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ECOSOC News

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

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 United Nations 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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CONTENTS

I - SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

- High-level Segment (30 June—3 July 2008)...p.2
- Dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions (7 July 2008)...p.2
- Coordination Segment (7-9 July 2008)...p.2
- Operational Activities Segment (10-14 July 2008)...pp.2-3
- Humanitarian Affairs Segment (15 - 17 July 2008)...p.3
- General Segment (18-24 July 2008)...p.3

II - OUTCOME PAST EVENTS / ACTIVITIES

A - ECOSOC

- Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis in New York, 20 May 2008...p.3
- Regional Preparatory Meeting on Sustainable Urbanization, Bahrain, 1-2 June 2008...pp.3-4
- Stakeholder Forum, "Role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness", Italy, 12-13 June 2008...p.4

B - Subsidiary Bodies

- International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), Ninety-second session, 19-30 May 2008...pp.4-5

I - SUBSTANTIVE SESSION ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

- At the [2008 High-level Segment \(30 June-3 July 2008\)](#), the Council will launch its first biennial [Development Cooperation Forum](#). It will also organize its second [Annual Ministerial Review \(AMR\)](#) on the theme, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development ". An opening plenary session will feature keynote addresses by Dr. Rajendra K Pachauri, Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Lord Stern of Brentford, author of the Stern Review, on the theme of the AMR. A [high-level policy dialogue](#) with representatives of the Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO and UNCTAD will also take place on current developments in the world economy. ECOSOC will also hold a [thematic debate](#) on "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges". A series of roundtable dialogues and panels, clustered around the themes of the High-level Segment and organized in close collaboration with organizations of the UN system, will take place throughout the Segment. An [Innovation Fair](#) on the theme of the AMR will also be held on the margins of the High-level Segment.
- The [Dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions \(7 July 2008\)](#) will be on the theme, "Regional aspects of the themes of the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council's 2008 substantive session". The Dialogue will provide regional perspectives on current challenges to sustainable development, including the issues of food and energy insecurity.
- During the [Coordination Segment \(7-9 July 2008\)](#), the Council will focus on the role of the UN system in implementing the 2007 Ministerial Declaration on "Strengthening the efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". Member States will have an opportunity to assess the UN system role and activities in a broad range of policy areas relevant to the eradication of poverty and hunger; identify areas where the UN system should promote more comprehensive and effective approaches; recommend ways in which the UN system's support to eradicate poverty and hunger can be strengthened against the backdrop of current challenges. The segment will also review progress made by the Council in promoting the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major UN Conferences and Summits, including the WSIS. Four panel discussions on various issues related to the implementation of the 2007 Ministerial Declaration will take place during the segment.
- The [Operational Activities Segment \(10-14 July 2008\)](#) will provide an opportunity for the Economic and Social Council to follow up on the implementation of the policy recommendations of the General Assembly, particularly the Assembly resolution 62/208, and to ensure that the mandates of the Assembly and the Council in the field of operational activities are implemented in their entirety and on a system-wide basis. A series of interactive dialogues on operational activities for development of the United Nations system, including panel discussions on the role of the UN system in a changing aid environment and on strengthening UN development system's responsiveness to the differing needs of programme countries. A dialogue with the heads of Funds and Programmes and a general

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debate will also be organized.

- The [Humanitarian Affairs Segment \(15 - 17 July 2008\)](#), will be an important forum for discussing the activities and issues related to strengthening the coordination of the humanitarian system of the United Nations. The Segment will address the theme “Building capabilities and capacities at all levels for timely humanitarian assistance, including disaster risk reduction” and it will organize two panels: (i) “Disaster risk reduction and preparedness: addressing the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters, including the impact of climate change”; (ii) “Humanitarian challenges related to global food aid, including enhancing international efforts and cooperation in this field”.
- The [General Segment \(18-24 July 2008\)](#), will undertake the follow-up and review of conferences; review and evaluate the annual reports of the United Nations Funds and Programmes and its subsidiary bodies, including its functional and regional commissions, expert bodies and ad hoc bodies, including the Advisory Groups for countries emerging from conflict, and take relevant action.

II– OUTCOME PAST EVENTS / ACTIVITIES

A - ECOSOC

- The Economic and Social Council organized a [Special Meeting on the Global Food Crisis in New York on 20 May 2008](#). The meeting brought together Member States, the UN system, civil society, including the private sector to discuss a range of policies, relevant at the national and international levels, which could minimize the negative impacts of the current crisis. [Participants](#) welcomed the approach proposed by the President to put in place policies that can turn the crisis into an agricultural renaissance. In the course of the discussion, diverse factors that led to the crisis were highlighted and concrete short-, medium- and long-term actions by the international community and national governments were formulated. As an outcome of the debate, the President issued a [Statement](#) outlining basic elements for effective and sustainable global action.
- On 1 and 2 June 2008, the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, with the support of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, hosted a [Western Asia regional preparatory meeting on Sustainable Urbanization](#) to provide input to the 2008 Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council. The meeting provided an opportunity for West Asian countries to contribute to the review, including by sharing best-practices and lessons learned related to sustainable urbanization that could aid in advancing and expanding activities to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. The meeting was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister and featured several high-level representatives from the UN system, including the ECOSOC President, and other regional organizations. The 90 participants examined emerging trends, challenges and potential solutions in the areas of urban infrastructure and access to services, green architecture for sustainable urbanization, and financing (including through Islamic banking) and technology transfer for sustainable development.

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The event also featured presentations by governments, civil society and the private sector of best practices and initiatives to promote sustainable urbanization.

Among the key messages to emerge from the discussions were: (1) owing to disparities within the region, solutions to the challenges of urbanization should be country-specific, not imported from other regions; (2) a full and fair partnership between government, civil society and the private sector is vital to ensuring sustainable development, requiring that local communities are involved throughout the entire process of planning for and managing urban development; (3) green buildings must be seen in the larger context of urban planning -- not as isolated projects -- and they must be scaled up and scaled out, especially to provide the poor with environmentally friendly housing; and (4) the Islamic banking industry has a bigger role to play in promoting sustainable development and should offer "green credit" and venture capital to promote sustainable urbanization, as well as provide greater access to financial services to the poor.

- The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) organized in collaboration with the Government of Italy on 12-13 June 2008 a [Stakeholder Forum](#) to discuss the important role parliamentarians and high-level representatives from civil society and local government play in guiding, managing and monitoring development cooperation.

The meeting which was organized around three segments and common plenary sessions with presentations, country-based case studies and discussions, aimed to: (i) Identify the problems and challenges of aligning aid with national development strategies, and the role of national and local stakeholders in this regard; (ii) Identify the impact of conditionality and tied aid on programme countries at the national and local level, and find ways to improve mutual accountability; and (iii) Assessed aid delivery modalities in terms of development impact at national and local level and discuss how civil society may contribute to enhancing their effectiveness.

B - SUBSIDIARY BODIES

- At the outset of its ninety-second session (19-30 May 2008), the [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](#) elected Hamid Ghodse, who has been a member of the Board since 1992, as its President. The other members of the bureau are: Sevil Atasoy (First Vice-President), Camilo Uribe (Second Vice-President and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Estimates) and Maria-Elena Medina-Mora (Rapporteur).

The Board reviewed treaty compliance by Governments with the provisions of the three international drug control treaties. One focus of the session was to strengthen the control of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of heroin. The Board decided to assist Afghanistan by requesting neighbouring countries to continue to cooperate with the Board in preventing the illicit trafficking of precursor chemicals into Afghanistan and to continue awareness-raising work to alert UNODC and the Afghanistan Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to chemical control issues. In addition, the Board considered information on the drug control situation gathered during its missions to United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and Ukraine, and adopted

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several recommendations which will be conveyed to the concerned Governments in the following weeks. The Board also examined follow-up action taken by the Governments of Bangladesh, Ghana, Mexico and the Russian Federation, after INCB missions had visited their countries in 2005. The Board decided to publish guidelines for Governments on matters related to Internet sites illegally selling internationally controlled substances.

The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime briefed the Board on the current situation in Afghanistan and the follow-up process to the final review of progress made and challenges since the convening of the Special Session of the General Assembly on drugs held in 1998. The review process was also discussed with the Chairman of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), Ambassador Eugenio Maria Curia of Argentina, during his meeting with the Board.

III– More Information

For further information, please contact ecosocinfo@un.org