



17 October marked the 20th anniversary of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Speaking on behalf of Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang, Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General, stressed that the path to poverty reduction is development.

Webcast

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/specialevents2007/se071017pm.rm?start=00:48:47&end=00:58:30> (10 minutes)

Stand up against poverty on UN Radio

<http://radio.un.org/play.asp?NewsID=7959> (5 minutes)

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The cooperative advantage

Combining social goals and business sense for productive employment and decent work

Social concern can be good business strategy. For over 150 years, cooperatives have been demonstrating just this principle. Cooperatives employ a hundred million people around the world and, with over 800 million member owners, play an important part in community well-being and promotion of decent work. In remote areas that do not receive much attention from public or private firms, cooperatives provide livelihoods for millions who might otherwise be mired in poverty.

According to DESA's new Report on the World Social Situation 2007, labour markets have evolved in the direction of greater economic insecurity and greater inequality in the current phase of globalization, adversely affecting opportunities for decent work and satisfactory employment over a person's lifetime. "With globalization," the report argues, "inequalities and insecurities have undermined the principles of universalism and social solidarity."

To a worker trying to eke out a decent living while grappling with uncertainty, the virtues of the cooperative model stand out. Cooperatives subscribe to the tenets of the decent work agenda advocated by the International Labour Organization, uniting business and social goals. Cooperatives are built upon the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and solidarity, notes Ms. Felice Llamas, Social Affairs Officer and focal point on

cooperatives in the DESA Division for Social Policy and Development. They are businesses, owned by the members, that generate income and employment by pooling limited resources and reducing risks while at the same time promoting social cohesion. Unlike other businesses, “Cooperatives are formed to meet the needs of their members, and are not ruled by profit, but by social and ethical values,” says Ms. Llamas. As many of them operate at the local level, there exists a commitment to the community.

More jobs, decent work

Cooperatives play a significant part in job creation, in a variety of sectors, in rural and urban areas, and for certain social groups. According to the International Cooperative Alliance, cooperatives generate a hundred million jobs around the world, twenty percent more than multinational enterprise. In Kenya, a quarter million people are employed by cooperatives. In Indonesia, the number of cooperative jobs has grown to almost 300,000, while in Colombia nearly half a million are engaged in this sector. In Italy, cooperatives account for one million workers, with another four million in France. In Canada, the Desjardins group of savings and credit cooperatives is one of the largest employers in the Province of Quebec.

Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, recently released a report on cooperatives, which sheds light on their role in promoting full and productive employment. The report indicates that there is an impact not only due to direct employment creation, but also due to the indirect and induced jobs that cooperatives generate. Indirect employment arises from the provision of goods and services to the cooperative sector, while induced jobs result from consumer spending by cooperative members and employees. Cooperative banks that provide microfinance are also an important source of jobs, the Secretary-General notes,



especially in the informal economy, as they boost self-employment and jobs in microenterprises. That said, exact numbers are unknown due to a lack of data and complexity of measuring cooperative job creation at the national and international levels.

Although quantity matters, mere job creation and economic growth are not sufficient indicators of social development, according to the Report on the World Social Situation 2007. Quality of work also matters, and should be placed that the policy-making agenda. Cooperatives are several steps ahead governments in this area. In farmers’ cooperatives, for example, members usually receive salaries above the minimum wage and enjoy comparatively higher job security. Many cooperatives also provide health, social and educational services.

An integral part of rural society

Cooperatives are an integral part of the social fabric of many rural communities. As most of the world’s poor depend upon agriculture for their livelihood, farmers’ cooperatives make a big difference in providing jobs that keep people above the poverty threshold. The Secretary-General cautions that external public and private investments often do not reach rural areas and people have to rely on self-initiatives to meet their needs.

Here is where agricultural cooperatives come in. They are pivotal to support the self-employment of millions of farmers. Cooperatives of agricultural producers help individual farmers to be more competitive and efficient, which leads to more sustainable employment. Farmers’ cooperatives in India, for example, gave a decisive impulse to the “green” and “white” revolutions, spawning jobs and injecting income to tens of millions of poor rural households. Indian dairy cooperatives, which have created jobs for more than twelve million farm families, are another case in point.

A predictable income in developing countries, where a majority of the poor live and work in agriculture, is valuable. Experts who gathered at a DESA-sponsored meeting in Shanghai last year noted that cooperatives offer the means by which jobs can be created, and incomes of poor farmers increased and stabilized. Stability is an unusual word in today’s liberalized labor markets, all the more so in rural areas where casual labour is widespread. Yet it is in rural areas especially there is a positive economic and social role the cooperative movement. Although seasonality of work tends to dominate in agriculture, the Secretary-

General notes, the bulk of those working for agricultural cooperatives end up being retained under non-seasonal contracts that provide for year-round employment.

By organizing themselves as cooperatives, small farmers can reap economies of scale through better access to inputs, sharing of common equipment and better access to markets, explains Ms. Felice Llamas. “By uniting, farmers’ cooperatives tend to become more and more efficient, and this often places them in a better position to compete with larger businesses than an individual farmer would compete operating in isolation,” she adds. At a time of increasing globalization, where farmers have to maintain their competitiveness at all costs, this should not be underestimated.

In general, production and service cooperatives require more labour than, say, utility cooperatives. Yet the latter have a clear impact in poverty reduction, Ms. Llamas indicates, as they provide a reliable and affordable supply of power in rural areas, which in turn triggers activities oriented to production and higher standards of living. Similarly, financial cooperatives are crucial as they finance businesses that would otherwise not receive support from corporate financial institutions.

“By uniting under a cooperative enterprise, rather than operating individually, production workers and artisans increase their odds of success and improve their chances for sustainable employment,” underlines the Secretary-General. Workers’ cooperatives, furthermore, tend to create more jobs and require less capital per unit of output compared to other private enterprises. They also bolster job retention in their local communities. In Argentina, worker cooperatives took over about 100 shuttered factories and shops after the 2001 economic crisis, preserving about 10,000 jobs in the process.

Cooperatives are everywhere

Benefits of cooperatives can be found in all of corners of the world, including developed regions. A look at figures from the International Cooperative Alliance reveals the extent to which cooperatives have gained ground. In France, Japan and Korea, for instance, 90% of all farmers are members of agricultural cooperatives. In Norway, dairy cooperatives are responsible for 99% of milk production, while in Poland the figure is 75%, in Uruguay 90% and in New Zealand 95%. In the latter, cooperatives also control 70% of the meat market,

70% of the fertilizer market, 75% of the wholesale pharmaceuticals, and 63% of the grocery market. The Korean fishery cooperatives report a market share of 71%, while cooperative banks in France handle 60% of total deposits. Up to 25% of all retailers in France are cooperatives.

The cooperative movement has gained momentum over the last years. In Europe alone, in 1980 there were only 2,500 workers’ cooperatives, while now there are 85,000, with 1.5 million worker-owners employed. Ms. Llamas explains that such growth stems from a growing trend in combining small service-sector and community-based activities to meet larger demand for services. In some countries such as France, the ageing of business owners is driving the conversion of businesses into worker-run cooperatives.

Many workers, for their part, have decided to take the plunge after governments have set up cooperative-friendly environments. This has included legislation encouraging the creation of cooperatives, financial assistance, and preferential tax rates. Argentina, Colombia, France, Spain and the province of Quebec in Canada all actively promote cooperative enterprise in one or more ways. By contrast, the growth of cooperatives has slowed in countries that lack government support.

Tool of social inclusion

Cooperatives have succeeded in building capacities and opening the world of work to persons with disabilities, indigenous people, women, youth and migrants. These groups, especially the first two, are all too often excluded from the labour market. Persons with disabilities are much more likely to be unemployed than persons without disabilities. According to DESA’s Report on the World Social Situation 2007, ninety percent of school-age children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, hampering any prospects to escape the poverty trap.

Social cooperatives have been instrumental in boosting jobs and providing social services and health care and education to overcome such systemic impediments to development. In Italy, the law requires that half of those employed in social cooperatives come from the ranks of the disabled. In addition, seventy percent of managers and workers employed in cooperatives in 2003 were women. In rural Andhra Pradesh province in India, women’s cooperatives have been fruitful in enabling women to

take part in productive employment, mainly in microenterprises.

Women's involvement in cooperatives has turned out "an empowering tool from which entire families benefit," says Ms. Llamas. Membership in health, childcare and consumer cooperatives, for instance, have enabled women to share the burden of traditional household duties while giving them an opportunity to work, which in turn has yielded improvements in child health and education.

Cooperatives have also helped revive economies of post-conflict and post-disaster areas – such as East Timor, El Salvador, and Bosnia and Herzegovina – through the incentives they offer to ex-combatants, minorities and displaced persons to regain an economic footing. In Rwanda, by bringing villagers of coffee-growing areas together to work towards a common economic goal, coffee cooperatives have helped reconstruct the social fabric and advanced national reconciliation.

An economic alternative, not a replacement

Some agricultural cooperatives have resorted to fair trade as a tool for widening their markets and ensuring their incomes in the face of growing global competition and volatility in commodity prices. Under fair trade, cooperatives in developing countries partner with distribution and consumer cooperatives and groups in developed countries, and are paid a price that covers the full cost of production.

A decent price is significant at a time when few of profits that accrue from the export of developing country commodities end up in the hands of smallholder farmers. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Kemal Dervis, Administrator of UNDP, and others recently pointed out in an article on the perils of free trade in agriculture that while prices paid in the supermarket have risen, the share paid to the farmers who grow these basic agricultural commodities has fallen. "The higher end, where food and natural textiles are processed, packaged, branded and advertised is where most of the money accumulates."

Cooperatives will not change that. The sector is too small to have much influence on the world economy. Yet while cooperatives "are not the answer to job creation and poverty eradication," in the words of Ms. Llamas, they play "a complementary role" and need to be scaled up to benefit more people.

The General Assembly Third Committee – on social, humanitarian, and cultural matters – takes up the issue of cooperatives as a force for development starting 1 November.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/cooperatives/>

Teaming up on sanitation

Lack of safe water and adequate sanitation is the world's single largest cause of illness

Something as easy as washing hands with soap and water can save lives. And improve health and nutrition in the process. Yet 2.6 billion people still live without even basic sanitation. Every twenty seconds, a child dies as a direct result. That is 1.5 million preventable child deaths each year. To promote better hygiene and speed up progress on securing this basic human right for an additional billion people by 2015, the International Year of Sanitation 2008 will be launched on 21 November.

Last year, the General Assembly declared 2008 the International Year of Sanitation to put the issue in the spotlight, and requested DESA to serve as its focal point. The Department is coordinating activities for the Year in partnership with UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector and academia. This will be "an opportunity to raise awareness, to educate, to engage civil society and to ensure that sanitation finds a place on the agenda of policy-makers at the local and national levels," says Kenza Robinson, coordinator of the Year in the DESA Division for Sustainable Development.

In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, world leaders brought



sanitation to the fore and agreed on a specific target to cut the proportion of people without basic sanitation in half in 2015 as a complement to the Millennium Development Goal to halve the proportion of the population unable to reach or afford safe drinking water. However, as the world is off track to meet the Millennium Development Goals, says Ms. Robinson, there is a clear need for the global community to refocus on good hygiene and basic sanitation.

The International Year of Sanitation 2008 serves that purpose. His Royal Highness the Prince of Orange of the Netherlands will attend the official launch in New York, along with ambassadors, and key UN players in sanitation from such agencies as WHO, UN-Habitat, and UNICEF. The launch will feature presentation of a new UN publication on the topic.

Gains and losses

Lack of safe water and proper sanitation are major sources of world illness. Yet strides to provide people with basic sanitation facilities have been uneven. DESA's Millennium Development Goals Report 2007 indicates that only Eastern, Southeastern and Western Asia, Northern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean are on track to halve the proportion of people without basic sanitation by 2015. No other developing region has made much headway. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the absolute number of people without access to sanitation actually increased – from 335 million in 1990 to 440 million people by the end of 2004. According to the report, this number may continue to rise if current trends are not reversed.

This is despite the fact improved sanitation can have a positive impact on economic growth and poverty reduction. Every dollar spent on improving sanitation generates an average economic benefit of seven dollars. Meanwhile, the economic cost of inaction is huge. If access to basic sanitation is not improved, none of the other Millennium Development Goals, to which the world committed itself in the Millennium Declaration, will be achieved.

Sadly, social stigma all too often prevents people from speaking openly about hygiene and the health of millions is compromised as a result. Almost two million people die each year from sanitation-related diarrhoea, ninety percent of them children under five. Water scarcity forces people to consume contaminated water, leading to water-borne diseases. As a result, repeated episodes of diarrhoea can push children to the brink of survival, leaving them too

weak and malnourished to survive common childhood ailments.

Sanitation, weapon against poverty

The International Year of Sanitation launch is an opportunity to raise awareness of the fact that the simplest measures can make a very large difference. Washing hands with soap and water, a mundane activity in developed countries, is a major factor in saving lives. Unwashed hands can transmit the bacteria, viruses and parasites found in human faeces directly to foods and mouths.

The gap between the developed and the developing world is wide. While almost everyone in rich nations has access to a private, flush toilet served by a supply of piped water, many poor people in the developing world are forced to defecate in bags, buckets, fields or roadside ditches. Infestation of intestinal worms caused by open defecation affects hundreds of millions of mainly school-aged children, leading to reduced physical growth, weakened physical fitness and impaired cognitive functions. As the infection worsens, academic performance and school attendance decline. In the case of girls, intestinal worms can lead to anaemia, raising the risk of complications later on in childbirth.

The UN publication entitled *Water for Life Decade*, prepared with input from the Secretariat of UN-Water in DESA, notes that “many decision makers underestimate the critical role that water, hygiene and sanitation play in poverty alleviation. The economic and health benefits of providing access to water and sanitation facilities significantly outweigh the cost of investment.” Investment in latrines and toilets in homes and in every school is crucial for health, and can even be a source of productive employment. “In areas affected by high unemployment,” the report suggests, “villagers can be engaged as latrine builders, masons and water pump operation and maintenance stewards.”

At its May session next year, the Commission on Sustainable Development will review progress in implementation of policy recommendations made by the Commission on the sanitation issue in 2005. Those recommendations, to be considered by Member States, stressed the need to set up an institutional home at the national level for sanitation – which is lacking in many countries – prioritizing sanitation in national development plans, incorporating sanitation in integrated water resources management plans, and promoting sanitation

sensitive to the needs of women and girls in addition to hygiene education and awareness.

Girls at risk

Better sanitation facilities bring development benefits beyond those directly attributable to health outcomes. The Commission on the Status of Women, for instance, in considering the question of “elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child”, has concluded that a lack of sanitation facilities threatens girl child most, undermining her ability to enjoy her rights and to reach her full potential.

One of the messages of the International Year of Sanitation is precisely that proper sanitation fosters dignity, while providing privacy and safety that is especially for women and girls. “Appropriate sanitation facilities have been shown to improve attendance school rates, above all for girls reaching puberty,” says Ms. Robinson. Restricted access to toilets increases the chance of chronic constipation and is making women vulnerable to violence if they are forced to defecate at night or in secluded areas. For this reason, having sanitation facilities can be liberating for women and girls, which benefits the whole community.

Bringing sanitation to the fore

“Adequate investment in capacity building, technology transfer, adoption of low-cost technology options, and greater community involvement, especially women involvement, in sanitation management, can promote simple technology design for easy maintenance, facilitate cost-recovery, and help ensure equitable access,” according to Ms. Robinson. In this spirit, DESA and UN system partners will be organizing a workshop next year to consider the linkages between improved sanitation and girls’ education, among other events.

When sanitation is recognized as a national development priority, and where there exist clear policies, budgets, coordination and cohesion within government institutions including at the regional and local levels, Ms. Robinson adds, successful sanitation programmes result. Integration of sanitation into national sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies, as well as integrated water resources management plans, are important ways of advancing implementation of the sanitation agenda. “Integration of sanitation programmes into national priorities is useful as it facilitates monitoring of the

status of – and the need for – sanitation and wastewater treatment to meet the Johannesburg commitments and targets.”

As the International Year of Sanitation looms, many challenges await. Only 20 percent of public sector spending in the water and sanitation sector in developing countries went to sanitation during the 1990s, says Ms. Robinson. It is therefore urgent “to prioritize the areas of greatest need and impact.”

New office, renewed action

DESA and its UN partners have launched an initiative to improve the capacity of water and sanitation utilities to expand their services and deliver them more efficiently, following recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, formed to galvanize global action. The result has taken the form of partnerships in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Managed by DESA, a new project office to support the International Water for Life Decade (2005-2015) in Zaragoza, Spain will and raise awareness on water and sanitation issues, and advocate for global action, as part of the campaign to reach the 2015 target. The Zaragoza office will also coordinate implementation of UN-Water’s work on water and sanitation. UN-Water is an inter-agency group that coordinates international action on those matters, and is supported by the Division for Sustainable Development in DESA.

The International Year of Sanitation 2008 seeks to secure increased financing to jump start and sustain progress through commitments from national budgets and development partner allocations. It will also mobilize existing alliances among governments, via collaboration agreements that set out the what, who, and how to implement specific actions. Reaching the water and sanitation target is estimated to require \$11.3 billion, a large sum but, to put it in a global perspective, less than the annual North American spending on household pets. The technologies, approaches and skilled people are ready. Now is the time to act.

For more information:

<http://www.sanitationyear2008.org/>

Global dialogue on development

Financing for development

Many delegates suggest linking climate change to the financing for development process

The General Assembly's high-level dialogue on financing for development concluded on 25 October with an eye on a review of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to take place in the second half of 2008. Delegates to the three-day meeting discussed the status of implementation of the Monterrey agreement and ways of breathing new life to it. One head of government, twenty ministers, fifteen vice-ministers, and other high-level officials from more than 100 countries were in attendance.

In his opening remarks on 23 October, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Assembly that progress in implementation of the Monterrey Consensus was "mixed". Over the past five years, many developing and low-income countries have experienced stronger economic growth, he said, and official development assistance has improved, but the sustained increase in assistance needed to meet the targets agreed in Monterrey has not materialized. "Closing the funding gap is essential if we are to alleviate extreme poverty, fight diseases and achieve the other development targets," Mr. Ban said.

General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim, who convened the dialogue, reminded participants that the review exercise is critical given that the Monterrey Consensus is "the principal multilateral basis establishing a global partnership to achieve the Millennium Development Goals." He said that a major remaining challenge is how to promote foreign investment in lower-income countries, and in countries with less stable governance, in order to boost productive economic activity.

The effect of climate change on development emerged as a new issue with some countries suggesting that it be linked to the financing for development process. International support for South-South cooperation and attention to the problems of middle-income countries were put on the table, along with a wish to make further inroads against tax evasion, and in favour of enhanced international cooperation in tax matters.

Many delegates stressed the critical importance of making decisive progress in multilateral trade negotiations for the sake of development in general and poverty alleviation in particular. To that end, implementation of the Doha development agenda is essential. At the national level, according to several speakers, there was a crucial need to increase tax revenues through progressive tax systems. This could reduce income disparities, and assist in the public financing of basic infrastructure.

Many participants reiterated the need to achieve the 0.7 percent target in official development assistance. Although noting that aid had increased considerably since 2002, they stressed that a decrease in 2006 was cause for concern. The debt landscape, it was said, had improved. But, still, the debt overhang persisted in least developed countries. Renewed calls for debt restructuring were made.

The issue of enhancing the voice and effective participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making was raised, with delegates pointing out that progress so far had been meager and much remained to be done. Several speakers called for enhanced tools for crisis prevention and resolution, strengthened multilateral consultations including talks on global imbalances, and effective emergency liquidity instruments for countries with access to private markets.

The President of the General Assembly will issue a summary of the high-level dialogue as an official document. Informal summaries of the hearings with civil society and business sector representatives will be available soon.



Mr. Oscar de Rojas, Director of the Financing for Development Office in DESA, and Robert Pollack from the Office of the President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly, brief the press on the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development held 23-24 October. A recording is available online at: <http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2007/pc071022pm.rm> (33 minutes)

Second Committee urged to tackle global imbalances

Multilateral surveillance of macroeconomic policy is desperately needed

The Second Committee of the General Assembly, responsible for economic and financial affairs, began its annual debate on 8 October hearing statements from Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, and Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang, stressing the implementation gap the world faces in reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and the need to take serious action to correct global imbalances.

With poverty deeply entrenched in Africa and many lives hanging in the balance, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said the continent's poor showing on the Millennium objectives is evidence of the underlying gap between commitment and implementation. Emphasizing that all stakeholders must make good on their promises, she pointed out that the new Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group established by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon aims to work to improve aid predictability and effectiveness, and to forge stronger country-level programmes. The Steering Group, chaired by Ms. Migiro herself, should ensure that Africa receives effective aid for key projects in health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and food security.

Ms. Migiro reported that she has launched an informal consultative process with the heads of United Nations departments, funds and programmes that will advise the Secretary-General on the sharp social and economic disparities in the global economy that thwart efforts to end extreme poverty and achieve the Millennium targets.

Global economy, global surveillance

For his part, Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, warned that the current global financial turmoil could threaten growth prospects for the world economy, and called for serious action to address imbalances. "The global economy desperately needs effective multilateral surveillance for macroeconomic policy coordination and collective action, involving all major players from developed and developing countries", he said.

Mr. Sha suggested that the Second Committee promote development cooperation by enhancing the

capacity of UN funds and programmes to meet deliverables. The focus should be on alignment of the Organization's country-level activities with sustainable development strategies; increasing the effectiveness and coherence of the UN development system; leveraging its advantages; and, increasing accountability, transparency and efficiency by simplifying procedures.

The Committee Chairperson, Kirsti Lintonen of Finland said the body's primary concern is to ensure that the international community takes appropriate steps towards equitable, sustainable development in all countries, in particular to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development targets. The Committee's agenda covers economic growth and development, financing for development, sustainable development, human settlements, poverty eradication, globalization and interdependence, operational activities for development, and information and communications technology for development. Ms. Lintonen added that the Second Committee would also consider issues of concern to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

Panels enrich development debate

The DESA Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination has organized several panel discussions and other events to stimulate the debate. A panel discussion on the role of enterprise of all sizes in poverty eradication will be held on 2 November. The panel, chaired by Jomo K.S., Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, includes Ms. Sheri Willoughby, Senior Manager of Markets and Enterprise at the World Resources Institute in Washington D.C.; Professor Aneel Karnani of the School of Business at the University of Michigan; Ms. Shulamit Ferdman, Director of Microenterprise Development Courses at the Mount Carmel Training Center in Haifa; and Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman of the National Rural Support Programme of Pakistan.

On 7 November, the Helsinki process on globalization and democracy, co-organized with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, will be the subject of a second conversation exploring the value-added of multi-stakeholder cooperation in the governance of globalization on 7 November. The panelists include Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development in DESA; Sunita Narain, Director of the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi; Mary

Robinson, President of the Ethical Globalisation Initiative, and Rick Samans, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, and

A panel discussion on financing for gender equality within the context of follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus will be held on 12 November. Organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Financing for Development Office in DESA, panelists will offer reflections on mobilization of domestic and international resources for the promotion of gender equality, including gender-responsive budgeting. Panelists are Isabella Bakker, Professor of Political Science at York University, in Toronto; Mohamed Chafiki, Director Financial Forecasts at the Ministry of Finance and Privatization of Morocco, and Mariama Williams, International economics and trade consultant and Adjunct Associate at the Center of Concern, Washington, D.C.

The DESA Division for Sustainable Development will organize a panel discussion on ways to address climate change in the context of national sustainable development strategies on 13 November (for more information, see trends section in this issue of DESA News).

Finally, a debate on moving out of aid dependency will be held on 16 November, co-organized by the Financing for Development Office and the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination. Examples of countries that moved out of aid dependency will be used to inform the current debate on aid effectiveness. Panelists are Poul Engberg-Pedersen, Director General of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; Roy Culpepper, President of the North-South Institute in Ottawa; Michael Atingi Ego, Executive Director of Bank of Uganda; Irma Adelman, Professor at Berkeley University, in California, and Debpriya Bhattacharya, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in Geneva.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ga/second/62/specialevents.shtml>

Religious and cultural understanding

The General Assembly held its first ever formal, high-level dialogue on issues of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation on 4 October. Srgan Kerim, President of the 62nd session, said that by convening the event, the Assembly had taken an important stand in reaffirming the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But more importantly, “We are taking concrete steps to advance these values around the world.”

The dialogue also covered issues of freedom of religion and belief, and the need for respect for a diversity of religions and cultures. Participants included leading academics, religious leaders and other civil society representatives. DESA will take account of the outcome of the dialogue in its work on economic and social development.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ga/president/61/follow-up/hld-interreligious.shtml>

Trends and analysis

Top economists assess implications of financial turbulence in 2008

Project LINK network convenes in Addis Ababa to discuss global economic outlook

The semi-annual expert group meeting on the world economy, also known as Project Link, will be held from 12 to 14 November in Addis Ababa. Jointly organized by DESA, ECA and the University of Toronto, the 2007 fall meeting of the economists' network will assess the implications of global financial turbulence for world economic prospects in 2008. Also of concern are the risks associated with further deterioration in the housing slump in the United States, and the possibility of a disorderly resolution of global imbalances that could conceivably accompany a steep decline in the value of the US dollar.

About fifty economists from more than fifty countries and several international organizations will take part in the conference. The outlook for global and regional economies will be the main topic of discussion. The LINK global economic outlook, prepared by DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division, will be considered alongside presentations of the IMF and World Bank. International policy issues, including some especially relevant to Africa, will also be examined.

Project Link is a non-governmental and cooperative research activity integrating independently developed national econometric models into a global econometric model. It provides a consistent framework for undertaking quantitative studies of the international economic transmission mechanisms and of the effects of international and national policies, developments and disturbances on the outlook for the world economy. LINK forecasts are incorporated into the World Economic Situation and Prospects, a flagship publication of DESA produced jointly with UNCTAD and the regional commissions each year.

For more information:

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

Citizen participation, a condition of accountability

DESA and INTOSAI team up to foster civic engagement for public accountability

Audit has an essential role in holding persons acting in the public interest to account. By tracking expenditure, it controls corruption and brings cost-efficiency in public expenditure. Yet "audit on its own – without the backing of democratic governance, rule of law, freedom of access to information and free media – does not experience much success, either in controlling corruption or in improving service delivery," says Adil Khan, chief of socio-economic governance in DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management.

According to a UN study on public accountability in different governance environments, some countries have increased their investment in the audit function only to find that poor governance compromises the value of the results. To explore the actual and potential roles of civil society in fostering public accountability, DPADM will hold a workshop on 9 November for those attending the 19th Congress of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) in Mexico City.

DESA, INTOSAI, and the International Budget Project are ongoing partners in the promotion of civil society engagement with audit institutions. Experts convened by DESA in 2005 found that, through formal or informal processes, collaboration between the sectors can foster accountability and encourage service delivery targeted to people's needs.

Civil society groups can take part in audits directly, as is the case in the Philippines, or they can serve as watchdogs by demanding follow-up to audit findings, as in Argentina. They can draw attention to entities that should be audited, as they do in the Republic of Korea, or carry out independent audits that complement the government's role, as in India.

The DESA panel on public accountability at INTOSAI is intended to strengthen the link between the monitoring and assessment of government expenditures, and public accountability. Panel members will discuss how to reform audit institutions so they become a tool of citizen empowerment.

For more information:

http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_id=2169

Integrating climate change into national sustainable development strategies

Expert group meeting explores national experiences

If efforts to address climate change are to be effective, they must be considered with a framework of sustainable development. In a bid to strengthen the link between the two issues, the Division for Sustainable Development in DESA is holding an expert group meeting on integration of climate change into national sustainable development strategies on 12 and 13 November in New York.

The meeting will open with introductory remarks from Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Sha Zukang. National strategies, as called for by Agenda 21 – as well as the World Summit for Sustainable Development, and the Commission on Sustainable Development – should build upon and harmonize existing economic, social and environmental policies and plans. Building on successful practices, experts will explore ways to blend action on climate change into national plans, with an emphasis on such critical areas as poverty eradication, job generation and public health.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/nsds/egm_ClimateChange/

Measuring the economically active population in censuses

The Statistics Division in collaboration with ILO is organizing an expert group meeting in New York from 5 to 9 November to review the draft Handbook on the Collection of Economic Characteristics in Population Censuses. The Handbook draws on the experiences of countries in measuring economic characteristics of the population, while providing detailed technical and operational guidance on the implementation of recommendations on economic characteristics outlined in the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/economically_active_nov07/

World e-Parliament conference spotlights parliamentary cooperation

DESA's Under Secretary-General Sha stresses the role of parliaments in boosting an inclusive and equitable information society

The World e-Parliament Conference ended in Geneva on 12 October with broad consensus on practices that ICT should be tapped to modernize parliamentary functions, and improve dialogue between legislators and the public. The conference brought together 70 delegations, made up of members of parliament, ICT directors and staff, librarians, researchers and legislative officials.

Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Sha Zukang opened the meeting on 11 October, reminding participants that “ICT should not be treated as a goal in itself, or as a substitute for developing and modernizing institutions, be they executive, legislative or judiciary.” Rather, promoting ICT should serve to complement and enhance those development efforts.

“Parliaments can make a difference for the advancement of an inclusive and equitable information society.” Similarly, they can create space for political dialogue that informs national information strategies. Organized by DESA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, the conference showcased innovative experiences that will be included in a first ever Global Report on ICT in Parliament to be released in February next year.

More than sixty-five members of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament also agreed on modalities of work and priority themes for the group. Members will prepare joint studies on the use of mobile devices and websites by legislatures, as well as security issues, and development of an e-learning tool for parliamentarians based on open standards and XML. The conference was preceded by a meeting of Latin American parliamentary officials, on 9 October, which gave birth to a similar regional network.

“Well-equipped in ICT and well-informed,” said Mr. Sha, “parliaments can help build better societies and a better globalization.”

For more information:

<http://www.ictparliament.org/worldparliamentconference2007/>

Experts call for policies that strengthen intergenerational ties

Policy interventions that foster the links between children, youth and older persons were strongly recommended by an expert group on intergenerational solidarity that met in New York from 23 to 25 October. Experts noted that demographic shifts and changing family patterns call for policies that encourage sharing of responsibility for the care of both the younger and older generations. Policies should not reward one generation at the expense of another, experts concluded, and no single age group should be fully responsible for the care of others. When care giving is shared, it is much more manageable.

In the delivery of care, partnerships between organizations yield the greatest benefit. Social service agencies, schools, healthcare providers, and community groups are all structured and funded differently, but efforts should be combined, where possible, for the sake of intergenerational programmes. Similarly, collaboration among government agencies can promote a national perspective that is more valuable than each part on its own. A report of the meeting is expected to be issued as a DESA publication.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/egm_unhq_oct07.htm

Technical cooperation

Converting coal into syngas for sustainable development

Capacity-building workshop in Kazakhstan explores the potential of underground coal gasification technology

Energy efficiency and renewables might appear to be solutions for protecting the atmosphere and decarbonizing the economy. But International Energy Agency projections seem to indicate that coal will continue to be the largest source of energy for the next forty years in many of the transition economies.

How do we curb greenhouse gas emissions in the meantime? The Commission on Sustainable Development has suggested the use of clean coal technologies. "Clean coal" may sound like an oxymoron, but underground coal gasification, or UCG, is a technology that now makes it possible to turn coal into a synthetic gas, which is itself a fuel. The production and use of synthetic gas is a more efficient, and cleaner, means of extracting energy than burning coal directly.

To explore the potential of UCG, a capacity-building workshop sponsored by DESA and the TuranAlemBank of Kazakhstan will be held in Almaty on 12 and 13 November. Kazakhstan has Central Asia's largest recoverable coal reserves while air pollution is a significant problem in the region, stemming from the use of low quality coals, lack of emission control equipment at the thermal power plants and technological inefficiency.

About thirty participants from Central Asia are expected to take part in the workshop. Experts from Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United States will share insights on the issue, while representatives from China and India have been invited to discuss experiences their own experience with the technology.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/energy/op/ucg_workshop/ucg.htm

Government accountability in Asia

Innovations to improve government accountability will be emphasized at Jakarta meeting

Practical solutions to the problems of government accountability will be presented at a regional forum on reinventing government in Asia, taking place in Jakarta from 14 to 16 November. The forum, organized by DESA in partnership with the Government of Indonesia and UNDP, will open with a statement by Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management in DESA.

Four plenary sessions will follow, covering reforms needed to build and sustain transparency and accountability in the public sector, programmes to combat corruption, capacity and accountability of local governments, and service delivery. Two country presentations will be made at each session on what works and what does not, with an emphasis on day-to-day practice. Working groups will meet on the third day of the forum to debate the main themes, with conclusions presented for general discussion.

Over the course of the event, each minister and senior government official will describe an innovation in accountability that has had tangible results, while conveying how social groups have most benefited. It is hoped that these shared practices will encourage and inspire government officials dealing with accountability issues at home.

For more information:

http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/bro_wseoneconference.asp?conference_id=2136

Census cartography and census management

DESA will be holding a regional workshop on census cartography and management in Rabat from 12 and 16 November covering the fundamentals of geographic information systems and census geography techniques including geo-coding. Practical data collection and conversion to digital format will be stressed along with GIS-based data analysis and dissemination.

In addition to demonstrating software usage, the workshop is intended to stimulate discussion among

participants on census mapping, with an emphasis on practical experience. Institutional, organizational, financial, capacity-building and implementation issues will be covered. The revised UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses will also be presented.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wsh/ops/Morocco_12Nov07/

Poverty reduction for beginners

E-course aims to acquaint young people with poverty reduction strategies

The many dimensions of poverty reduction strategies are spelled out in an e-course the DESA Division for Social Policy and Development has designed especially for young people in collaboration with UNFPA, the World Bank and Youth Action for Change. The course seeks to help youth understand UN poverty reduction strategy papers, and acquire the skills needed to contribute to poverty eradication efforts in their countries.

Replete with a chat room, learning forum, and collaboration engine ("wiki"), the course is comprised of six modules to be completed over a nine week period, including: Introduction to national development strategies; poverty diagnostics; defining priority interventions; costing and budgeting; monitoring and evaluation; and the consultation process. Participants will receive a certificate of completion, as well as ongoing support to help them apply their newly-gained knowledge.

The course runs 1 October to 30 November. A total thirty youths will take part, most of them from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

For more information:

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

Compilation of international merchandise trade statistics in Africa

Improving the quality and availability of trade data from Eastern and Southern Africa is the purpose of a

workshop on compilation of international merchandise trade statistics running from 12 to 16 November in Addis Ababa. The meeting is being organized by the DESA Statistics Division in cooperation with ECA. Export processing zones, treatment of re-exports, valuation of imports, and calculation of external price indices and trade indicators are on the programme.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/WS%20AddisAbaba07/WS%20AddisAbaba07_workshop_imts_trade.htm

Decentralization in Africa

Fostering capacities of local leaders is essential to combat poverty

The design and implementation of decentralization policies will be the focus of attention at a capacity-building conference in Monrovia from 20 to 22 November. Organized by the Municipal Development Partnership Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office in close collaboration with DESA, UNDP and UNCDF, the workshop will offer participants a chance to share experiences on decentralization and improvement of service delivery at the local level.

Devolution of power to sub-national governments is being embraced increasingly in Africa. Decentralization is viewed by many not only as a way to speed up local development, but also as a means of giving the poor increased say in the fight against poverty. Local leadership capacity is essential. Participants will include national ministers in charge of local government, senior civil servants, local government leaders, representatives of European regional assemblies and municipalities, civil society and other development partners.

For more information:

http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_id=2116

Economic statistics and the informal sector

A DESA workshop on integrated economic statistics and the informal sector will take place in Tehran from 10 to 13 November. National statistical officers of ECO member countries will be trained on data

collection strategies, and the compilation of basic business statistics, with an emphasis on the petroleum and manufacturing sectors. Current country practices will be covered along with measurement of household enterprises and the informal sector, and issues considered for the update of the 1993 System of National Accounts that are relevant to ECO members. Participants from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are expected.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/workshops.asp>

Publications and websites

Technical reports



Report on the World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative

The 2007 edition of the Report on the World Social Situation, which will be launched in November, covers the crucial role of productive employment and decent

work in reducing poverty and promoting social development. The report examines global trends in employment and work, as well as the socio-economic environment that has formed a backdrop for the world of work over the last twenty years. It also casts a spotlight on the issues of jobless growth, global informalization of the labour market, economic and social liberalization, and migration.

The conclusion is that socio-economic trends have for the most part resulted in greater insecurity for workers with notable impact on specific social groups. The report urges governments to place productive employment at the heart of economic and social policy-making, with due consideration of demographic and social adjustments. It also stresses that laws are required to prevent work-related discrimination and that, as more workers find themselves in informal employment, the need for some form of universal social protection increases.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/rwss/>

Meeting records



Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Current Issues in the Estimation of Adult Mortality

The DESA Population Division convened an expert group meeting on 26 and 27 October 2006 to

discuss current issues in estimation of adult mortality, including the effect of increased longevity and the

AIDS epidemic on estimation models. Since 2004, significant attention has been devoted to mortality estimation methods and the development of flexible models that allow derivation of life tables from partial information. UN work in this area benefits from a dialogue with experts inside and outside the international system.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/EGM_AdultMort/EGM_AdultMort.pdf

Working papers

How Cash Transfers Boost Work and Economic Security

There has long been a minority view that providing people with cash is an effective way of combating poverty and economic insecurity while promoting livelihoods and work. The mainstream view has been that giving people money, without conditions or obligations, promotes idleness and dependency, while being unnecessarily costly. Better, they contend, would be to allocate the available money to schemes that create jobs and/or human capital and that produce infrastructure. This paper reviews recent evidence on various types of scheme and on several pilot cash transfer schemes, assessing them by reference to principles of social justice.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp58_2007.pdf

The Relationship between Rainfall and Human Density and its Implications for Future Water Stress in Sub-Saharan Africa

This paper uses population density projections in combination with rainfall and climate change scenarios to identify areas that may experience increased water stress by 2050. As a result of population pressures, a significant expansion of water stressed zones can be expected in Africa especially around the Sahel and Eastern regions. Changes in rainfall patterns could mitigate or compound those effects. Densities that are at unsustainable levels, for example as a result of migration, are expected to become more prevalent.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp57_2007.pdf

Climate Change and Sustainable Development

In the future the primary focus of policy research and global agreements should be the de-carbonization of economic development. Consequently, this paper argues, instead of treating climate stabilization and economic development as separate and equal, the strategy should be to re-integrate the two global policy goals, in part by separating responsibility – and funding – from action. This will require an approach that goes beyond Kyoto. The paper invokes the example of the Manhattan Project to argue for a massive, globally funded public investment program for the deployment of renewable energy technologies in developing countries.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp56_2007.pdf

Strengthening the International Partnership for Effective Poverty Reduction

Important progress has been made towards developing a global partnership in support of national poverty reduction strategies. Nonetheless, the existing framework of that global partnership, the use of poverty reduction strategy papers as its main instrument, appears to be neither adequate nor effective. Aid recipient countries need to gain more ownership of their poverty reduction strategies. Aid and other international support should be provided under conditions that enhance, rather than restrict, domestic policy space in recipient countries. Multilateral trade negotiations need to be consistent with poverty reduction objectives and do not conflict with development assistance priorities.

To download:

<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/2007%20docs/poverty.pdf>

The International Development Agenda and the Climate Change Challenge

Focusing international cooperation on climate change solely on the establishment of emission targets is not adequate: it does not properly address developmental challenges or help achieve internationally agreed goals. The international development agenda needs to specify the actions and approaches required for ensuring economic behaviour that is compatible with environmental constraints in a way that minimizes aggregate costs, protects the vulnerable and maximizes economic growth. Integration of climate

change and development goals will require a fundamental reorientation of the current developmental trajectory so that the carbon intensity of production is reduced while economic growth is still maintained. It will also require a more effective partnership between developed and developing countries.

To download:

<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/devplan/2007%20docs/climate.pdf>

Websites



2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

The recently launched website of the 2010 world population and housing census programme facilitates the exchange of information on census-taking, provides methodological and other resources for countries implementing censuses, and helps visitors monitor implementation of programme activities. The site includes a searchable census knowledge database.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_PHC/



Global Development Trends, Issues and Policies

The DESA Division for Development Policy and Analysis has reorganized its website on global development trends, issues and policies. Among other things, DPAD produces the annual World Economic and Social Survey as well as the Report on World Economic Situation and Prospects, and provides support to the UN Committee for Development Policy. The site features events and publications sections, as well as details on development account projects, and Project LINK.

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

Comings and goings

Honours



Jomo K.S. wins Leontief prize for advancing economic thought

Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, has been awarded the prestigious 2007 Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought, by Tufts University. Mr. Jomo K.S. has been honoured for his contribution to development economics, together with economist Stephen De Canio, who was recognized for his work on climate change. The award ceremony took place on 17 October at Tufts University and featured a lecture by Mr. Jomo and Mr. De Canio on climate change, economic development, and global equity.

“With the world’s attention increasingly focused on the urgent challenges of climate change and global inequality, we want to recognize two individuals whose contributions have helped supply the theoretical framework and empirical understanding to tackle these global problems”, said the Co-director of Tufts University’s Global Development and Environment Institute.

The Leontief Prize, named after the Nobel-prize winning economist Wassily Leontief, recognizes economists whose work, like that of Leontief himself, combines theoretical and empirical research that can promote a more comprehensive understanding of social and environmental processes.

Comings

The following staff members were promoted in October:

Mr. Matthias Bruckner, Sustainable Development Officer, Division for Sustainable Development

Ms. Shehnaz Daruwala, Social Affairs Officer, Division for Social Policy and Development

Ms. Aida Diawara, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Ms. Janaki Murthy, Programme Assistant, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women

Ms. Kebebush Welkema, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Ms. Jing Zhang, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Goings

The following staff members retired in October:

Ms. Claudine Fercovich, Human Resources Assistant, Technical Cooperation Management Services

Ms. Jadwiga Gierycz, Chief of Section, Division for the Advancement of Women

Calendar

November

General Assembly

62nd session, New York, 18 September-December

Second Committee panel discussions on poverty eradication, financing for gender equality, climate change and sustainable development, and aid dependency, 2-16 November

Launch of the Report on the World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative

New York, date to be determined

DESA/ILO Expert Group Meeting on Measuring the Economically Active Population in Censuses

New York, 5-9 November

Congress of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions – UN Panel on Public Accountability

Mexico City, 9 November

Workshop on Integrated Economic Statistics and Informal Sector for Economic Cooperation Organization Member Countries

Tehran, 10-13 November

Workshop on International Exchange of Experience in Underground Coal Gasification Technologies and Sustainable Energy Development

Almaty, 12-13 November 2007

Project LINK Fall Meeting 2007

Addis Ababa, 12-14 November

Sub-regional Workshop on Census Cartography and Management

Rabat, 12-16 November

DESA/ECA Workshop on Compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics

Addis Ababa, 12-16 November

DESA/UNDP/Indonesia Regional Forum on Transparent and Accountable Governance in Asia

Jakarta, 14-16 November

DESA/UNDP/UNCDF/MDP Pan African Conference of Ministers of Local Government – Leadership Capacity Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Africa

Monrovia, 20-22 November

Sixth Coordination Meeting on International Migration

New York, 26-27 November

December

Launch of the World Public Sector Report 2007: People Matter, Civic Engagement in Public Governance

New York, 11 December

Observances

Launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008

New York, 21 November

Proper sanitation is a seemingly mundane activity 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. On 21 November, the global launch of the International Year will take place in New York with an unveiling of the IYS logo, presentation of a UN publication on sanitation, and viewing of a special public service announcement.

For more information:

<http://www.sanitationyear2008.org>

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

25 November

The General Assembly has designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and has invited Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to organize on that day activities to raise public awareness on the problem.

Women's activists have marked 25 November as a day against violence since 1981. The date came from the brutal 1961 assassination of the three Mirabal

sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic,
on orders of Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/violence/>

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.