

## **United Nations Economists Network (UNEN)**

### *A Concept Note and Draft Agenda*

#### **Background**

The Secretary General – in his letter to the Member States on 28 December 2018 – underscored the imperative of strengthening UN thought leadership to respond to the new demands of the 2030 Agenda. Within existing resources and mandates, the Secretary General outlined his vision for a United Nations Network of Economists, led by the Chief Economist, that will include economists from Regional Commissions and Resident Coordinators Offices, amongst others. The Network will enable local, national and regional perspectives to inform global deliberations on the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary General expects the Network to be fully operational by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

#### **Objectives**

Guided by the vision of the Secretary General, the Network will foster a system-wide and cross-cutting approach to research and policy analyses on key current and emerging economic, financial, social and environmental issues, with a view to advancing the 2030 Agenda. The deliberations and outputs of the Network will inform the position of the United Nations system, reorienting and shaping economic policies for broader sustainable development outcomes. The Network will also serve as a source for guidance and policy advice on SDGs for UN country teams and to the Member States, at the global, regional, and country levels. Serving as a platform for collaboration among participating entities working on same or related issues, the Network will build synergies, help to avoid duplication of efforts and strengthen UN thought leadership on policies most relevant for SDGs.

#### **Membership and modus operandi**

The Network will be primarily comprised of UN economists, working in the fields of development economics, macroeconomics, public finance, trade, labor market, climate change, environment and financial and social sector policies. Initially, it will be composed primarily of chief economists or equivalent staff members of UN-DESA, five Regional Economic Commissions, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, and the ILO, but it will also draw on relevant expertise from the WHO, FAO and IFAD, WIPO, UNRISD, and other entities. In the second phase, the Network will expand to include UN country economists working in Resident Coordinators' Offices around the world.

As communities of practice – focusing on a specific sustainable development challenge or cross-cutting themes – the Network will function largely as a “virtual network”, driven by demand and facilitated by conference calls and digital communications. The Network will also convene an annual in-person meeting. Every effort will be made to organize the in-person meeting on the margins of other major events where a significant number of Network members are likely to be present.

#### **Inaugural meeting**

Taking into account the Secretary General's expectations and the urgent need for activating the Network, an inaugural meeting in New York on 13-14 March 2019 is proposed for consideration of all prospective members. The kick-off meeting will enable the participants to:

- exchange information on the existing work plans and research agenda and priorities of all the member entities;

- identify areas and themes of common interest and establish communities of practice among interested entities round these themes;
- agree on a common and shared work program for 2019-2020; and
- finalize and agree on modalities for engagement among the Network participants

A work programme – discussed and adopted in the inaugural meeting – will lead to the production of a few major outputs, in the form of reports or publications, highlighting the United Nations system’s analyses and policy recommendations in these areas of central importance to the 2030 Agenda.

#### Draft agenda of the inaugural meeting

<b>13 March 2019</b>	
Opening session 10:00-10:30	Welcome address by DSG/USG DESA Introduction by the Chief Economist Self-introduction of participants
	Coffee break
Session 1: 11:00-13:00	Stock-taking: who is doing what? Global mega trends and their implication for the SDGs
	Lunch break
Session 2: 15:00-17:00	Common challenges: Regional perspectives Cross-cutting issues: Aging, social protection, data and measurement
<b>14 March 2019</b>	
Session 3 10:30-12:30	Emerging demands for new research and policy analysis: Where do we stand and how do we best respond to changing demand? Outlines of a joint work programme
	Lunch break
14:00-16:00	How do we organize ourselves? Mandates, resources and commitments Concluding remarks by the Chief Economist