



Video

Women in politics: We must look behind the numbers

On 29 February, Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women joined Anders Johnsson of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to launch the 2008 map of women in politics. Statistical data is very important but “it is not enough to count women in parliament,” noted Hannan. “We also need to monitor the way that women are involved in politics and the effectiveness of their participation.”

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2008/pc080229am.rm> (54 minutes)

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Global solidarity and the least developed countries

High global growth rates mask sharp income inequalities across countries

The level of the world’s income has grown impressively since the start of the new Millennium, from \$31.8 trillion in 2000 to \$48.2 trillion in 2006, at annual rates of above four percent on average, with some of the emerging economies such as China and India attaining growth rates between eight and nine percent. Regrettably, the media focus on these impressive income growth rates masks the tremendous imbalances in the income levels across different groups of countries.

In 2006, the total income of countries with a per-capita income of \$905 or less and 37 percent of the world’s population was \$1.6 trillion, a mere 3.3 percent of world income. High-income countries, those with per-capita incomes of \$11,115 or above and home to 15 percent of the world’s population, received 76 percent of world income.

Various shortcomings in the global economic and financial system and a series of human, material and other constraints on development in particular groups of countries combine to maintain a highly unequal distribution of world income. Globalization has not led to the convergence of incomes across groups of countries. Despite the high growth rates among the poorest countries, income levels continue to diverge.

Least developed countries, thirty-four of which are in Africa, are among the most disadvantaged among

low-income nations. The continued existence of the category of 49 LDCs, is an important indicator of the presence of systemic imperfections and the need for concrete action. The persistent difficulties of the LDCs to overcome structural impediments to development serve as a spur to renewed action aimed at building systems for global solidarity, as exemplified in Millennium Development Goal Eight (MDG-8), the global partnership for development.

When is a country “least developed”?

Since the LDC category was created in 1971, it has provided a basis for the world community to provide official development assistance and special treatment in trade for these countries, which otherwise would be further marginalized from the global development process.

Currently, the Committee for Development Policy uses three criteria to determine LDC status, all of which had to be satisfied for the General Assembly to add a country to the list. They are: (1) gross national income per capita under \$745 (in 2006); (2) limited human development as evidenced by indicators of nutrition, health, education, and adult literacy; and, (3) signs of economic vulnerability as documented by economic smallness, remoteness, lack of economic diversification and acute exposure to economic and natural shocks. Additionally, the country’s population must not exceed seventy-five million. To qualify for graduation, a country must meet graduation thresholds for two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews by the Committee.

Climate change is increasing the vulnerability of all countries, but the least developed are also the least able to take action to adapt to climate change in the absence of additional aid flows. At its upcoming session, the Committee will take up specifically the question of considering climate change in assessing the heightened vulnerability of LDCs. The Committee also regularly reviews the economic and social performance of the LDCs.

High growth, high risk

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008 reports that the growth of the least developed countries was strong in 2006, at 8.1 percent, moderated in 2007 to 6.7 percent, and is expected to reach 6.9 percent in 2008. However, their growth is driven by increased demand for commodities, including oil, which will tend to abate when

international conditions slow down, as currently anticipated. In other words, LDC growth may not be sustained and these countries still face severe structural obstacles to development, although they are following proactive and supportive national development policies.



This high average rate of growth for the group conceals a wide divergence in growth rates across the LDCs. Indeed, eight countries experienced declines in per capita GDP in 2006, seven did so in 2007 and two are expected to suffer decreases in 2008. The high average reflects the performance of some sixteen countries whose growth exceeded three percent in 2006. Eighteen countries grew at more than three percent in 2007 and an estimated eighteen countries may do so again in 2008.

Most LDCs have used the increased revenues and aid inflows well to expand public expenditure for the social sectors and infrastructure, in order to relieve supply side bottlenecks and achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. In Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania, vibrant agricultural growth has also fueled expansions in construction, manufacturing and services. Mining has driven growth in Sierra Leone and oil production has done so in Angola.

Nevertheless, fiscal positions remain precarious in most LDCs, because government revenues depend heavily on aid flows and commodity prices. Prospects for the LDCs in the near-term may be compromised by severe weather shocks, serious security threats and political instability in several countries, including Chad, Haiti, Mali, Nepal, Niger and in the Darfur region of Sudan. A deceleration of growth in the rest of the world would cut sharply the demand for exports from LDCs.

Moreover, increased food prices may exacerbate pressures in their current account – not to mention compromise achievements made in the area of health and nutrition – as most LDCs are net food importers. The WESP 2008 also shows much higher inflation for LDCs than anywhere else. More effective global action is clearly needed to support the national efforts of the LDCs. The current high average growth rate of the LDCs, therefore, should not be seen as a reason to diminish aid efforts or other partnership mechanisms under MDG-8.

The basis of a policy framework

At the international level, the LDC category reflects a continuing effort by the world community to define vulnerable groups of countries as a prelude to concrete national and international development action, somewhat analogous to efforts at the regional and national levels to define and promote vulnerable zones and social groups. Although governance and redistributive mechanisms are weaker at the global level than at the national or regional level, the LDC category provides a concrete platform from which global solidarity mechanisms can be discussed and designed.

The existence of the category of LDCs, therefore, is politically significant both to countries within the category as well as to donors. Even for countries that are not formally LDCs, the criteria of low GDP per capita, economic vulnerability, human assets, population size can be beneficial as these support their case for receiving commensurate ODA and trade preferences, even though their situation is not as dire as that of the LDCs. Specific thresholds separate these countries from the LDCs in a formal sense, but the criteria should be seen to measure a continuum. Countries above the thresholds can dip down below them as their economic situation fluctuates. Declines below the three thresholds may lead to the formal classification of a country as an LDC, as has happened in many cases since 1971.

The graduation of two countries, Botswana in 1994 and Cape Verde in 2007, and the inclusion of two others Senegal in 2000 and Timor Leste in 2003 in the list has maintained the number of LDCs steady at around fifty and keeps the case for ODA strong. The Maldives and Samoa are to be graduated in 2011 and 2010.

Global action on development assistance

MDG-8, which emerged from the Millennium Summit in 2000, calls for a global partnership for development through concrete measures in trade, debt and aid to benefit the poorest countries. In 1970, 22 of the world's richest countries pledged to spend 0.7% of their national income on aid. Thirty eight years later, only five countries – Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden – have reached that target.

Three United Nations conferences on the Least Developed Countries were held in 1981, 1990, and 2001. The third conference (Brussels, 14-20 May 2001) agreed on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. Both the 2001 Brussels Plan of Action and the 2002 Monterrey Consensus called for ensuring that of the original 0.7 percent target, 0.15 to 0.20 percent of national income would be channelled to LDCs and 0.50 to 0.55 percent to other developing countries. This would represent a de facto target of some twenty-nine percent of ODA to LDCs.

Overall ODA from the DAC countries has increased from \$57.8 billion in 2000 to \$104.4 billion in 2006, which represented 0.31 percent of their combined GNI, well short of the 0.7 percent goal. According to DAC, total ODA disbursements to LDCs reached \$29.4 billion in 2006, up from 12.7 in 1995-96. Several countries did reach the 0.15 percent goal for LDCs: Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and United Kingdom. Some 28 per cent of DAC ODA was allocated to LDCs in 2006, up from 22 percent in 1995-96.

A significant portion of the increased total ODA is for debt relief, emergency and humanitarian or is concentrated in strategic and geo-political allies of donor countries and not necessarily in the poorest countries. Much aid favours short-term and immediate social needs over long-term capacity development. It also tends to be shaped by donor interests, priorities and suppliers.

Aid for trade

All in all, there is strong justification for the continuation of the category of LDCs and for international support to them through aid and trade, particularly in the context of promoting global solidarity through the partnership for development called for by MDG-8. The long-term development of the LDCs is highly dependent on the expansion of their trading opportunities. Many studies, however, now confirm that completion of the Doha trade round

may not sufficiently benefit this particular group of countries because of certain trade preferences they would lose and their overall lack of trade capacity.

In this context, the WTO Aid for Trade initiative to help LDCs build supply-related capacity and trade infrastructure, and the Integrated Framework, a multi-agency initiative for trade capacity-building in LDCs, will require greater political support and funding so that these countries may derive greater benefit from the strong growth of world trade. Negotiations at the upcoming High-Level Event at Doha on Financing for Development will also need to seek additional ways to realize MDG-8 by increasing resource flows to all developing countries and to LDCs in particular.

For more information:

<http://www/esa/policy/devplan/profile/>



The empowered legislature

DESA and the Inter-Parliamentary Union are teaming up to bring information technology to parliamentary assemblies

Powerful, accountable and active parliaments are the backbone of popular participation in democratic government. Information and communications technologies make it easier and faster for constituents to interact with their elected legislators and influence lawmaking and oversight of public affairs of direct concern to them such as national budgets. ICT also keep constituents better informed about parliamentary debates and draft laws and enables them to hold their elected representatives accountable.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008, launched by DESA and the Inter-Parliamentary Union on 28 February, is the first global assessment of how

parliaments are using ICT in the myriad of tasks for which they are responsible. It establishes a baseline of how parliaments are using, or planning to use, information and communications technology to help them carry out their representative, lawmaking and oversight responsibilities and to connect to their constituencies. It is also intended to advance a shared knowledge base among the parliaments of the world and to promote international debate on these matters. Building on the responses and comments sent in by 105 assemblies from around the world to a survey on the use of ICT in parliament, the report also draws on experiences exchanged during the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and relevant publicly available information. e-Parliament Report 2008.

“The report underscores the importance,” said Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, “of leveraging the forces and expertise available in parliamentary assemblies in developed countries in this field to support the development efforts of those parliaments with fewer resources.”

At the launch, Mr. Sha was joined by Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament.

The report was prepared as part of the work of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. The Global Centre is a joint initiative of DESA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and a group of national and regional parliaments established in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society process. The Global Centre also receives support from the Italian Development Cooperation, the Government of the Netherlands and the Inter-American Development Bank.

The launch of the report was followed by a high-level dialogue on the right of access to information, which saw the participation of Katalin Szili, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary; Mechtild Rothe, Vice-President of the European Parliament; and Geoff Q. Doidge, House Chairperson of the National Assembly of South Africa. Members and representatives of the Shura Council of Egypt, the Chamber of Deputies of Italy and the House of Representatives of the Philippines also participated in the event.

Leading by example

The report defines e-parliament as a legislature that is empowered to be more transparent, accessible and accountable through ICT. It empowers people, in all their diversity, to be more engaged in public life by

providing greater access to its parliamentary documents and activities. It is an organization where connected stakeholders use information and communication technologies to support its primary functions of representation, law-making and oversight more effectively. Through the application of modern technology and standards and the adoption of supportive policies, it fosters the development of an equitable and inclusive information society.

The results of the survey behind the report confirm that the income level of each country plays a significant role in determining the extent to which ICT are adopted in parliaments. However, technological legacies in older legislative bodies, organizational flexibilities in younger parliaments, and the rapid evolution of technologies are all factors that can help level the playing field among legislatures. Attaining a high level of performance in the application of ICT is not only dependent on resources; it also requires strong political leadership, active engagement of members, a skilled secretariat, well-trained technical staff, and a sustained commitment to the strategic implementation of information and communication technologies in the legislative setting.

Dialogue with citizens

Approximately, ten percent of the chambers and parliaments that replied to the survey have acquired extensive ICT capabilities across a wide range of key application areas. These include developing systems for managing essential documents, utilizing open document standards, creating rich websites that present information through a variety of formats and channels, and providing access to a wide range of online information linked to pending legislation.

At the other end of the spectrum, many parliaments lack a strategic plan, an adequate ICT infrastructure, basic tools for members and staff, systems for managing documents and trained ICT staff. The status of the ICT systems and services of those parliaments that fall in between these two groups is uneven. Many of them have implemented ICT applications that serve some of their most important functions. But many of these applications appear to be operating at the lowest level of utility and have not been enhanced to take greater advantage of ICT to improve efficiency and effectiveness, or to offer additional services.

An issue of special importance to parliaments in today's world is improving dialogue with citizens. Some chambers and parliaments are exploring new

approaches using the Web, and others have plans to test new ICT based systems. However, currently, very few legislatures have any systematic capabilities for interactive communication with citizens.

From strategy to action

The report concludes that there is a significant gap between what is possible with ICT and what has actually been accomplished by parliaments so far. On the other hand, survey responses clearly demonstrate that most parliaments have plans to improve their use of technology to support their goals and work. The high level of participation in the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and the enthusiastic response to the survey indicate that parliaments are acutely aware of the strategic importance of ICT.

Narrowing this gap will require increased cooperation among parliaments, in partnership with other stakeholders. The World e-Parliament Report 2008 highlights the many opportunities for parliaments to benefit from cooperating at the regional and global levels in the e-parliament domain. Existing and emerging parliamentary networks can sustain some of these efforts, but a worldwide dialogue is becoming increasingly essential. By offering coordinated support and training for those parliaments with fewer resources, increasing the opportunities for sharing expertise and software at the global level and providing greater access to parliamentary information resources, parliaments will be better positioned to fulfill citizens' legitimate expectations, achieve common goals and advance the principles of the World Summit on the Information Society.

The World e-Parliament Report 2007 reflects modern international knowledge management and e-TC, the use of electronic technical cooperation for capacity development. ICT help parliaments work more effectively but also facilitate greatly the sharing of knowledge and skills across legislatures in different countries, which indirectly helps spread the practice of more participative government.

For more information: <http://www.ictparliament.org/>

Global dialogue on development

Gearing up for annual development review

Economic and Social Council resumes organizing on 6 March to make the most of its new substantive functions

With the second Annual Ministerial Review and first Development Cooperation Forum a scant four months away, preparations are underway in the Economic and Social Council to ensure its high-level segment in July, of which the AMR and DCF are a part, lives up to expectations. On 6 March, a one-day informal meeting of the Council will be devoted largely to a discussion of essential procedural questions.

In the morning, delegates will discuss ways in which the AMR fosters progress towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and how best to highlight challenges, obstacles, solutions and so forth, calling for an international response. Delegates will be invited to draw upon other more established peer review mechanisms for ideas, such as those of NEPAD and the OECD. Consideration will also be given to the way in which environmental issues are integrated into the sustainable development policies of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, alongside economic and social concerns.

Attention will turn to the DCF in the afternoon and its role a fulcrum for global discussions on development cooperation. Later this year, for example, world leaders will take part in a follow-up conference on the Monterrey Consensus, in Doha, and a high-level forum on aid effectiveness, in Accra. There is a clear link with issues before the DCF. The question is how, in fact, to make the connection.

Two preparatory events for the DCF have been held so far. The first was in Vienna last April on the question of country-level experiences in managing development cooperation. The second took place in Cairo in January on the subjects of South-South and triangular cooperation, and aid effectiveness. Delegates will have a chance to hear about the outcomes, and reflect on their contribution to the Council's July session.

For more information: <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/>

Doha review sessions on external debt, international monetary, financial, and trading systems

The General Assembly continues its review sessions in preparation for the Doha review conference on the Monterrey Consensus in November. On 10 and 11 March, the theme of external debt will be covered, while on 11 and 12 March the conversation will turn to systemic issues including coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial, and trading systems in support of development.

In a letter of 10 January addressed to all States, the President of the General Assembly, Srgjan Kerim, emphasized the importance of a successful outcome to the Review Conference and proposed a work programme for the preparatory process. The programme includes review sessions on the thematic areas of the Monterrey Consensus and interactive hearings with representatives of civil society and the business sector, to be held at UN Headquarters in New York between February and June 2008.

In addition, UN regional commissions, with the support of regional development banks and other relevant entities, will hold regional consultations during the first half of this year. All stakeholders are invited to contribute actively to the preparatory process.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for his part, appointed Philippe Douste-Blazy of France as his Special Adviser on Innovative Financing for Development on 19 February. Mr. Douste-Blazy's main remit is to promote sources of innovative financing for implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

For more information: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>

Violence against women “never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable”

Secretary-General launches global campaign against violence during 52nd session of Women’s Commission, in progress through 7 March

Launching a multi-year campaign to end violence against women, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made an urgent call to world leaders, member states, lawmakers, United Nations entities, civil society, the private sector, the media and individuals to work together to end such violence.

Speaking during the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women’s fifty-second session, he said, “Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable and never tolerable.” Statistics made it clear that it was “an issue that cannot wait”. At least one in every three women was likely to be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, and the practice of prenatal sex selection meant that countless others were denied the right even to exist.

No country, culture or woman was immune, he said. Horrific crimes – including rape, sexual violence and the abduction and sexual enslavement of women and children during times of armed conflict – went unpunished, and perpetrators walked free. What’s more, gender inequality thwarted progress towards achieving the millennium targets.

“This is a campaign for them. It is a campaign for the women and girls who have the right to live free of violence, today and in the future. It is a campaign to stop the untold cost that violence against women inflicts on all humankind,” he said, stressing that the global campaign would continue until 2015, to coincide with the target date for the Millennium Development Goals.

The Secretary-General urged all states to review and, when necessary, revise or create applicable laws to ensure that violence against women was always criminalized. In December, the General Assembly had adopted a historic resolution on rape and sexual violence. Now it was time for the Security Council to create a mechanism to monitor violence against women and girls, under the framework of its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. He pledged to galvanize the United Nations system to provide stronger, more effective

support to all stakeholders and said he would form a global network of male leaders to help him mobilize men in government, the arts and sports, business and the religious sphere, as well as work with women’s groups worldwide.

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said DESA would do its part, noting that the recently concluded forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development had addressed the issue of gender-based violence in employment. He urged the Women’s Commission to establish a set of indicators, supported by the DESA’s Statistics Division, as there were few reliable statistics on women’s discrimination. Further, the Commission’s current session, which was considering the impact of climate change on women as an “emerging issue”, should seek ways to boost women’s representation and input in global efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Similarly, Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, said women accounted for most of the poorest people in disaster-prone areas and always faced the greatest obstacles to rebuilding their lives after disaster struck. She called on the Commission to include human security in its agenda, in order to address climate change’s serious threat to humanity and hold a meaningful discussion on its impact on women, men and children.

Mayanja said the 2002 Monterrey Consensus had recognized gender equality, women’s empowerment and poverty eradication as development goals, but it provided little in the way of concrete action plans or specific policy recommendations. More than 120 countries had national gender plans, but they were rarely integrated into national development strategies or funded adequately for effective implementation. Sufficient, predictable and sustainable resources to reduce and eliminate gender bias across sectors were crucial.

Source: WOM/1664. For more information:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm>

Consensus on promoting full employment and decent work for all

Commission for Social Development concludes 46th session on 22 February with texts on decent work, disability, ageing, Africa's development partnership

Recognizing that a people-centred approach must be at the heart of economic and social development, the Commission for Social Development concluded its forty-sixth session on 22 February, calling on governments to match their words with deeds on decent employment for all. The Commission has also put forward resolutions urging greater attention to persons with disabilities and elderly persons, as well as a text on the New Partnership for Africa's Development. All resolutions except the text on ageing will be forwarded to the Economic and Social Council for final adoption in July.

Freedom of association, recognition of the right to organize and bargain collectively, and elimination of all forms of forced labour, child labour, and discrimination in respect of employment and occupation are at the heart of International Labour Organization conventions and core principles embodied in the Decent Work Agenda underpinning the consensus view.

Recalling the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, which had embraced the notion of putting people at the centre of development, the text would have the Economic and Social Council stress that productive employment and decent work are key elements for the sustainable development of all countries, and reaffirm that decent work should be a made a central objective of relevant national and international policies and development strategies as part of the global efforts to achieve agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The text reaffirms that social integration policies should be designed to reduce inequalities, promote access to basic social services, education for all and health care, and increase the participation and integration of social groups and, to that end, stresses that policies and strategies to achieve full employment and decent work should include specific measures to promote gender equality and foster integration for social groups, such as youth, persons

with disabilities, and older persons, as well as migrants and indigenous peoples.

Further, the Council is encouraged to call on the public sector to continue to play its important role in developing an environment that enables the effective generation of full and productive employment and decent work for all, while acknowledging its role as an employer, and likewise calls on the private sector to continue its vital role in generating new investments, employment and financing for development and in advancing efforts towards full employment and decent work.

On the disability issue, the Commission is urging governments, United Nations entities and the wider international community to incorporate the perspective of disabled persons in the formulation of policies, the conduct of their mandate and missions, and their budget allocations, aiming at the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in development, both as beneficiaries and agents. If approved by the Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability would be called upon to advocate equal opportunities for disabled persons, promote awareness of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and act as a catalyst for international and technical cooperation on disability issues.

A resolution on ageing encourages governments to continue their efforts to mainstream the concerns of older persons in policy agendas, "bearing in mind the crucial importance of family, intergenerational interdependence, solidarity and reciprocity for social development, and the realization of all human rights for older persons, and to prevent age discrimination and provide social integration." In addition, data collection, sharing of ideas, information and good practices were recognized as important to the successful review and appraisal of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, and should continue.

Finally, progress made by African countries in fulfilling the social dimensions of their NEPAD commitments will be brought to the attention of the Council. The Commission stresses, however, "a favourable national and international environment for Africa's growth and development, including measures to promote a policy environment conducive to private sector development and entrepreneurship" are needed to advance.

The Commission recognizes the need for national Governments and the international community to continue efforts to increase the flow of new and additional resources for development financing, and welcomes the efforts by development partners to align their financial and technical support to Africa more closely with the priorities of NEPAD.

Source: SOC/4745. For more information:
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2008.htm>

Trends and analysis

Climate change, financial turmoil and development policy

World economists, environmental experts, and social scientists meet in New York in March to consider climate change, financial turmoil, development gains and what it all means for developing countries

The international response to climate change will be one of the main issues up for discussion when the Committee for Development Policy convenes its tenth session in New York from 17 to 20 March. Other items on the agenda include the current financial turmoil and its implications for developing countries, and monitoring the progress of countries graduating from least developed status.

The Committee's development experts will face the challenge of recommending an effective policy response to climate change by developing countries, bearing in mind that action to mitigate the impact of climate change and adapt to its effects must continue to support the development aspirations of all nations. Of particular concern are vulnerable developing countries most likely to suffer from adverse environmental conditions in the short-term. Strengthened cooperation at the global level will likely be required.

The widely-expected deceleration of the world economy is another major reason for concern for the Committee because of the economic shock it could have on developing nations and further delays in meeting development goals. Low income countries, whose recent economic performance has been boosted by higher commodity prices and increased external demand, will be particularly affected. These countries tend to lack currency reserves and other financial resources, making it difficult to introduce counter-cyclical policies that act as a cushion against an economic downturn.

Are the existing multilateral contingency financing mechanisms suitable for dealing with the current financial turmoil? Can they deliver what is needed at this stage, without imposing an undue burden in terms of cost or conditionality? What innovative approaches might one consider to strengthen multilateral financial instruments? These are some of the questions the Committee will consider.

Finally, the Committee will have before it a suggestion to establish an "early warning" procedure to detect signs of a possible deterioration in the progress of countries graduating from the list of least developed countries. The Economic and Social Council would be informed, with particular emphasis on situations where support of the international community has been abruptly interrupted. In preparation, a group of experts from the Committee met in January to review monitoring guidelines.

The Committee is a 24-member advisory body that draws on the expertise of top economists, environmental experts, and social scientists from around the world, and reports to the Economic and Social Council.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/>

New media, new entrepreneurs in emerging markets

The Global Alliance for ICT and Development is hosting an event on new media, new entrepreneurs and new ICT opportunities in emerging markets on 25 and 26 March in New York. The second in a series, the conference will give leaders in the information and communication technology industry a chance to discuss the use of technology to drive development, understanding what is in the mind of ICT entrepreneurs and how new media are shaping business economics in developing countries.

The first day will be occupied with a number of panel sessions, with the second day devoted to an investors' forum showcasing emerging ICT investment opportunities in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific. Government officials, business leaders, academics, civil society representatives, and the media are expected to attend.

Participants will also have an opportunity to watch for the next "mega-venture" to champion doing business with the "base of the pyramid." They will also hear about financing solutions from a range of well-known investment firms.

The first such event, entitled "United Nations meets Silicon Valley" saw ICT leaders meet in April 2007

on the question of public-private sector partnerships to bolster the use of technology in development with special attention on increasing broadband connectivity to Africa and expanding telecentres in developing countries, two of the Alliance's flagship initiatives.

For more information: <http://www.un-gaid.org/>

Corporate philanthropy meets world poverty

The Economic and Social Council met with business leaders on New York on 25 February to explore links between corporate giving and international development goals

Economic and Social Council delegates met informally with business leaders on 25 February to reflect on the role of corporate philanthropy in advancing the Millennium Development Goals. Council members were offered a chance to learn more about the motives and interests behind private sector giving. Corporate executives, for their part, heard about opportunities for partnership to help governments meet international sustainable development objectives.

The event was organized around two panel discussions, one on "strategic philanthropy" moderated by Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the MDGs, and one on "leadership and partnership" moderated by Kathy Bushkin Calvin, Executive Vice-President and COO of the United Nations Foundation.

The subject of corporate support for development is especially relevant for the Council, which will hold its first Development Cooperation Forum in July. The Forum is intended to provide a broad perspective on development assistance by also addressing the contribution of donors who are not members of OECD's Development Assistance Committee.

Corporate philanthropy, one of many types of philanthropy, is a relatively new phenomenon associated with the marketing arms of major corporations and is usually to promote positive brand values in the global market place. At the same time, it is clear that many of the goals of international corporate philanthropy are coalescing around the same UN values and activities as defined by the MDGs, including the eradication of extreme poverty

in its many dimensions while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.

Private philanthropy constitutes a significant and increasing share of overall development assistance. Contributions to international development from non-government entities in developed countries – including businesses and foundations – grew from \$11.5 billion in 2005 to \$14.6 billion in 2006 – while official development assistance allocated by OECD member countries fell by 4.5 per cent during that time to \$104.5 billion in 2006.

Corporate giving aimed at fighting world poverty is thus taking its place among the growing component of development assistance that supplements aid from OECD member governments. In this context, it is clear that the impact of this source of assistance could be substantially greater if appropriate tools were found to give greater coherence to the work of the many diverse actors involved.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ecosoc/phlntrpy/philanthropy.shtml>



Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the MDGs, addressing the Economic and Social Council on corporate

philanthropy on 25 February

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/specialevents/2008/se080225pm1.rm>

Mixed reaction to economic news among ECOSOC delegates

There was no shortage of ideas on how to respond to the current economic downturn at an informal Council meeting on 6 February

What is the current state of the world economy and what should be done about it? This was the subject of an informal gathering of the Economic and Social Council on 6 February, attended by a number of well-known figures in economics. Among them were Nouriel Roubini, Professor of Economics at New York University, Rob Vos of DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division, and Jomo Kwame Sundaram, the UN Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development.

Addressing delegates, Mr. Roubini predicted that this United States recession will last four to six quarters, longer than previously anticipated, and that it will spread globally. Triggered by the burst of the housing bubble, the impending recession will be a direct corollary of several weaknesses and problems inherent in the United States financial system which cannot simply be rectified with an easing of monetary policy. The economy not only faces illiquidity but also an insolvency problem, has to deal with a glut in housing and consumer durables and a lack of transparency of its financial sector.

In addition to short term fiscal measures there is a need to think of ways to establish a more robust global financial system and better risk management in developing countries but also, as the current crisis demonstrates, in developed countries. Such medium-term measures could be spearheaded by the Group of 7 finance ministers, and the Financial Stability Forum.

Rob Vos, Director of DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division, concurred that 2008 might see a major slowdown of the world economy. He predicted that the indebtedness of the United States will increase and that net financial flows from developing to developed countries will continue, mainly due to the continued build up of foreign currency reserves in United States dollars by developing countries.

As the dollar devalues further, countries might be moving into other currencies to diversify their risks, which in turn would put additional downward pressure on the dollar. Vos suggested these vast foreign reserves should be used to stop the devaluation of the dollar. Europe and Japan, as well as developing countries with large current account surpluses could provide an economic stimulus to revive the United States economy.

To check the impending recession, Vos called for measures to improve the regulation of the financial system, concerted action to avoid the hard landing of the dollar and multilateral policy coordination involving all relevant stakeholders. For this, the IMF needs to make more progress in changing its governance structure and in strengthening its credibility as a guardian of the multilateral system of surveillance and as a mediator in a process of international policy coordination.

A multiplicity of views

Many delegates welcomed the panelists' sobering, if not alarming, assessment of the current state of the world economy and noted that DESA had in last year's report on the World Economic Situation and Prospects already warned of the downside risks to global growth behind current economic woes. Others, however, suggested that the panel's projections were overly pessimistic. The current recession should be seen in a historical perspective and in the light of business cycles.

Opinions also differed over how to respond to current challenges facing the global economy. Some suggested that Council discussions should have a stronger take on this matter and called for the translation of DESA's policy recommendations into policy actions. Others indicated that emphasis should be placed on what countries can do individually, with the IMF and Basel Committee on Banking Supervision having a stronger role to play than the UN. Others argued that a global common currency reserve was now more feasible than ever. Still others suggested that an investment-led recovery might be an alternative to further dollar depreciation.

The panelists concurred that the international reserve system needs to be reformed in the medium to long run and that there is a need to move away from predominantly dollar-denominated reserves. An investment-led recovery would on the other hand constitute as much of a zero-sum game as much as that further dollar devaluation would not be the solution to a benign adjustment of the global imbalances. These options are therefore not very attractive solutions.

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development, stressed that the Council has a record of having responded effectively to several crises, inter alia, the Asian crisis. In several cases it has been proven that collective responses are more efficient than individual policy responses at country level. Mr. Jomo concluded that the world economy can benefit from the informal discussions taking place within the Council.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/StateWorldEconomy.shtml>

Technical cooperation

Civic engagement in city governance

Urban managers share views on participatory government at Porto Alegre conference



The first World Conference on the Development of Cities was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to map innovative experiences in

participatory urban management. The week-long event, from 13 to 16 February, was sponsored in part by DESA along with UNESCO, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and a host of other public and private sector entities.

More than 2,000 public administration professionals gathered to hear Guido Bertucci, Director of the DESA Division for Public Administration and Development Management, discuss civic engagement for urban governance and inclusive development, in a panel that featured Mayors José Fogaça of Porto Alegre, Mario Conejo of Otavalo (Ecuador), Zea Usca of Villa El Salvador (Peru), together with Alberto Paranhos of UN-Habitat and Jonas Rabinovitch, Senior Adviser on Governance in DESA. Altogether, the conference attracted more than 7,000 public officials, urban management experts, academics and community leaders, along with representatives from international organizations and the media.

“Inclusive governance depends on establishing working partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society,” stresses Rabinovitch adding that, “Beyond the rhetoric, there is also a methodological challenge.” Indeed, Rabinovitch points out, incorporating the needs of women, the disabled, youth, and older persons is hard to achieve without active civic engagement in the planning and budgeting processes of local governments. More than half of humankind now lives in urban areas.

Later this year, DESA will release its flagship World Public Sector Report 2008 on the subject of civic engagement in public governance. The report will showcase innovations and emerging references for civic engagement in public policy design and

implementation, along with methodological and capacity-building options.

For more information:

<http://www.cmdc2008.com.br/novo/programacao.php?tipo=4&idioma=pt&dia=1>

Action on ageing in Grenada

DESA workshop in St. George’s provides guidance on national planning for older persons

Experts from DESA’s Division for Social Policy and Development head to Grenada to advise government officials as they draft a national plan of action on ageing. The four-day workshop, from 11-14 March, is being organized jointly with the ECLAC Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean.

Older persons in Grenada, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, represent an increasing proportion of the population – a demographic shift for which a clear set of strategies is needed. Sustainable public finances for social security and pensions that can guarantee a decent standard of living for all are especially important.

The most significant hurdles for the island nation are lack of financial support, limited human resource capacity, lack of public awareness of issues facing older persons, and scarcity of income generation opportunities for this age group. Women are particularly vulnerable because of breaks in economic participation associated with childbearing, which put them at a disadvantage in social protection systems, and greater longevity.

DESA’s support to the Government of Grenada is part of a larger effort to build national capacities for implementing the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Similar advisory missions are being undertaken in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Cameroon and Senegal.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/building_national.html



DESA Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang joins Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions on 8February to consider

perspectives on ageing. The event was held in conjunction with the 46th session of the Commission for Social Development in New York.
<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/specialevents/2008/se080208.rm>

Environmentally sound transport for Asia

A regional forum on environmentally sustainable transport will be held in Singapore from 17 to 19 March to promote public health, non-motorized transport, cleaner fuel and noise abatement among a host of other “people-friendly” transport policies in Asia. Government representatives and transport experts from over twenty South and Southeast Asian countries are expected to attend.

Forum participants will be invited to share experiences and knowledge of best practices, policy instruments and techniques, in the spirit of the 2005 Aichi Statement on environment and transport. The Aichi statement, together with the so-called Kyoto Declaration of 1993, constitutes a blueprint for action on environmentally-friendly transport policy for the continent. Though neither is a binding instrument, the Aichi Statement and Kyoto Declaration are generally supported by all countries in the region.

The forum itself has a broad membership of international, inter-governmental, donor, civil society and other national organizations. The Singapore event is being organized by DESA’s Center for Regional Development in Nagoya, in partnership with the Governments of Singapore and Japan.

For more information:

<http://www2.unpan.org/Regions/Global/tabid/80/Default.aspx>

Publications and websites

Technical reports



Global E-Government Survey 2008: From E-Government to Connected Governance

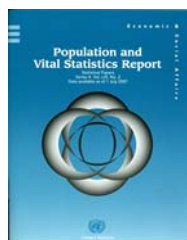
The Global E-Government Survey 2008: From E-Government to Connected Governance is now available online. The report, prepared by DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management, assesses the e-government readiness of the 192 countries based on a review of websites, telecommunication infrastructure, and human capacity.

The survey also sheds light on gains in operational efficiency through integration of back-office functions. Such initiatives, if successful, can improve the effectiveness of government agencies. The report finds that complexity, expressed in terms of the number of functions within the scope of an integration project and number of agencies involved, is the primary determinant of outcomes. More ambitious projects tend not to live up to promises, with the ability to change public service cultures, address trade union concerns, and provide skilled management among the chief factors of success.

For more information:

http://www.unpan.org/egovkb/global_reports/08report.htm

Statistical compilations



Population and Vital Statistics Report, July 2007

This semi-annual journal provides estimates of world and regional populations as well as estimates for 218 countries. Information is derived from each country's latest population, national census and from nationally representative statistics on birth and mortality.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/vitstats/>



Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and MBS Online

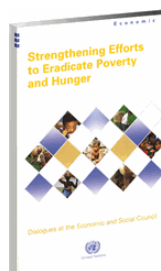
MBS provides current economic and social statistics for more than 200 countries and territories of the world. It contains over 50 tables of monthly and/or annual and quarterly data on a variety of subjects illustrating important economic trends and developments, including population, prices, employment and earnings, energy, manufacturing, transport, construction, international merchandise trade and finance.

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In this issue: Retail price indices relating to living expenditures of United Nations officials; fuel imports, developed economies; indicators on fuel imports, developed economies; registration of new motor vehicles; external trade conversion factors; manufactured good exports; selected series of world statistics. Publication symbol ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Q/420.

For more information: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mbs>

Meeting records



Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger: Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council

This book presents an overview of the key debates that took place during the Economic and Social Council meetings at the 2007 high-level segment, at which the Annual Ministerial Review and Development Cooperation Forum – two new functions mandated by world leaders at the 2005 World Summit – were launched. The discussions revolved around strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger. This publication also includes the Secretary-General's report as well as the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the ECOSOC high-level segment.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ecosoc/docs/seeph.shtml>

Working papers

New Thinking on Poverty: Implications for Globalization and Poverty Reduction Strategies

Three main changes in thinking about poverty have gained increasing currency over the past decade. First, the concept of poverty has broadened, with increasing attention to issues of vulnerability, inequality and human rights. Second, the causal structure has broadened to include causal variables, such as social, political, cultural, coercive and environmental capital. Third, the causal structure has deepened to focus on flows of individuals into and out of poverty, rather than on changes in the stock of poverty, and on strategies of social protection versus poverty reduction. The paper reviews these changes and their implications for globalization and policy.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2008/wp65_2008.pdf

Excess Liquidity, Oligopolistic Loan Markets and Monetary Policy in LDCs

Evidence about commercial banks' liquidity preference says the following about the loan market in LDCs: (i) the loan interest rate is a minimum mark-up rate; (ii) the loan market is characterized by oligopoly power; and (iii) indirect monetary policy, a cornerstone of financial liberalization, can only be effective at very high interest rates that are likely to be deflationary. The minimum rate is a mark-up over an exogenous foreign interest rate, marginal transaction costs and a risk premium. The paper utilizes and extends the oligopoly model of the banking firm. A calibration exercise tends to replicate the observed stylized facts.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2008/wp64_2008.pdf

Outreach material

Concerted International Policy Action Needed to Tackle Worsening Global Outlook

The global economic outlook has turned gloomy, very much along the lines of the pessimistic scenario in the most recent World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008. If the US economy moves into recession this year, world economic growth could slow to just 1.6 percent in 2008, debunking the myth of its "decoupling" from the US. This policy brief by DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division highlights some of the more pertinent issues.

To download:

<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/policybriefs/policybrief5.pdf>

Websites



Country or Area (2005)	2005
Algeria	5,558,485,216
Africa	883,352,353,953
Albania	3,246,000,510
Algeria	95,571,466,482

UNdata: A World of Information

The DESA Statistics Division has just launched a new internet-based data service for the global user community. It brings UN statistical databases within easy reach of users through a single entry point. Users can search and download a variety of statistical resources of the UN system.

"The UN-system has accumulated over the past 60 years an impressive amount of information. UNdata, developed by the Statistics Division of DESA, is a new powerful tool, which will bring this unique and authoritative set of data not only to the desks of decision makers and analysts, but also to journalists, to students and to all citizens of the world," says Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

Since its foundation, the United Nations system has been collecting statistical information from member states on a variety of topics. The information thus collected constitutes a considerable information asset of the organization. However, these statistical data are often stored in proprietary databases, each with unique dissemination and access policies. As a result, users are often unaware of the full array of statistical information that the UN system has in its data libraries. The current arrangement also means that users are required to move from one database to another to access different types of information.

UNdata addresses this problem by pooling major UN databases and those of several international into one

single internet environment. The innovative design allows a user to access a large number of UN databases either by browsing the data series or through a keyword search.

The project has been developed in partnership with Statistics Sweden, the Gapminder Foundation and with partial financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

For more information: <http://data.un.org/>



ECOSOC National Voluntary Presentations

The Division for Economic and Council Support and Coordination has set up a website on national voluntary

presentations in preparation for the 2008 Annual Ministerial Review. ECOSOC's national voluntary presentations provide an opportunity for countries to describe progress they have made on achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Eight countries will be making presentations this year – Belgium, Chile, Finland, Tanzania, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom.

For more information:
<http://www.ecosoc/newfunct/amrnational.shtml>

Comings and goings

Comings



Mr. Thomas Stelzer of Austria will join DESA as Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs beginning in March. Since August 2001, Ambassador Stelzer has been serving as Permanent

Representative of Austria to the United Nations at Vienna, IAEA, UNIDO and CTBTO Preparatory Commission.

Mr. Stelzer was President of the UNIDO Industrial Development Board in 2005/2006, Chair of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in 2003, and Facilitator and Chair of the Vienna Terrorism Symposiums in 2002 and 2007. Most recently, he served as a Vice-Chair of the Second Conference of States Parties of the UN Convention against Corruption, which he had also co-negotiated.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Stelzer held a number of diplomatic and international posts, including Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, Deputy Director of the Austrian Cultural Institute in New York, and Minister-Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations in New York. He was the Austrian delegate to the General Assembly Committee for Disarmament and International Security (First Committee) and representative to the governing bodies of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA.

Mr. Stelzer has a law degree from Vienna University; a Master of Arts in Latin American studies from Stanford University; and a Diploma in International Relations from the Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies at Bologna.

The following staff members also joined DESA recently:

Mr. Wai Min Kwok, Associate Programme Officer, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

Mr. Oddbjorn Haugen, Associate Statistician, Statistics Division

The following staff members were promoted in February:

Mr. Sami Areikat, Sustainable Development Officer, Division for Sustainable Development

Mr. Srdjan Mrkic, Chief of Social and Housing Statistics Section, Statistics Division

Ms. M. Cristina Rojas Espinosa, Staff Assistant, Executive Office

Mr. Diego Rumiany, Programme Officer, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination

Mr. Broddi Sigurdarson, Social Affairs Officer, Division for Social Policy and Development

Calendar

March

DESA/UNDP e-Discussion on Achieving Sustainable Development
Online 4 February-14 March

Commission on the Status of Women
52nd session, New York, 25 February-7 March

Economic and Social Council
Informal Global Preparatory Meeting for the 2008 High-level Segment
New York, 6 March

Workshop on Debt, Finance and Emerging Issues in Financial Integration
New York, 6-7 March

Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development
Preparatory review session on the Monterrey Consensus, New York 10-12 March

Workshop on Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
St. George's, Grenada, 11-14 March

Committee for Development Policy
10th session, New York, 17-20 March

GAID Meeting on New Media, New Entrepreneurs, and New ICT Opportunities in Emerging Markets
New York, 25-26 March

April

General Assembly
Thematic debate on achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015
New York, 1-2 April

International Conference on Strengthening Integration of the Economies in Transition into the World Economy through Economic Diversification
Geneva, 2-4 April

Commission on Population and Development
41st session, New York, 7-11 April

Special High-level Meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods

Institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD
New York, 14 April

DESA/Eurostat/World Bank/Norway Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics
Oslo, 14-16 April

Committee of Experts on Public Administration
7th session, New York, 14-18 April

Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development
Preparatory review session on the Monterrey Consensus, New York 15-16 April

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
7th session, New York, 21 April-2 May

Economic and Social Council
2008 organizational session (resumed), New York, 29-30 April

Observances

International Women's Day
6 March

The theme of International Women's Day 2008, celebrated on 6 March, will be investing in women and girls. At United Nations Headquarters, the day will be commemorated with appearances by Secretary-General Ban, Ana Vilma Alvarez de Guth, Vice President of El Salvador, Geraldine Fraser, South African Minister of Public Service and Administration, and Lloyd Blankfein, Chairman and CEO of Goldman Sachs.

A high-level panel on investments in women and girls will follow, with Muriel Siebert, the first woman to become a member of the New York Stock Exchange, joining the discussants from national, bilateral and multilateral institutions. The UNHQ event is being organized by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, a committee of gender focal points from across the UN system.

In adopting its resolution on the observance of Women's Day, the General Assembly wanted to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women.

At the same time, the world body acknowledged the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security.

For the women of the world, the day's symbolism has a wider meaning. It is an occasion to review how far they have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development. It is also an opportunity to unite, network and mobilize for meaningful change.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/>

World Water Day

20 March

World Water Day 2008 will be celebrated by the UN on 20 March this year with a spotlight on the issue of sanitation. People around the world are encouraged to celebrate the day by drawing attention to the world's sanitation challenge. Of special note, HRH the Prince of Orange will attend celebrations in Geneva.

The General Assembly declared 22 March as World Day for Water in 1992 to promote awareness of the extent to which water resources contributes to economic productivity and social well-being.

For more information:

<http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/>

DESA News is an insider's look at the United Nations in the area of economic and social development policy. The newsletter is produced by the Communications and Information Management Service of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with DESA Divisions. Prior to January 2007, DESA News was issued every other month. It is now issued monthly.

Inquiries should be addressed to esa@un.org.