



Video

Forest management – *Fifteen years after discussions began on a global approach to protecting the world's forests, the General Assembly adopted on 17 December the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests. "Let us not forget that today over 1.6 billion people depend on forests for fuel, food, medicine and income," says Assembly President Srgjan Kerim, emphasizing the role of forests in stabilizing climate change, and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems.*

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/ga/62/2007/ga-specialevent071217am.rm> (59 minutes)

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The turbulence factor

World economic growth in 2008 may be compromised by financial uncertainties and imbalances despite strength in Asia and Africa

Stakes for policymakers in developed and developing countries are high in 2008. With the world economy expected to slow, governments will be faced with the challenge of avoiding a global recession and safeguarding growth against the risk of continued financial turmoil and a weakening dollar. For poor countries, strong and sustainable economic growth that is resilient to economic turbulence – while not the only condition – is pivotal to generating the resources needed to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium

Development Goals. For industrialized countries, too, expanding economic activity is essential for grappling with long-term challenges such as population ageing and new investments needed to confront climate change.

The projection in the flagship World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008, to be released on 9 January, points to a moderation of growth for 2008 compared with 2006-2007. The drag on the world economy is mainly being driven by conditions in the United States, the world's largest economy, whose economic and financial ills often have global consequences. The bout of instability in the financial markets precipitated by sub-prime mortgage difficulties in that country has, for instance, had global repercussions. A credit squeeze and higher risk premiums are impacting financial markets even

in countries such as Indonesia that have limited sub-prime exposure.

Developing countries are vulnerable to a possible downturn of the global economy, the DESA annual forecast of short-term global and regional global economic trends finds. Growth in most emerging economies is not yet self-sustaining with these areas highly dependent on an economic environment that is shaped by the policies and performance of developed regions. In the outlook for 2008, therefore, slower growth of the United States and other developed economies may hinder the growth prospects of developing countries and economies in transition, although with considerable variability.

Strong but uneven growth

In the past few years, developing countries as a whole have performed well, exhibiting growth levels of around 7 percent. Developing countries in East Asia did remarkably well, led by China. South Asia also grew at a robust pace, led by India. African economies grew at an average 5.4 percent over the last decade with continued strength expected in 2008, according to the World Economic Situation and Prospects.

Yet, DESA's annual report nuances, the solid performance of developing countries on the whole obscures important differences among countries with several economies performing poorly as a result of adverse weather conditions, trade shocks and civil strife. In a special event on development held by the General Assembly on 6 December, Nobel economist Joseph Stiglitz noted that growing inequality within most countries was especially worrying, implying that reductions in poverty are slower than expected. In India, for example, the prevalence of malnutrition has soared despite increased growth.

Thirteen African countries, with 25 percent of population, grew less than 3 percent from 1998 to 2006, and another 25 countries, with almost 50 percent of Africa's population, grew between 3 percent and 5 percent. While many regions are making headway on some of the Millennium Development Goals, absolute poverty has risen over the last decade in sub-Saharan Africa. The most recent figures by the World Bank suggest that only a third of the world's poorest countries will achieve a single Millennium Development Goal by 2015.

The need to join forces

These conditions might be exacerbated by the challenges faced by developing countries in 2008. Growing global demand for food, high energy prices, and integration of global energy and food markets through bio-fuels coupled with global warming are likely to lead to increasing food prices, Stiglitz indicated. This in turn could lead to a macroeconomic problem owing to rising inflation and, in this regard, Stiglitz cautioned developing countries against raising interest rates.

Indeed, interest rates cuts are being used to stimulate the economy in the United States, and treat the current US slowdown. But in the current context, DESA's forecast stresses, such cuts could precipitate a further depreciation and loss of confidence in the dollar. It would be safer and more useful, says the report, to attract funds from countries with large savings and current accounts surpluses, such as China, Japan and oil producing nations, which could be accomplished through stepped-up public investment on health, education and social security.

In addition to stimulatory measures, the report suggests that governments should join forces to stave off a dollar decline that risks being steeper and more abrupt than the descent that has prevailed so far. The large current-account deficit and perceptions that the US debt position is approaching unsustainable levels have been among the major factors underlying the depreciation of the US dollar by about 35 percent against other major currencies since 2002, says the report.



The threat of a hard landing may be further intensified by the very nature of the global reserve system which uses the national currency of the United States as the main reserve currency and instrument for international payments. Under this system, the only way for the rest of the world to accumulate dollar assets and reserves is for the United States to run an external deficit. The report recommends obtaining greater stability through “an officially backed multicurrency reserve system, reducing the likelihood of crisis where capital flight out of the major single reserve currency brings on disastrous global economic repercussions.”

Addressing global imbalances

In 2008, reserve management will be a challenge given vulnerability to a sudden depreciation of the US dollar. Should a hard landing of the dollar occur, there will likely be much greater instability in the global financial system and a disorderly unwinding of global imbalances, the DESA report forecasts. For developing countries holding a large proportion of foreign reserves in dollar-denominated assets, a sharp depreciation of the dollar would entail great financial losses.

In his presentation to the General Assembly, Stiglitz emphasized that developing countries have borne the brunt of the risk associated with the recent instability in global financial markets. The global reserve system can be considered inequitable in that developing countries lend the United States and other reserve countries trillions of dollars at low interest rates and borrow back at much higher rates. This implies an implicit subsidy to the United States, he stressed, which is greater than all of its foreign aid. Moreover, money is flowing the wrong way – from poor countries to rich – increasing the worry of a disorderly unravelling of imbalances.

The IMF has already begun multilateral consultations to deal with global monetary imbalances through concerted policy actions. The participants in this dialogue, which include the United States, Japan, the euro area, China and Saudi Arabia, seem to agree on the desirability of correcting global imbalances without jeopardizing sustained growth, and on the need to work together. The World Economic Situation and Prospects advises that such discussions should be broadened to involve developing countries, and that agreement be reached on multi-year policy adjustment schedules that can be monitored in order to make participants accountable and increase the likelihood of follow through.

Bilateral agreements can undermine multilateral trade

This year could prove to be the toughest test for developing countries in some time, according to DESA report. The slowing of the United States and other developed economies will take air out of the rising commodity prices which have buoyed developing country growth. The slowdown will undercut world trade, which in 2007 has already tailed off from the high growth rates of 2004 and 2006. Also apparent last year was greater volatility in investment flows – and emerging market economies have already had experience with investment booms that turned to busts.

“Many countries have been put under pressure to sign bilateral agreements which, hidden into trade agreements, are very much adverse to the interests of developing countries and, evidence has it that they have not promoted investment,” according to Stiglitz. Highlighting a longstanding problem for developing countries, he added that “the growth of bilateral trade agreements is undermining the multilateral trading system.” Top economist Jagdish Bhagwati, also commenting on the state of the world economy at the General Assembly special event on development, further warned that bilateral trade agreements are perpetrating the trend of imposing stringent restrictions on trading partners.

Deputy-Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro for her part recalled developing countries’ need to have access to open, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory trading and financial systems. “It is imperative that the Doha trade negotiations conclude early and deliver on the promise to be a true development round,” she urged.

Reform of global economic governance

A problem of global economic governance may be at the root of many of these issues. The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008 reminds us that reform of the Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – remains still high on the agenda. At its 2006 annual meeting in Singapore, the IMF Board of Governors approved an agenda and timeframe for reforming voting power and governance structures to ensure better representation of developing countries and bolster the Fund’s legitimacy and relevance, which continues to be under discussion.

Meanwhile, changes at the IMF do not yet appear to have much impact on decision-making. The new

head of the IMF, Dominique Strauss-Khan, was recently selected the same way as in the past despite dissatisfaction with recent choices, recalled Stiglitz. Broader participation and more transparency at the World Trade Organization are also essential but remain elusive, he added. As a consequence, multinational corporations tend to have excessive influence over global trade decisions.

The DESA forecast for 2008 concludes that without reform of global financial institutions, concerted action to confront the problem of imbalances in the world economy will likely remain “far removed from what is needed and enhance the risk of a much deeper slowdown in world economic growth.”

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/wesp.html>



Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development; Joseph Stiglitz, President of the Initiative for Policy Dialogue at Columbia

University; and Jagdish Bhagwati, Senior Fellow in International Economics at the Council on Foreign Relations at Columbia University brief the press on 6 December on recent developments in the world economy and current policy challenges. A recording is available online at

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2007/pc071206.rm> (27 minutes)

Saving indigenous languages

Among other things, the survival of a language depends on the prosperity and political influence of the community which speaks it

Some five to seven thousand languages are spoken in the world today and the majority of these are the mother-tongues of indigenous groups. Linguists fear that in the next hundred years many of these languages will simply vanish. To the indigenous groups who speak them, these languages are more than a means of communication; they confer on their speakers a sense of identity and uniqueness. Language is about who we are. Losing our language means losing our culture, how we see our place in the world and how we connect and communicate with those who came before us and those who follow us.



Along with income inequality and income concentration, our world also suffers from great language inequality and concentration. Some ninety-seven percent of the world's population speaks a mere four percent of the world's languages. The current trend is for this four percent of languages to crowd out completely the remaining ninety-six percent. There are numerous reasons for this tendency.

Most countries are pluricultural

It has been the policy in many countries to assimilate native populations into the dominant culture. Assimilationist policies that lead to the destruction of languages are tantamount to a form of ethnocide or linguistic genocide. Few countries are homogeneous, but rather multi-ethnic and pluricultural. The world's almost two hundred countries are home to some five thousand ethnic groups, while over two thirds of all countries have more than one ethnic or religious group making up at least ten percent of the population.

Despite their long and rich histories, indigenous languages are often relegated to a second class status of dialect, or vernacular, synonymous with poverty, backwardness and a lack of development. Misguided past policies have treated native languages as a part of the problem of underdevelopment, which was supposed to be solved through the introduction of the dominant language, which stood for modernity, development and national unity. Being offered no alternatives, many indigenous peoples have been forced to comply, thus exacerbating the loss of their languages, cultures and identities.

To complicate matters, indigenous peoples are increasingly migrating to urban areas. By way of example, an estimated fifty percent of Chile's

indigenous population and eighteen percent of that of Ecuador is urban. Much of this migration is seasonal or short term, allowing indigenous peoples to maintain economic, social and cultural ties with their communities of origin, and thus resist assimilation. However, both indigenous and non-indigenous migrants tend to stay longer than originally anticipated, sometimes losing touch with their peoples, leading to increased social fragmentation, a loss of identities and deterioration of language skills.

Education matters

According to an expert paper on indigenous children's education and indigenous languages submitted to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2005, educational models for indigenous and minority children that use mainly dominant languages as languages of instruction have extremely negative consequences on the right to education and perpetuate poverty.

Education through the dominant language prevents access to education, since it creates linguistic, pedagogical and psychological barriers. Without education mainly in the mother tongue in public schools, with good teaching of a dominant language as a second language, most indigenous peoples have to accept education through a dominant or majority language, at the cost of the mother tongue which is displaced, and often replaced, by the dominant language.

Research on results of indigenous and minority education shows that the length of education in the mother tongue is more important than any other factor – including socio-economic status – in predicting the educational success of bilingual students. The worst results are with students in programmes where the students' mother tongues are not supported at all. The report concludes that education in the dominant language curtails the development of capabilities in indigenous children and perpetuates poverty.

Revitalization and rescue

To address the multiple challenges underlying the accelerating disappearance of indigenous languages, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development is organizing an expert group meeting from 8 to 10 January in New York, whose results will be reported to the Forum in April.

The meeting will be attended by indigenous experts, members of the Permanent Forum as well as interested member states, UN agencies, indigenous peoples' organizations, and non-governmental organizations. At the meeting, experts will address good practices in the areas of enabling legislation for promoting indigenous languages, the empowerment of indigenous languages through all mediums including radio and television, supporting and increasing the number of centres for the study of indigenous languages, and financing special schemes designed by indigenous peoples for revitalizing and rescuing their languages. They will also make proposals for a world conference devoted to linguistic diversity, indigenous languages, identity and education, as a contribution to the programme of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

The expert group meeting sets a visible milestone for the year 2008, which UNESCO has declared as the International Year of Languages. The meeting responds to the need for concrete public policies for the protection and promotion of indigenous languages and its outcomes, as well as subsequent decisions adopted by the Permanent Forum, will serve as guidance to policy-makers throughout the world concerned with the revitalization and promotion of language diversity and indigenous languages.

Ultimately, clear public policies backed by generous resources can certainly provide the enabling environment for promoting indigenous languages. The survival of these languages, however, will depend on the prosperity and political influence of the communities which speak them. Language policies, therefore, will need to be complemented by policies that empower indigenous groups politically, economically and socially so that they can make their livelihoods in their own communities without having to give up their language and culture or to migrate out of economic need.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/EGM_IL.html

Global dialogue on development

Agreement on triennial policy review, climate change and modalities for Doha Conference at the Second Committee

Thirty resolutions adopted by the Assembly on the recommendation of its Economic and Financial Committee with another sixty from the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

The Second Committee of the General Assembly concluded its 62nd session on 18 December having given a decisive thrust to efforts for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. The Committee adopted over thirty resolutions this year, covering a broad range of development issues.

Among the texts was a procedural resolution setting out the modalities for the 2008 Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development in Doha. This Review Conference will assess progress or setbacks in the realization of the Monterrey Consensus and reaffirm goals and commitments, leading to further action. The Committee also proclaimed the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017), after deliberating on the impact of the first Decade which ended in 2006.

Against the backdrop of the Bali Conference, the Committee passed a resolution calling for urgent global action to address climate change. Like the Committee, the Conference of the States Parties also acknowledged that efforts to address climate change should be carried out in a way that contributes to poverty eradication, sustainable development and sustained economic growth of developing countries by promoting the integration of economic development, social development and environmental protection.

The Committee – and one day later, the Assembly – also adopted a landmark resolution on the triennial comprehensive policy review. The resolution gives guidance to the UN development system in carrying out its operational activities for development at the country level, and covers many important

dimensions, such as funding, national capacity development and development effectiveness, improving its functions and follow-up.

The Committee underscored that global economic growth and a stable international financial system can strengthen the ability of developing countries to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the Committee stressed the importance of cooperative and coordinated efforts by all countries and institutions to cope with the risks of financial instability. The Committee reiterated the need to enhance the voice and participation of developing countries in the Bretton Woods institutions, and encouraged these financial institutions to take further and effective measures.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Committee could not reach a consensus on the trade and development resolution. The voting reflects the growing difficulties that the Doha round of negotiations is facing at this stage. The European Union voted against the resolution this year whereas it has abstained in the past.

The atmosphere in the Committee was generally congenial and only five resolutions ended in voting – the oil slick on Lebanese shore, permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people, unilateral economic measures, trade and development and the first ever Israeli resolution in the Second Committee titled “Agricultural technology for development.” This resolution would have the General Assembly call on Member States to step up efforts to promote technology development and transfer to developing countries under fair, transparent and mutually agreed terms. No country voted against this resolution. It was adopted with almost 120 votes in favour and near 30 abstentions.

For its part, the Third Committee forwarded sixty draft resolutions to the General Assembly plenary for consideration. Among the draft resolutions approved by consensus were texts on the protection of migrants, the girl child, and the Sub-regional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. Drafts on a variety of issues including the right to development, the inadmissibility of practices fuelling racism, the use of mercenaries or the situation of human rights in Belarus were approved by a recorded vote.

For more information: <http://www.un.org/ga/62/>



H.E. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62nd session of the General Assembly, held an end-of-year press conference on 19 December. A recording of the event is available at <http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2007/pc071219.rm> (44 minutes).

Development Cooperation Forum gears up

To ensure a comprehensive consultative process in preparation for the 2008 Development Cooperation Forum, DESA is supporting the organization of a high-level symposium in Cairo on 19-20 January, in cooperation with the Government of Egypt. The symposium is the second in a series of events intended to explore ways of promoting results-oriented development cooperation in pursuing national priorities. The first high-level, country-led symposium took place in Vienna in April 2007.

Focusing on recent examples of how countries partner up to ensure an impact of development cooperation based on national priorities, the Cairo symposium will include sessions on the future of conditionality, South-South and triangular development cooperation, and the possibility of rethinking the current framework for assessing aid quality based on principles such as national leadership and mutual accountability.

Through country studies and panel discussions, the event is intended to promote open dialogue between senior government officials and representatives of other stakeholder groups, such as international and regional organizations, civil society and academia.

The Development Cooperation Forum is mandated to provide policy guidance and options as well as recommendations on practical measures to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of development cooperation. The Forum is expected to become a principal mechanism for global dialogue and policy review on key development cooperation issues. The first DCF will take place in New York in July.

For more information:

<http://www.ecosoc/newfunct/develop.shtml>

Demand remains strong for consultative status

The NGO Committee will hold its 2008 regular session in New York from 21 to 30 January. The 19-member committee will have a heavy agenda this session with a review of 103 new applications of non-governmental organizations applying for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, 42 applications deferred from previous sessions, 135 new quadrennial reports submitted by organizations in general and special consultative status, 4 reclassifications, 6 deferred quadrennial reports and 1 deferred reclassification.

A new chair from among the African States and members of the Committee will be elected at the 2008 session to replace Colombia which has been at the helm for the past two years.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>

New members, new views in ECOSOC

General Assembly elects eighteen members to the Economic and Social Council

The General Assembly held its annual election of eighteen States to serve three-year terms on the Economic and Social Council on 8 November. States receiving the required two-thirds majority were elected according to the following pattern: four from African States, four from Asian States, three from Eastern European States, three from Latin American and Caribbean States and four from Western European and Other States. The new members are Brazil, Cameroon, China, Congo, Iceland, Malaysia, Mozambique, Moldova, New Zealand, Niger, Pakistan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Sweden, United Kingdom and Uruguay.

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

General Assembly adopts agreement to protect world's forests

The new instrument eases countries' long-term political commitment

Fifteen years after discussions began on a global approach to protect the world's forests, which are disappearing at an alarming rate, the General Assembly adopted on 17 December a new landmark international agreement to safeguard this critical natural resource. The agreement, entitled the "Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests," was negotiated in April last year within the UN Forum on Forests, serviced by DESA, and transmitted to the Assembly following its approval by the Economic and Social Council.

Hailing action by the Assembly, the Director of Forum's Secretariat, Pekka Patosaari, said it "significantly advances efforts to monitor the state of the world's forests and secure long-term political commitment to sustainable forest management." While not legally binding, the agreement sets a standard in forest management that is expected to have a major impact on efforts to reverse the loss of forest cover, reduce deforestation, prevent forest degradation, promote sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty for people dependent on forests for their survival.

Forests need to be protected because they are disappearing at an alarming rate, said Assembly President Srgjan Kerim, noting that over the past 15 years, more than 3 per cent of the planet's forests have vanished. "The instrument we have just adopted thus expresses our will to respond to this alarming trend."

For his part, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, Sha Zukang, pointed out that success in implementing the instrument will require a combination of national effort and international cooperation. "At the national level," he said, "forest issues must be integrated with other cross-sectoral issues, while at the international level, cooperation and support for a new, people-centered forest policy agenda must be enhanced."

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

Breakthrough on climate change in Bali

The agreed text does not, however, specify emission targets

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the outcome of the landmark United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia, in which 187 countries agreed on 15 December to launch a two-year process of formal negotiations on strengthening international efforts to fight, mitigate and adapt to the problem of global warming. After almost two weeks of marathon discussions, delegates agreed on both the agenda for the negotiations and a 2009 deadline for completing them so that a successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions can enter into effect in 2013.

Under the so-called Bali Roadmap, the key issues during the upcoming negotiations will be taking action to adapt to the negative consequences of climate change, such as droughts and floods; devising ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; finding ways to deploy climate-friendly technology; and financing adaptation and mitigation measures. Participating countries also agreed on a series of steps that can be taken immediately to strengthen their commitment to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, such as combating deforestation in poor countries, the scaling up of investment in green technology and enhancing funding for adaptation measures.

The text does not specify or mandate emissions targets, but it does say that deep cuts in emissions will be needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

Secretary-General Mr. Ban called the Bali Roadmap "a pivotal first step toward an agreement that can address the threat of climate change, the defining challenge of our time," adding that the agreement had met all the benchmarks for success he set out when the Conference began. The Secretary-General said he "appreciates the spirit of cooperation shown by all parties to achieve an outcome that stands to benefit all humanity."

Mr. Ban's statement welcoming the Roadmap's eventual adoption was echoed by leading UN and international environmental officials at the Conference. UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer said Bali had produced "a real breakthrough, a real opportunity for the international community to

successfully fight climate change. Parties have recognized the urgency of action on climate change and have now provided the political response to what scientists have been telling us is needed."

In his closing address to the plenary session, the Conference President and Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar hailed the "number of forward-looking decisions" in the text. "But we also have a huge task ahead of us and time to reach agreement is extremely short, so we need to move quickly," he said.

With an eye on the future, DESA Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang reminded delegates that climate change is a long-term development challenge. "Within the framework of sustainable development," he said, "the world has a way forward."

Four major UNFCCC meetings to implement the Bali Roadmap are planned for next year, with the first to be held in either March or April. The negotiations process is scheduled to conclude in 2009 at a major summit in Copenhagen.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/desa/climatechange/>

Trends and analysis

Experts take another look at LDC threshold

Committee for Development Policy may suggest changes to category that currently comprises fifty countries

An expert group meeting on possible refinements to the criteria for inclusion in, and graduation from, the list of least developed countries will unfold in New York from 16 to 18 January. The development of guidelines for monitoring the progress of countries that have graduated from the list will also be up for discussion. The meeting has been organized by DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division in support of the Committee for Development Policy which is responsible for the LDC standard.

In 2006, three criteria were used to determine LDC status, all of which had to be satisfied for a country to be added to the list by the General Assembly. They were: (1) Gross national income per capita had to be under \$745; (2) There must have been limited human development as evidenced by indicators of nutrition, health, education, and adult literacy; and, (3) There must have been signs of economic vulnerability as evidenced by economic smallness, remoteness, merchandise export concentration, dependence on agriculture, forestry and fisheries, homelessness due to natural disasters, instability of agricultural production, and instability of exports. Finally, to be included in the category, the 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.

For more information:

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

Promoting confidence in government in Asia-Pacific

Researchers gather in Honolulu to identify dimensions of governance that affect public trust

Trust in government is a serious concern for policy-makers and development practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region, much as it is elsewhere in the world. Since good governance is a necessary condition for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while effective public administration depends in turn on trust in government, many countries in the region have found themselves making limited progress towards the 2015 targets. Corruption, inadequate investment in the judiciary, police, revenue agencies, and land administration, and insufficient analysis before launching government reform initiatives are all thought to have contributed to wariness on the part of an uncertain public.

In order to better understand the role of government reform in renewing public trust, the East-West Center, sponsored by the Government of the United States, together with the UN Governance Centre sponsored by the Republic of Korea will host a workshop for policy-makers, scholars and others in Honolulu from 28 to 30 January. Research directors will present the findings of four sub-regional reviews as well as country studies from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia, which will later be published in edited form as a book. Participants are expected to identify critical dimensions of governance that affect public trust while charting a course for further action.

Asia and the Pacific is the fastest growing region in the world. Although some success has been made in reducing extreme poverty and enhancing access to primary education, none of the developing countries of the region is on track to meet all of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite high growth rates, many are falling behind in the areas of child mortality, maternal health, gender equality, the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and environmental sustainability. In addition to public caution, a limited relationship between government policy-making and programme-level intervention may be partly to blame.

For more information:

http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/bro/wseoneconference.asp?conference_id=2196

Meeting on urbanization

Though urbanization is a positive and welcome development in general, it presents important challenges that vary in nature and scale from country to country. To deepen understanding of these challenges, researchers will gather in New York from 21 to 23 January to share recent findings on the multi-faceted relationship between population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development. Experts will have a chance to reflect on the renewed worldwide interest in these matters, and discuss current publications on the topic produced by UNFPA and UN-Habitat. The meeting is being organized by DESA's Population Division.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/>

Secretary-General reinforces development message

Stressing the importance of the development pillar to the work of the United Nations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon started the new year with a visit to DESA on 2 January. Development is a foundation for peace, security and human rights, emphasized the Secretary-General, adding that "each of the pillars is mutually-reinforcing."

The Department has helped Member States accomplish much in 2007, from the inaugural session of the annual ministerial review in the Economic and



Social Council to significant legislative outcomes on indigenous peoples, forests, and persons with disabilities. DESA's work is crucial for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, noted the Secretary-General in a message intended to reinforce his personal commitment to development issues.

The General Assembly will resume discussions in March on strengthening the work of the Organization in the economic and social fields.

Year in review on UN radio:

<http://radio.un.org/play.asp?NewsID=8462>

Technical cooperation

Different countries, different needs

Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities underscores need for stable funding, national capacity-building and aid effectiveness

The General Assembly adopted a landmark text on the United Nations development system in December after two and a half weeks of intense debate in the Second Committee. Stressing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to development, the Assembly reiterated that assistance provided by UN organizations should respond to countries' varying needs and be in line with national development plans. The resolution, on the triennial comprehensive policy review, is intended to shape United Nations development activities over the next three years, specifically in the areas of funding, national capacity building and aid effectiveness.

The Assembly also noted with concern the overall decline in official development assistance in 2006, and called on developed countries to devote the targeted 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to aid by 2015, at least 0.5 per cent by 2010 and between 0.15 per cent and 0.2 per cent to least developed countries. There has been a decline in recent years of the share of core contributions – the bedrock of United Nations operational activities for development – to the Organization's funds and programmes. Donor countries and others were urged to increase their voluntary contributions to core or regular budgets substantially, and to contribute on a multi-year basis in a sustained and predictable way.

For more information:
<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/tcpr.htm>

Peace-building and good governance for African professionals

Italy funds international training programme on conflict transformation

The Government of Italy has committed \$1 million for continuation of an international training programme on peace-building and good governance administered by DESA's Division for Public

Administration and Development Management. DESA has been working with the Legon Centre for International Affairs at the University of Ghana and the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa since 2002 to train African professionals from government and civil society on the fundamentals of conflict transformation.

Since its inception, around 400 individuals have learned about election observation, election management, human rights, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and negotiations, skills that will enable participants to find employment with national, regional and international institutions active in these areas. The Italian donation will enable the project partners to provide a fourth round of training, with technical assistance from DESA in project formulation, monitoring and evaluation.

Alliances with other institutions are actively encouraged. A number of participants have been deployed in the international peace-building activities of the Department of Peace Operations as well as United Nations Volunteers, and there has been mutually-beneficial cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa such as the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre located in Accra, and the Economic Community of West African States based in Abuja.

For more information: <http://www.ug.edu.gh/itppgg/>

Launch of the Arab-Africa civic engagement network

Arab States aim to advance participatory governance through networking at Mauritania workshop

Civic engagement in policy development is an important aspect of public accountability. In order to facilitate the exchange of information, and enhance the capacity of Arab States to advance participatory governance, the Government of Mauritania has offered to host an Arab-Africa citizen engagement network. From 29 to 31 January, some seventy representatives of government, regional organizations, civil society, the media, and the private sector will gather in Nouakchott to work out an action plan for establishing the prospective network while promoting dialogue among Arab and African stakeholders on governance issues.

A discussion will be held on the benefits and challenges of networking, along with the impact that

similar international, regional and sub-regional associations have had on national policy-making. The initiative follows from the so-called Amman declaration adopted at a related workshop held in March 2007. The main conclusion emanating from the Amman meeting was that civic engagement in socio-economic policies is essential for effective and efficient implementation of national and regional development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The Nouakchott event is being organized by the Mauritanian Ministry in Charge of Relations with the Parliament and Civil Society, along with DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management, and UNDP Mauritania. Participants from seventeen Arab countries are expected to attend.

Towards a social charter for the Middle East

DESA helping Middle East Citizens' Assembly with concepts and methodology at Amman meeting

Recognizing that promoting citizen participation may be a way to enhance cooperation and security, the Middle East Citizens' Assembly has initiated discussion of a social charter for Western Asia and Northern Africa. Such a charter might address, for example, civil and political rights, employment, shelter, education, health, poverty alleviation, and social protection. The Assembly, whose member organizations bring together concerned citizens from Afghanistan to Morocco, aims to develop civic awareness through positive communication between people, and active participation of citizens in creating a future for the region.

A two-day meeting supported by DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management will be held in Amman on 8 and 9 January to consider the conceptual and methodological aspects of the proposed instrument. DESA will provide information on best practices, and advise participants on methodologies appropriate for such initiatives. His Majesty Prince El-Hassan of Jordan, primary sponsor of the initiative, will open the session. DESA provided similar support for a social charter and agenda for civic action for South Asia adopted by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in 2004.

Publications and websites

Technical reports



World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008

This publication discusses short-term prospects for the global economy and an overview of some key policy and development issues for 2008.

According to the WESP 2008, the world economy is facing serious challenges in sustaining the strong pace of economic growth seen over the past few years. While the baseline forecast is for world economic growth to moderate somewhat in 2008, the risks associated with the bursting of the housing bubble in the United States, the related unfolding credit crisis, the decline of the dollar, large global imbalances and high oil prices are all pointing to the downside.

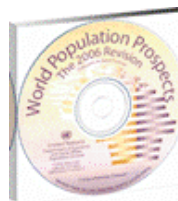
The report draws some lessons from the global financial turmoil of 2007, which was triggered by the meltdown of sub-prime mortgages in the United States, and points out that the various measures adopted by central banks of the major economies did not address the root causes of the turmoil: the huge global imbalances. In an alternative scenario, which takes into account the possibility of a sharper than expected decline in house prices in the United States and a hard landing of the US dollar, the United States economy would fall into a recession, while global growth would be significantly lower than the baseline.

In addition to trends in international trade and capital flows, WESP 2008 also covers the latest progress and policy issues related to international trade negotiations and reform of the international financial system. One of its purposes is to serve as a point of reference for discussions on economic, social and related issues taking place in various United Nations forums during the year. The WESP 2008 is a joint product of DESA, UNCTAD and the five regional commissions.

For more information:

<http://www/esa/policy/wess/wesp.html>

Statistical compilations



World Population Prospects 2006 on CD-Rom

This CD-Rom provides a comprehensive and consistent set of population data for the world's countries and their aggregates.

Information is provided for 229 countries and areas, 33 country aggregates, including the world as a whole, the more and the less developed regions, and the major areas. The title contains data on total births, total deaths, total net-migration, the respective crude rates, life expectancy at birth by sex, infant and child mortality, total fertility, net-reproduction rate and population growth rates for 1950-2050 by five-year periods, population by five-year age group and sex for five-year periods and interpolated annual total population, and a host of other data. A comprehensive and an extended comprehensive edition are available.

For more information and to order:

<http://www/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/wp2006.htm>



Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and MBS Online

MBS provides monthly statistics on more than 50 indicators from over 200 countries and areas, together with special tables illustrating important economic developments. Quarterly data for significant world and regional aggregates are included regularly.

Vol. LXI, no. 10, October 2007

In this issue: Civil aviation traffic (passenger-kilometres and cargo net tonne-kilometres); total exports and imports by countries or areas (volume, unit value indices, terms of trade and purchasing power of exports, in US dollars). Publication symbol ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Q/418.

Vol. LXI, no. 11, November 2007

In this issue: Indices of world industrial production, by branches of industry and by regions; producer price indices; earnings in manufacturing, by sex; construction of new buildings; total exports and imports by regions (volume, unit value indices and terms of trade); world exports by commodity classes

and by regions. Publication symbol
ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Q/419.

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

Meeting records



Participatory Governance and the Millennium Development Goals

In evaluating the implementation of development targets, it is increasingly clear that success requires an approach that redefines

the relationship between government and civil society. In particular, there is a need for involving all stakeholders in the formulation of public policy and decision-making. This title is a collection of papers presented for discussion at an expert group meeting on citizen participation in the implementation of the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, held in New York in November 2006.

To download:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN028359.pdf>

Working papers

Public Accountability, Corruption Control and Service Delivery: Governance Challenges and Future

Public accountability can be defined as the obligation of persons or entities entrusted with public resources to be answerable for the fiscal, managerial and program responsibilities that have been conferred on them, and to report to those that have conferred these responsibilities. The main objectives of all public accountability initiatives are to ensure that public money is spent economically and efficiently, that there is minimum of wastage or theft, and that public actually benefit from public finance.

To download:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan028466.pdf>

The Human Factor in Global Governance: Leadership Capacity Development Perspective in Africa

This paper discusses the major challenges facing Africa's leadership and the framework that needs to be applied to enable African countries to harness the benefits of global governance while avoiding some of the dangers it may cause to the development of the continent. Some ideas are introduced for preparing current and future African leaders for administering global governance.

To download:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan028410.pdf>

Outreach material



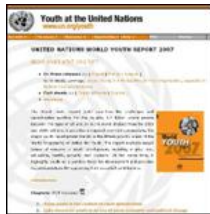
Innovations in Governance from around the World - Success Stories from the Winners of the United Nations Public Service Awards - Fifth Anniversary (2003-2007)

This publication is intended for policy makers, scholars and practitioners who have a keen interest in concrete solutions to governance challenges. Its purpose is to encourage more women and men in the public sector who are working hard to improve citizens' lives to share with the world their innovations by applying to the annual United Nations Public Service Awards, to recognize the efforts of those who have won an award, and to provide governments interested in innovation with useful information and knowledge about practices that have worked on the ground.

To download:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN028454.pdf>

Websites



World Youth Report 2007 online

Progress and challenges in young people's transition to adulthood is the theme of the 2007 World Youth Report to be

launched on 19 December. The report stresses the need to enhance youth participation in all areas of social and economic development for the sake of young people and the communities in which they live. While youth face different challenges in different regions, a common thread is the lack of opportunity to become involved in development. An online edition of the report is now available for download.

To browse:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wyr07.htm>

Comings and goings

Comings

The following staff members were promoted in December:

Mr. Patrick Gerland, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division

Ms. Sabine Henning, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division

Ms. Joliet Jean, Staff Assistant, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

Ms. Weihua Ju, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Ms. Sylvie Pailler-Marshall, Research Assistant, Division for Social Policy and Development

Goings



Mr. Shabbir Cheema retired on 31 December after twenty-seven years of dedicated service to the United Nations, most recently as Coordinator of the Global Forum on Reinventing Government in DESA's Division for Public

Administration and Development Management. Prior to joining DESA, Mr. Cheema spent many years at UNDP where he directed the Management Development and Development Division, and prepared a number of early policy papers on governance, human rights, and urban management. Mr. Cheema will move to Hawaii to head the politics, governance and security program of the East-West Center, an education and research organization established by the Government of the United States to strengthen relations among peoples of the Asia-Pacific region.



Mr. Pekka Patosaari retired from the UN on 31 December following a distinguished career in international forestry of more than two decades. Mr. Patosaari joined DESA as Coordinator and Head of the Secretariat of the UN Forum on

Forests in 2002. A forester and educator by training, Mr. Patosaari spent most of his career with the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Helsinki rising to become Director of State Forestry and Forestry Research and Deputy to the Director General. He has also worked for the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London with a portfolio of forestry and environmental issues, and has been involved in Finland's international cooperation programs, particularly in China.

The following staff members also retired in December:

Mr. Alejandro Carpio, Statistics Assistant, Division for Sustainable Development

Mr. Serekeberhan Zerai, Chief of Energy Statistics Section, Statistics Division

Calendar

January

Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages
New York, 8-10 January

Launch of the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008
New York, 9 January

Economic and Social Council
Election of the Bureau, New York, 14 January

Expert Group Meeting on Least Developed Countries: Refining Criteria, Graduation Process and Follow-up
New York, 16-18 January

Economic and Social Council
High-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum, Cairo, 19-20 January

Expert Group Meeting on Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development
New York, 21-23 January

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
2008 regular session, New York, 21-30 January

Beijing International Conference on Combating Desertification
Beijing, 22-24 January

DESA/Republic of Korea/East-West Center:
Workshop on Promoting Trust in Government through Innovations in Governance in Asia and the Pacific
Honolulu, 28-30 January

DESA/UNDP/Mauritania: Regional Workshop on the Arab/Africa Civic Engagement Network
Nouakchott, 29-31 January

February

Economic and Social Council
Organizational session of 2008, New York, 5-8 February

Commission for Social Development
46th session, New York, 6-15 February

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

Statistical Commission
39th session, New York, 26-29 February

Observances

International Year of Sanitation 2008

Proper sanitation: It's a seemingly mundane thing that most people in the developed world take for granted. But at least 2.6 billion people – some 41 percent of the global population - do not have access to latrines or any sort of basic sanitation facilities. As a result millions suffer from a wide range of preventable illnesses, such as diarrhoea, which claim thousands of lives each day, primarily young children.

To put the spotlight on this issue the General Assembly declared the year 2008 the International Year of Sanitation. The goal is to raise awareness and to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goal target to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015.

For more information:

<http://www.sanitation2008.org/>

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.