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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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The Members of the Bureau of ECOSOC

President of ECOSOC:

- H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas (Luxembourg)

Vice-Presidents of ECOSOC:

- H.E. Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez (El Salvador)
- H.E. Ambassador Tiina Intelmann (Estonia)
- H.E. Ambassador Hamidon Ali (Malaysia)
- H.E. Ambassador Somduth Soborun (Mauritius)



UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, Sixty-fifth President of the Economic and Social Council speaks at the ECOSOC Special Event on “Philanthropy and the Global Public Health Agenda”, 23 February 2009.

I - PAST EVENTS

A - ECOSOC



UN Photo/Mark Garten

**Ambassador Sylvie Lucas
Sixty-fifth President of the
Economic and Social Council**

➤ Ambassador Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg was elected 65th President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 15 January 2009, with a call to continue building on ECOSOC's successes and to tackle the challenges at hand. "Our main challenge is to further strengthen the quality and relevance of the work of the Council on development", she said.

Ms. Lucas is the second woman to hold the position since Marjatta Rasi of Finland was elected to the presidency in 2004. Also during the meeting, the Council elected its 2009 vice-presidents, Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez of El Salvador, Tiina Intelmann of Estonia, Hamidon Ali of Malaysia and Somduth Soboron of Mauritius. It is also the first time that ECOSOC has a majority of women on its Bureau.

Outlining the Council's work for 2009, Ms. Lucas presented the theme of the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global health", to be held next July in Geneva. She stated that by taking advantage of its unique cross-sectoral nature, the Council can focus on the inter-linkages between health related goals and the overall development agenda, and highlight those dimensions that are critical in putting in place effective policies.

"I intend to work very closely with the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly to make this year a historic year for action on the health agenda", she said.

- The annual meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council with the Chairpersons of the functional commissions was held on 27 January 2009. Its main focus was to discuss how the functional commissions could contribute to the Council's 2009 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) theme of global public health. Included in the discussion were concrete measures on how the functional commissions and relevant expert bodies could strengthen collaboration in support of ECOSOC's work, and suggestions for how both the Council and its subsidiary machinery could operate as a unified system around the single framework of the internationally agreed development goals in order to drive and review their implementation.
- A moderated e-discussion on Global Public Health (29 January – 26 February 2009) was launched as part of the preparatory process for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR). This online forum brought together experts, from within and outside of the United Nations system, to share experiences and generate practical input towards the 2009 AMR.

Part I of the e-discussion addressed "Strengthening health systems" and ended on 11 February with more than 70 contributions and a total of 5,700 subscribers. In this session there was widespread agreement on the fact that universal access to Primary Health Care (PHC) is essential to reduce health inequities. In this regard, participants gave specific recommendations on how to improve health care in remote areas and empower the most vulnerable through health education. Interventions also focused on incentives for public health workers to be able to stay in rural communities and provide high-quality services, as well as on the need to set standards and harmonize multiple health initiatives in nation systems.

Part II of the e-discussion continued until 26 February to discuss "Emerging and future health challenges", including national strategies to address the growing magnitude of noncommunicable diseases, approaches to enhance trends for global health in the wake of the financial crisis and innovations for global health partnerships and collaborative arrangements to improve their performance.

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- The ECOSOC Special Event on “The Contribution of Traditional Medicine to the Realization of International Development Objectives related to Global Public Health” was held on 12 February 2009. The discussions focused on the potential of traditional medicine for improved health conditions at the global level, particularly in the developing world, where traditional knowledge has a strong potential. The need for strengthened regulations and control mechanisms was emphasized, as was the importance of policies that integrate traditional medicine into national health care systems. It was agreed that legal measures were needed to reduce the illegitimate use of intellectual property rights, particularly patents, on traditional knowledge and genetic resources and that mechanisms to promote equitable sharing of benefits from their use, including by indigenous communities, should be put in place. Innovative experiences from India and Ecuador were presented. The event was co-organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Intellectual Property Rights Organization (WIPO), the Secretariat of the Independent Forum on Indigenous Issues/DESA and the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination/DESA.



UN Photo/Evan Schneider

- At a special event of ECOSOC on “Philanthropy and the Global Public Health Agenda” (23 February 2009), which featured addresses by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Prof. Klaus Leisinger, President and CEO of the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development and President Bill Clinton of the United States, more than 700 participants of the corporate, philanthropic, academic and global health partnerships communities as well as Member States and United Nations representatives identified gaps and explored opportunities in advancing progress in maternal and girls’ health and neglected tropical diseases.

Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the two leadership dialogues and underlined that maternal and child mortality as well as neglected tropical diseases are easily treated and largely preventable. A number of participants, including some of the panelists, stressed the need for a global initiative, modeled after the HIV/Aids and Malaria partnerships, is needed to raise the necessary awareness for maternal and child health. With regard to neglected tropical diseases, a number of participants, including the panelists also underlined the need to create a broader network with its central focus on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).



UN Photo/Evan Schneider

In his closing remarks, President Bill Clinton stressed the need to improve health networks in developing countries, particularly in rural areas, in collaboration with local NGOs. He also encouraged private sector companies to sell technologies in developing countries that help advance the public health, and emphasized the importance for “corporate partners and philanthropists to apply their expertise to maximize the impact of every dollar spent”.

The special event, which was jointly organized by UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy (CECP) was preceded by a press conference. IKEA announced a \$48 million donation to the United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) programme in India. The international medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) also present at the press conference spoke about their collaborative efforts to fight neglected diseases. MSF has committed about \$22.5 million over the next six years to DNDi in the operational and clinical research to drug-development portfolio. The global network of the Sabin Institute also stressed its work in the fight against neglected tropical diseases. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently announced a \$34 million grant to the Global Network to scale up control of several of the most neglected tropical diseases.

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B - ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies

- At its 2009 regular session, held from 19 to 28 January and on 2 February 2009, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations reviewed 157 applications for consultative status. Of those, the Committee recommended 68 for consultative status, deferred 86 for further consideration at a later date, took note that 2 non-governmental organizations had withdrawn their applications, and closed, without prejudice, consideration of the applications of 4 non-governmental organizations. It did not recommend one non-governmental organization. The Committee also had before it 4 requests for reclassification of consultative status; it recommended 3 requests and deferred one. In addition, it had before it 95 quadrennial reports, of which it took note of 94; it deferred consideration of one quadrennial report. The Committee heard 14 representatives of non-governmental organizations. It recommended that the Council would decide to suspend consultative status to those non-governmental organizations that have failed to submit their quadrennial reports for two or more consecutive periods by the first day of May 2009. It also voted to recommend to the Council to suspend the consultative status to the non-governmental organization Arab Commission for Human Rights for one year, and to request the organization to submit a list of their members and associates by 1 April 2010 prior to considering reinstatement of its status. Finally, the Committee voted to recommend to the Council not to grant consultative status to the organization Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lesbicas e Transgeneros.
- The International Narcotics Control Board held its 94th session from 2 to 6 February 2009 in Vienna. During the session, the Board reviewed intersessional developments, including the visit by its President to the Vatican in November 2008 to discuss possible collaboration between the Board and faith-based organizations to promote worldwide efforts against drug abuse. The Board discussed its participation in the 43rd session of the Subcommittee on Illicit Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East, held in November 2008 in Tehran and its mission to Finland which was undertaken in January 2009. Ahead of the high-level ministerial segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to be held in March 2009, the Board reviewed its activities on follow-up to the Twentieth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Countering the World Drug Problem together. The Board has published a special report on this issue (see the publication section).
- The Commission for Social Development held its 47th session from 4 to 13 February 2009 under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Kirsti Lintonen of Finland. The 2009-2010 priority theme for the Commission is “*Social integration*” taking into account the relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work. The Commission also discussed “the current global crises and their impact on social development” under its emerging issues agenda item and reviewed the implementation of the United Nations plans and programmes of action and programmes questions pertaining to the situation of older persons, persons with disabilities and youth.

The Commission held two panel discussions in relation to the priority theme and the emerging issues as well as had an interactive dialogue with the Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers Programme. Also, the Special Rapporteur on disability reported on her work in that field over the past six years.

The launch of the first World Day of Social Justice took place during the Commission and a panel discussion was organized by DESA in cooperation with the ILO and the Permanent Mission of Kyrgyzstan.

The 47th session of the Commission for Social Development aimed at building consensus on social integration and laying ground for concrete policies to be recommended to Governments at its 48th policy session. The Commission adopted three resolutions—on *Promoting full employment and decent work for all*; *First review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002*; and *Policies and programmes involving youth*—as well decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution on the *Social Dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development*.

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- The Fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission took place from 24-27 February 2009 in New York. The Commission continues its work as the leading body of the global statistical system, especially in the area of developing international standards and methods for official statistics. During the 2009 session, new technical norms in the area of national accounts (System of National Accounts) were before the Commission for formal approval. Furthermore, the Commission focused on an in-depth programme review of the field of official statistics for climate change, which has been prepared, as in past years, by a member-state, namely the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Further key items on the agenda included the development of a framework for agriculture statistics, a review of regional statistical development in Asia and the Pacific and a discussion on the ongoing improvements in compiling MDG indicators.

The Commission also conducted a technical review of proposed indicators on 'violence against women' and discussed a proposed framework for health statistics. The latter two agenda items support ongoing debates in the Commission on the Status of Women and ECOSOC. The Commission session was accompanied by a comprehensive programme of side events, allowing delegates to discuss cutting edge topic, such as a one-day seminar on "Innovations in Official Statistics" (Friday, 20 Feb), two "Learning Centres" focusing on: (i) Environmental-Economic Accounting and (ii) CensusInfo: A new interface for dissemination of census information (Monday morning, 23 Feb) and a High Level Forum on "Globalization and Global Crises: The Role of Official Statistics" (Monday afternoon, 23 Feb).

II– NOTEWORTHY ANNOUNCEMENTS

A - ECOSOC

- Health challenges vary greatly between regions. To highlight regional differences, three regional consultations are being organized in South Asia, Asia Pacific and Western Asia in the run up to the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review. The sharing lessons learned and examples of best practices that have been tested in the region is the main objective of the meetings. The regional meetings will help bringing actors from different domains together at the regional level while at the same time provide the Council with a snapshot of the key challenges on the international health agenda. The positive initial response has shown that leading experts from governments, including local governments, regional organizations, UN system organizations, NGOs, foundations, academia and private sector are endorsing the idea.

The South Asia Regional Meeting, to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 16-18 March 2009, will focus on "Financing Strategies for Healthcare", a key issue on the global health agenda, which is of even greater urgency at a time of the global financial crisis. "Health Literacy"- the achievement of a level of knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community health – will be the theme of the East Asia Regional Meeting, scheduled to be held in Beijing, China, 29-30 April 2009. The Western Asia meeting, planned for 10-11 May 2009 (dates tbc) in Doha, Qatar, will focus on "The growing burden of non-communicable diseases". Non-communicable diseases caused an estimated 35 million deaths in 2005, representing 60 per cent of deaths globally, with 80 per cent occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Tackling non-communicable diseases is now seen by many as the major health challenge to global development in the 21st century.

- DESA is supporting developing countries in their preparations towards their national voluntary presentations during the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review in Geneva. National workshops were recently organized in Sri Lanka and China on the 24th and 26th February respectively. Further national workshops are planned for in March and April for other developing countries that have volunteered for presentation. These workshops will bring together all stakeholders at the national level, including government representatives and members of the private sector and civil society. The discussions will focus on progress in achieving internationally-agreed goals and commitments, especially in regard to health at the national level.

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- The Global Preparatory Meeting of ECOSOC, to be held on 31 March 2009, will give a snapshot of the progress on the international health goals, the implications of the world financial crisis on the achievements of the international health goals and health challenges in post conflict situations. A number of panelists have already confirmed their participation. For the morning session, it will include Professor Rosling from the Karolinska Institute who will give an overview of where we stand on the health MDGs and Mr. Cassels, WHO Director of Strategy, for the health and financial crisis panel. For the afternoon session, confirmations include the Minister of Health of Sierra Leone, and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti, who will both participate in the panel discussion on Health and Conflict. The policy recommendations will serve as input to the report of the Secretary-General for the ECOSOC High-level Segment.

B - ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies

- The fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be held in New York from 2 to 13 March 2009. This year the Commission will consider “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS” as the priority theme. A number of interactive events on the priority theme are planned including a high-level round table on 2 March (3pm); interactive expert panels on key policy initiatives on 3 March (10 am), and on capacity-building on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes (3 pm).

The Commission will consider as the emerging issue “The gender perspectives of the financial crisis,” through an interactive expert panel discussion on 5 March (3 pm), and will review the status of implementation of the agreed conclusions on “Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels,” adopted by the Commission in 2006, through an interactive dialogue on 6 March (10 a.m.). An expert panel on “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health: a gender perspective,” will be held on 12 March (10 a.m.) to provide input to the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review. A large number of parallel events will be organized by UN agencies, funds and programs, Permanent Missions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

- The Committee for Development Policy will hold its eleventh plenary session in New York from 9 to 13 March 2009. A main topic of the Committee’s deliberations will be the theme the Council’s 2009 Annual Ministerial Review. In particular, the Committee will examine the persisting inequalities in health. The Committee understands that the presence of marked inequalities have significant implications for achieving internationally agreed goals on public health. In the lack of well targeted efforts to provide necessary health care services for worse-off, neglected and disadvantaged groups, achieving a particular *average* target will not necessarily indicate that living conditions *of all* have improved. At the international level, the Committee will examine whether and how new approaches for development cooperation embodied in the global health partnerships (GHPs) -- alliances among public and private entities-- have an impact on health inequalities and will recommend ways in which GHPs and other formats of international aid can help reduce health inequalities.

The Committee will also conduct the 2009 triennial review of the list of Least Developed Countries. The objective of the review is to identify those low-income countries that would be eligible to join, and those LDCs already on the list that would be eligible to graduate from the category. The category comprises low-income developing countries which face severe structural impediments to growth as indicated by high economic vulnerability to external shocks and low level of human capital development. There are currently 49 countries identified as LDCs, including the Maldives and Samoa whose graduation has already been taken note of by the General Assembly.

Other issues on the Committee’s agenda include the current financial turmoil and its implications for the developing countries and the sustainable development agenda.

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- The Commission on Narcotic Drugs will hold its fifty-second session and High-level segment in Vienna on 11-20 March 2009. In its resolution 1999/30, the Economic and Social Council recommended that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) should convene ministerial-level segments of its session to focus on specific themes related to the follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly in 1998. At its fiftieth session in March 2007, the Commission decided to convene a high-level segment, open to all States Members of the United Nations, during its fifty-second session in 2009.

The High-level segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs will take place on 11 and 12 March 2009. It is expected that a large number of ministers will attend and that a Political Declaration on the follow-up to the 1998 special session target to counter the drug problem together will be adopted at the end of the segment.

- The Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) will hold its Eighth Session from 30 March to 3 April 2009 at the United Nations Headquarters. The Committee will focus on “The human factor in capacity-building and development” as its main theme. During the session, key issues in capacity-building will be determined and policy options and recommendations will be identified for Member States, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat. In addition to the main theme, the paper on "Mainstreaming of health issues and human capacity-building in public administration" will be presented in concurrence with the Committee's discussion of the public administration perspective on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health. This is in response to the thematic focus of the 2009 annual ministerial review of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. To this end, the Committee will discuss and make recommendations on the synergies needed in addressing the government policies and governance strategies to ensure global public health. The Eight Session will also include work on the compendium of basic United Nations terminology in governance and public administration and the review of the United Nations programme on public administration and finance.
- The forty-second session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) will convene from 30 March to 3 April 2009 at United Nations Headquarters. The theme of the session will be “The contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals”. This theme was selected to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action and to underscore the relevance of population dynamics for development. The Commission will consider four reports: the report on world population monitoring and the report on population programmes, both focusing on the theme of the forty-second session; the report on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, and the report on world demographic trends. The Commission will also review the implementation and progress of work in the field of population in 2008. The documentation for the forty-second session is available on the Population Division’s website at <http://www.unpopulation.org>

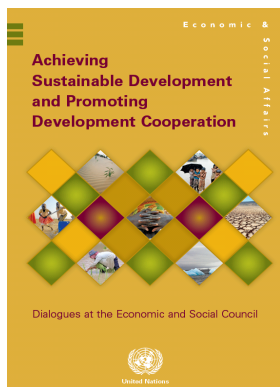
III – NEWS

- Ban stresses role of philanthropy in preventing deaths from child birth, tropical diseases
- 23 February 2009
- President predicts ‘challenging’ year ahead for UN Economic and Social Council
- 11 February 2009
- Luxembourg diplomat elected to lead UN Economic and Social Council in 2009
- 15 January 2009

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IV – ECOSOC PUBLICATION



➤ Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council - Achieving Sustainable Development and Promoting Development Cooperation

This book presents the key debates that took place during the 2008 High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council on Sustainable Development, at which ECOSOC also organized its first biennial Development Cooperation Forum. This publication brings together the proceedings – statements, issues papers, summaries of roundtables and other discussions – of the ECOSOC session.

- On 19 February 2009, the International Narcotics Control Board released its annual report for 2008. The report offers a balanced assessment outlining achievements and challenges of the international drug control system, which is rooted in efforts that started in 1909 at the International Opium Commission in Shanghai, China. In addition, the report highlights the emergence of West Africa as a major hub for trafficking cocaine into Europe, the difficult drug control situation in Afghanistan and the new channels of diversion of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, the chemicals used in the manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) such as methamphetamine, amphetamine and MDMA (ecstasy). The report provides a comprehensive picture on the world situation and trends with respect to cultivation, abuse and trafficking of illicit drugs. In addition to its annual report, the Board publishes three additional reports on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of illicit drugs. This year, the Board issued a special supplement to its annual report on follow-up to the Twentieth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in which the Board makes recommendations on how to deal with the new challenges to international drug control that have surfaced since 1998, the year the Special Session met.