slow progress made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals and underscored the need to generate political will. In order to achieve the MDGs, delegations recommended that necessary steps be taken through increased ODA, and debt relief. Also, new and innovative mechanisms were critical. Slow progress in debt relief continued to stretch already scarce resources available to poor countries thereby impeding their development. Highlighting the need for new and innovative mechanisms of financing for development, delegations welcomed the Brazilian initiative "Action against Hunger and Poverty" which strives to devise and implement viable financing mechanisms, in an attempt to reach a consensus on the possible means for effectively attaining the MDGs by 2015. HIV/AIDS remained a priority for most countries. Delegations stressed that combating HIV/AIDS must be an integral part of the global campaign against poverty. Moreover, HIV/AIDS prevention was inextricably linked to reproductive health and rights. Without the requisite preventive care, access to affordable drugs and the health delivery infrastructure, developing countries would lose the gains from development made thus far.

Countries unanimously agreed that an enabling environment was essential to achieving the MDGs. This included free and fair trade and more foreign investment. Delegations welcomed the progress made at the World Trade Organization's General Council meeting in Geneva in July which put the Doha agenda back on track. However many speakers felt that the successful conclusion of the Doha Round was important since key issues were at stake such as anti-dumping, the status of agricultural products and textiles, various complex issues related to intellectual property and how to deal with pandemics using generic or low-cost drugs.

Delegations from developing countries recognized that domestic policies, at home have to be reformed to embark on a path of sustainable development. Yet, they felt that while their countries had undertaken reforms, the international environment was not conducive to enable poor countries such as theirs to achieve the MDGs. They recognized the G8's continued support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), whose primary objective was to eradicate the increasing poverty in Africa. Yet, significant debt burdens remained, as did substantial distortions in trade, especially in agricultural commodities. FDI flows were also insufficient. Without an enabling environment, countries poor countries, in particular the LDCs, would not be able to achieve their goals in development including the MDGs.

Reform of the United Nations/High Level Plenary Meeting in 2005

Delegations agreed that there was a need for comprehensive reforms of the United Nations to ensure its suitability and

capability to face the current challenges to peace and development. Several delegations called for the reform of the United Nations, specifically advocating for an expansion of the Security Council to make it more representative. They felt that such reform was long overdue because of the changed world situation. Calling for reform of the General Assembly, countries emphasized that the General Assembly was the central organ of the United Nations, the only one with universal membership. Therefore, the General Assembly had to become more than an annual forum where Member States focus carefully on critical topics. The ECOSOC had to eventually become the central organ in the United Nations system for consultation and decision making on economic and social issues. Speakers pointed out the need to improve UN coordination on development, health and environment and proposed a meeting of approximately leaders to boost overall reform efforts. They observed that proposals for enhancing coordination between the GA, ECOSOC and Security Council had made limited progress, United Nation's economic and social programmes needed reform and ECOSOC and its functional commissions could benefit from fewer meetings and less redundancy.

Member States looked forward to the 2005 High Level Plenary Meeting to be held during the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. They emphasized that the meeting must be comprehensive, balanced and effective and deal with the interlinked concerns of peace, security, poverty and sustainable development. Many delegations expressed their support to the convening of High-Level Plenary Meeting in 2005 to review the progress of all commitments in the

Millennium Declaration and stressed that all Member States have a collective responsibility to implement the commitments set forth in it.

Environment

Rapid environmental degradation was a major cause for concern for several delegations. Member States called for the urgent ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Speaking for the plight of Small Island Developing States, delegations stressed that the ten-year review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to be held in Mauritius in January 2005 would be a timely opportunity for the international community to take special consideration of the vulnerability of SIDS. They hoped that serious consideration would be given to adopt mechanisms that could support the recovery and reconstruction efforts of SIDS in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Summary of the general debate of the Second Committee during the 59th session of the General Assembly

During the general debate, a total of 71 speakers took the floor. Many more participated in the Questions & Answers sessions. Overall, it was a rich and broad debate that put forward a range of concrete new proposals.

The backdrop of the debate was the slowing global economic recovery. Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, USG for Department of Economic and Social Affairs, framed his introductory statement around the global economic outlook. He highlighted several factors at the origin of the recent slowdown in

the global recovery and addressed their implications for the development goals. In an innovation this year, the floor was then opened for an informal and lively Question & Answer session, which helped us in better understand the various views on this issue. This new format was broadly welcomed.

Following are some of the main issues highlighted during the debate.

Combined with a renewed support of multilateralism by smaller countries, there was strong articulation by the most marginalized countries of their concerns and perspectives.

It emerged from the debate that the follow-up process for the International Conference on Financing for Development, follow-up to the Brazil-Chile-France and Spain Initiative for “Action against Hunger and Poverty,” preparations for the 2005 High-Level event, preparations for the Barbados+10 and the 2004 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) would require special attention of the Committee.

Strong commitment was expressed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and of the overarching goal of poverty reduction. There was also a broad consensus on the need for the Second Committee to promote concrete measures during this session to achieve progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

However, the continued imbalance in the distribution of the benefits of globalization, the widening income gap between and within countries, worsening economic conditions in several countries, weak employment generation and the

related adverse effects on the environment were highlighted as major obstacles towards the achievement of the MDGs.

In this context, it was emphasized that the 2005 High Level Event must be effective in pushing implementation and it should give new impetus to the realization of the MDGs. Several delegations called for a special focus on development. It was also emphasized that the Meeting should have a negotiated consensus outcome.

With globalization, the movement of people across borders has increased and it is critical to address the issue of migration in a comprehensive manner. Hence, several speakers welcomed the General Assembly’s decision to convene a high-level dialogue on migration in 2006 and Peru’s initiative to host an international conference of developing countries with important migration flows next year.

Speakers emphasized the need to strengthen the FFD follow-up process and keep it focused on achieving results in all areas of the Monterrey Consensus. Many recent initiatives and studies on Innovative Sources of Financing need to be carefully examined by the Second Committee so as to decide during the 2005 Event which of them could be implemented. The initiative undertaken by Brazil, Chile, France and Spain “Action against Hunger and Poverty”, which strives to devise and implement viable financing mechanisms received broad support and there were many calls for undertaking measures to promote its implementation.

While welcoming the recent agreement reached at WTO on a framework for

future negotiations, the need for greater market access, Special Differential and Preferential Treatment and removal of subsidies and other harmful barriers as envisioned in the Doha Agenda was repeatedly emphasized.

In addition to renewed calls for aid flows to rise well above current levels, in line with the Monterrey commitments, there were also broad consensus on the urgent need for new efforts on debt relief, including debt cancellation to the poorest countries and a new HIPC framework. Measures in this respect should not detract resources devoted to their development. It was stressed that all these actions must be part of a coherent overall approach in support of development.

Many speakers underlined that the International Meeting to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, to be held in Mauritius, should lead to a renewed political and financial commitment in support of the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States. The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by Russia was also welcomed.

Many delegations highlighted the situation of middle-income countries and the need to address their particular development constraints, through strengthened international cooperation and trade liberalization.

There was also a call for a more comprehensive and innovative approach to conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict development, inspired by the engaging address by Prof. Collier. It was observed that such a comprehensive approach would be essential for the realization of the development goals.

Finally, during this general debate, the Committee received reports on the outcomes of the annual meetings of the Development Committee and the International Monetary and Finance Committee. The interactive dialogue with the representatives of the World Bank and the IMF led to interesting discussions.

For more information on the Economic and Social Council, please visit:
<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/>

For further information on the work of the UN Secretariat in economic and social affairs see DESA News online at:
<http://www.un.org/esa/desanews.htm>

Please note that there will be a reformatted webpage available soon. Additionally, it will provide access to ECOSOC resolutions and decisions from 2001 through the most recent session.

Publications currently for sale:

Publication on the high-level Segment theme of 2003: *An integral approach to Rural Development*

Publication on the high-level Segment theme of 2002: *Human Development, Health and Education*

Publication on the high-level Segment theme of 2001: *Supporting Africa's efforts to Achieve Sustainable Development*

Publication on harmful products: *the consolidated list of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sales have been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely restricted or not approved by Government* (seventh and eight editions)

Upcoming Events on Economic and Social Issues for 2004:

Please verify event in the UN Daily Journal

General Assembly Plenary:

17 November: Lecture by Professor Talat Halman on “Culture and Peace” Conference Room 6: 1:15-2:45 p.m.

7 December: Event on sports and development during the Launch of the Year of Sports organized by United Nations for International Partnerships with Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Second Committee:

22 October: Panel Discussion with Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions “A regional perspective of the MDGs” organized by the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination with the Regional Commission New York Office
10 a.m.-1 pm

27 October: Lecture on “Trade and Development” by Thomas Friedman coordinated by Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination
10 a.m. -12 noon

29 October: Lecture by Professor Amartya Sen “Forging coherence to achieve the MDGs in the context of globalization” organized by Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination

10 a.m.-12 noon

1 November: Hearings on Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, with the participation of executive heads of UN organizations, on “United Nations Development Cooperation: Reforms, Resources and Results”

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2 November: Country team panel on Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review: United Nations Development Cooperation: Coordination, Participation, and Effectiveness

9 November: Keynote address by Professor Jeffery Sachs on the MDGs organized by Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination with the Millennium Project in ECOSOC Chamber 2:30-5:30 p.m.

15 November: Expert Group meeting on Department of Economic and Social Affairs Framework on conflict prevention, peace-building and development organized by Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination
9 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

United Nations University:

28 October: Presentation on “Harnessing biotechnology for development: the Latin American and Caribbean experience” organized by the United Nations University
2:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

15 November: Lecture by Anthony Atkinson on “New Sources of development finance” organized by United Nations University
2:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

11 November: Event on Intellectual property rights and development organized by World Intellectual Property Organization
1:15-2:45 p.m.

Upcoming Events on Economic and Social Issues for 2004 (continue):

18 November: Launch of the International Year of Microcredit organized by United Nations Capital Development Fund and Department of Economic and Social Affairs

12 November: Initiative D 21 Annual Convention, Bremen, Germany
The Initiative D21 is Germany's largest Public Private Partnership. It is an economic initiative with almost 300 members from all spheres of business, politics and society. The ICT Task Force will host a booth at this event with the purpose of strengthening its relationship with the private sector.

19-20 November: Seventh Meeting of the United Nations ICT Task Force, Berlin, Germany *The ICT Task Force of the United Nations will hold its Seventh Meeting on 19-20 November* in Berlin, Germany. There will be a Global Forum on the 19th on the theme of Promoting Enabling Environment for Digital development. On the 20th, the ICT Task Force members will discuss in a closed session the business plan of the Task Force, contributions for WSIS, funding for the budget and the structure of the working groups.