



On 1 August, Mr. Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, briefed the press on the need for a new global strategy on climate change in the context of development. The UNFCCC Secretariat reports to the Secretary-General through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

A recording of the event is available online at <http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/pressconference/pc070801.rm> (38 minutes).

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Time for action on climate change

A global strategy for the future involves more resilience, new technologies, mitigation efforts and a strong financial response

The warming of our planet is real. Arctic ice is melting, coral reefs are dying, and sea levels and extreme weather events are rising. Yet climate change is not only an environmental issue. It has a clear economic and social impact, and some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable, who have contributed least to climate change, will be hit hardest and soonest. Increasing droughts, floods and heat waves are already leading to declines in crop productivity and food security, as well as rising poverty and conflict. To respond to the climate challenge, world leaders gathering for the 62nd session of the General Assembly this month will lay

out paths to move the world towards negotiations on a new international agreement this December in Bali.

Quick and concerted action is urgent to confront the climate challenge, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has taken the lead by convening a special event on climate change on 24 September in New York to consider "The future in our hands: Addressing the leadership challenge of climate change." By organizing the event, Mr. Ban hopes to convince Heads of State and Ministers to send a strong political signal to signatories to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that the Kyoto Protocol is no longer enough, and that a new approach is needed. Climate change is an economic problem calling for an economic response, possibly embodied in a new multilateral convention.

Adopted in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Convention has near universal support, and remains the central reference point in global climate change policy. The Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention and Kyoto Protocol will be meeting in Bali in December.

A new climate change agreement should succeed the Kyoto Protocol. This treaty broke new ground in 1997 becoming the first legally binding agreement under the UNFCCC that set emission reduction targets for developed countries. It entered into force in 2005, and comes up for review in 2012. Because of that deadline, “All countries must do what they can to reach agreement by 2009, and to have it in force by the expiry of the current Kyoto Protocol commitment period in 2012,” stressed the Secretary-General on 31 July in his address to an earlier General Assembly thematic debate on the issue. If Member States decide to pursue negotiations, an agreed text would be at least two years away. Only if formal discussions start this year could a treaty could be concluded in time.

Gearing up for the climate challenge

The future global strategy will need to tackle the problem on all fronts, according to the Secretary-General, with an emphasis on adaptation, mitigation, clean technologies, deforestation and resource mobilization. To this end, the high-level meeting during the General Assembly will seek the views of world leaders on adapting to the impact of climate change and building resilience, using technology and innovation, financing the response, and stabilizing the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world faces an average temperature rise of around 3 degree Celsius this century if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at their current rate, effectively doubling the pre-industrial level by 2100. Countries can curb harmful emissions and mitigate impacts in the long-term, says Friedrich Soltau, Sustainable Development Officer in DESA. But “the greenhouse gases we are pumping to the air now will affect us for two more centuries, so a global strategy for adaptation is therefore essential.”

Adaptation is pivotal in the regions such as the Arctic that will see the highest levels of warming, and whose natural systems are the most fragile. Sub-Saharan Africa is at risk due to desertification and low adaptive capacity of the economy. Small island States are vulnerable because of the exposure of populations and infrastructure to sea-level rise and storm surges. Large population groups living in major Asian river deltas, such as the Ganges-Brahmaputra and the Zhujiang, may also be inundated by higher seas, storm surges and river flooding.



The poorest of the poor bear the brunt

Vulnerability arises not only because of geography. Like the sinking of the Titanic, “It is the poorest of the poor in the world, and this includes poor people even in prosperous societies, who are going to be the worst hit and vulnerable,” noted IPCC Chairman, Rajendra Pachauri, in April. Even in industrialized countries, the impacts of extreme weather events are evident. Between a half and two thirds of deaths that occurred during the summer 2003 heat wave in Paris, the IPCC estimated, were due to climate change.

Climate change represents, first and foremost, a threat for the fragile economic and social gains of the least developed countries and small islands developing States to the point where prospects for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, are being compromised. “They are the ones with the most to lose from climate change and the least capacity to adapt to its effects,” the Secretary-General reminds us in his background note for the high-level event, “despite having contributed the least to causing the problem in the first place.”

Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, produces less than four percent of the world’s greenhouse gases. Yet droughts and flooding will jeopardize rain-fed irrigation, and further reduce the productivity of crops that draw nourishment from marginal soils. By 2020, the IPCC predicts, between 75 and 250 million people in Africa will be exposed to an increase of water stress due to climate change. On small islands, deterioration of coastal conditions, through beach erosion and coral bleaching, could wreck havoc on local resources such as fisheries and tourism, often the main sources of income for littoral communities.

A sustainable development response

To reduce the chance of disaster, resistance to the future effects of climate change is needed. “A key issue is how to make systems resilient, capable of responding to sudden changes, adapt and recover from the impact,” Mr. Soltau points out. A first step to that end is preparing for more extreme weather conditions through disaster risk reduction programmes, for example, to bolster public risk awareness, early warning systems and disaster preparedness. Disaster risk reduction, the Secretary-General has underscored, should furthermore be reflected in national development plans, as called for in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. This global strategy to reduce disaster risks sets out an agreed plan for reducing vulnerability to severe weather and for adapting to future threats.

Development also plays a major role in reducing adverse impacts. “Economic growth is critical to reducing vulnerability,” said Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Sha Zukang to the General Assembly on a thematic debate on climate change on 1 August. At the end of the day, “More resources means greater access to cleaner technology, and improved capabilities for addressing adaptation and protection from extreme weather events.”

“Take the case of the Netherlands and Bangladesh,” proposes Mr. Soltau, while both countries are vulnerable to floods, the Netherlands is expected to be equipped to face the impact of such eventualities while Bangladesh is not. “A very poor country lacking funds to develop the adequate infrastructure and adapt to the impact of climate change such as Bangladesh might well end up flooded. Adaptation therefore should be hand-in-hand with sustainable development,” stresses Mr. Soltau.

Financing today, investing in tomorrow

Similarly, external financial assistance will be key to assisting developing countries as they struggle to adapt, says the Secretary-General in his note. In particular, assistance should be targeted to sectors and countries which are already highly dependant on external support, such as agriculture and health in the least developed countries, coastal infrastructure needs in small island states, and desertification, drought and food insecurity in Africa, bearing in mind that some countries may be concerned that traditional official development assistance could be diverted to financing for climate change adaptation when additional resources are called for.

While the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol foresee financial assistance, the funds that are currently available to deal with the effects of climate change are small compared to the magnitude of adaptation needs, explains Mr. Soltau. The parties to the Framework Convention assigned operation of a financial mechanism to the Global Environment Facility, a funding agency established in 1991 to assist developing countries finance environmental protection projects. In addition, three special funds have been established for this purpose, namely the Special Climate Change Fund, and Least Developed Countries Fund, under the Convention, and the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol.

The Special Climate Change Fund supports adaptation, energy management, technology transfer and climate-related economic diversification projects in all developing countries. For its part, the Least Developed Countries Fund is intended to help those countries classified as least developed to prepare and implement national adaptation programmes. Since its launch in 2001, less than half of the \$120 million pledged to the Least Developed Countries fund has been received. The status of the Special Climate Change fund is about the same. Of a total \$60 million pledged, about \$34 million was available in 2006.

Increasing available funding is crucial, especially since adaptation to climate change will cost several tens of billions of dollars per year in 2030, according to a report just released by the UNFCCC secretariat.

Technology for a climate-friendly world

Adapting to the impact of climate change and combating its causes require transfer of technological knowledge. Most of the technologies needed to confront the problem are already available: more energy efficiency, renewable energy, water-saving technologies, anti-drought seeds and land restoration. Yet low-carbon alternatives are still, in most cases, expensive than conventional technology based on fossil fuels, says Mr. Soltau. Pulling new technologies into the market – by setting energy-efficiency standards for appliances, or introducing tax credits for solar energy, for example – could foster commercialization by expanding take-up and cutting prices. In this connection, private investment in environmentally sound technology should be at the heart of any market strategy.

According to the Secretary-General, research and development through subsidies and other support packages can make a big difference in both the

mitigation and adaptation realms. Governments should encourage research and development in new technologies such as carbon capture and storage, hydrogen and fuel cells, biofuels, clean energy technology, early warning systems and biotechnology, among others. Similarly, technology transfer from North to South and via South-South cooperation will be needed on an unprecedented scale. “But to achieve transfer of technology on the scale needed”, says the Secretary-General, “a powerful global incentive framework will be indispensable.”

Offsetting emissions via the carbon market

Strong incentives to curb greenhouse gases emissions have been around since the entry into force of Kyoto in 2005. The Protocol requires industrialized nation signatories, up to 35 countries to cut greenhouse gases emissions five percent below 1990 levels. The Protocol broke new ground by putting in place three innovative market mechanisms to lower the costs of meeting those targets: the clean development mechanism, joint implementation and emissions trading.

These mechanisms enable countries to take advantage of cost-effective opportunities to reduce emissions, or to remove carbon from the atmosphere, in other countries. The clean development mechanism, for example, allows developed nations to meet emissions reduction targets by funding green projects in developing countries. The idea is to award such projects “carbon credits” that can be traded on international carbon markets. Carbon markets have grown rapidly since 1997. In the first nine months of 2006 alone, according to UN and World Bank figures, up to \$22 billion of carbon emission rights exchanged hands.

“Offsetting” is a precisely a fundamental principle of the Kyoto Protocol, and the high-level event on 24 September will be used to set a modest example for others to follow. As was the case during the three-day informal thematic debate between 31 July and 2 August, the General Assembly meeting will be “carbon neutral”. The entire carbon dioxide emissions of the UN Headquarters and the emissions from air travel to bring world leaders to the event will be offset. This will be achieved by investing in renewable energy projects in developing countries.

Common but differentiated responsibilities

Forests can also play a key role in mitigating climate change. According to FAO, the world’s forest and forest soils store more than 1.2 trillion tons of carbon, twice the amount found in the atmosphere and just over half the total in all terrestrial vegetation and soils. However, every year 13 million hectares of the world’s forests are lost due to deforestation, an activity that accounts for up to 20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions (35 percent in developing countries and 65 percent in the least developed countries) that contribute to global warming.

Curbing emissions, including those due to deforestation, remain a long-term solution to combating global warming. While emphasis on adaptation is vital for the near-term, the IPCC working group report on mitigation released earlier this year made it clear that unmitigated climate change would, in the long term, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt. The secretariat of the UNFCCC released a report last month in which it was revealed that an investment of more than \$200 billion will be necessary in 2030 to return greenhouse emissions to current levels.

The cost of inaction is clearly more than the cost of action, and greater international cooperation, as called for by the Secretary-General, is needed. But the means to push ahead a post-Kyoto mitigation strategy “must be equitable if global consensus is to be reached,” Mr. Ban has cautioned. This means adhering to the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” by which developed countries take the lead in combating climate change, which is enshrined in the existing convention. The European Union has set the goal of reducing greenhouse gases by twenty percent by 2020 and by another ten percent if other nations join in. But a “one-size-fits-all” strategy of setting reduction targets for all countries could constrain growth of developing nations, many advocate. A solution would be the status quo of incentives for developing countries combined with emission reduction targets for industrialized nations.

DESA is the secretariat for a number of intergovernmental processes which deal with climate change and development, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council. Its Under-Secretary General, Sha Zukang, advises the Secretary-General on climate change matters directly and on behalf of the

UNFCCC Secretariat. DESA also provides advice to Member States, at their request and in accordance with national development priorities, on capacity-building in the areas of climate change, and energy efficiency and development.

Information on the UN climate change agenda and the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development can be found at

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/climate_change/climate_change.htm

For more information on the high-level event:

<http://www.un.org/climatechange/2007highlevel/>.

The inclusive society

Participation as an essential ingredient of social integration

Some groups are systematically locked out of the benefits of development. They cannot escape from poverty as they are deprived of opportunities that are available to others, and have difficulty asserting their rights because of race, cast, disability, social status or other social identity. Creating an inclusive society means building communities based on social justice, and participation by all at all stages of decision-making. With this idea in mind, the DESA Division for Social Policy and Development is convening an expert group meeting in Paris between 10 and 13 September, in collaboration with UNESCO and UN-Habitat, intended to map out practical strategies to promote social integration through participation and inclusion.

The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 introduced the notion of social integration to the intergovernmental discourse and



national policy-making. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, a key outcome of the Summit, pledged to make social integration, along with poverty eradication and the promotion of full employment, an overriding goal of development. The Summit viewed social integration processes as crucial to achieving “a society for all” in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.

Building on the Copenhagen Declaration, experts meeting in Paris will explore pivotal elements for creating an inclusive society, clarify the methodology of analysis of social inclusion, and shed light on possible approaches to measure the inclusiveness of societies. This will be done through examination of case studies, and existing methodologies and indicators to assess the impact of initiatives to promote social inclusion at the local and community level.

All actors on board

Inclusive societies are promoted by social policies seeking to reduce inequality and create tolerant societies that embrace all people. The recently released DESA publication entitled “Participatory Dialogue: Towards a Stable, Safe and Just Society for All” explores dialogue as an important policy participation tool that can offer practical means to promote social integration. According to the report, three ingredients – inclusion, participation, and justice – are essential for constructing socially integrated societies. Inclusion refers to policies and institutional arrangements designed to include people in civic, social, economic and political activities, and it is an action taken by policy-makers, while participation refers to the active engagement of people, and is an action taken by citizens.

The meeting in Paris will deal with participation, and its connection with inclusion and justice. Inclusive societies, says the report, benefiting from citizen engagement, are “more resilient to social tensions and disintegration, and possess the capacities to manage conflicts non-violently through a culture of dialogue that is indicative of a healthy democratic system.” Socially integrated societies, in addition, build the stability necessary for productive economies and sustained economic growth. By contrast, a lack of investment in social integration implies risks in terms of political stability and security.

The costs of social exclusion

The causal relationship between social exclusion and conflict is apparent in the case of Sierra Leone and its prolonged civil war. According to DESA's publication on participatory dialogue, social exclusion is now understood to have played a greater role than the diamond trade or political instability in prolonging the conflict in this African country. Eight years of fighting helped provoke a revolt among youth, who turned to guerrilla insurgency in response to their political, economic and social exclusion by powerful urban elites, rural chiefs and elders. Subsequently, bilateral donors supported youth inclusion in government and civil society projects to empower young people.

Similarly, in Nepal social exclusion has led to an unequal distribution of power, with exclusionary policies leading to the formation of institutions that further reinforce differences in status and wealth. Dalits and Janajatis, who constitute almost fifty percent of the total population in the country, have been kept out of mainstream development. Economic growth remains at less than three percent a year underscoring a warning in the DESA 2005 Report on the World Social Situation that the impact of growth on poverty reduction is greater when initial income inequality is lower.

Nepal is an example of how social exclusion creates various forms of conflict and ultimately affects stability and prosperity. In Nepal, failure to address the issues of exclusion in a timely manner – exclusion on the basis of caste, ethnicity, gender and geography – is one of the causes of the armed conflict. As a result, more than 14,000 people have lost their lives and the livelihoods of many people have been threatened.

Raising the voices of the excluded

Participation in decision-making can, in contrast, bring about positive change at the local and national levels. "Engaging with excluded people and empowering them to take an active role in decisions that affect their lives helps bring long-term benefits," says Makiko Tagashira, Social Affairs Officer in the Division for Social Policy and Development in DESA and focal point of the meeting. She cites the example of Manshiet Nasser, a shanty town perched on sandstone cliffs in the desert outskirts of Cairo, where engineers and planners have begun work with local people to address basic needs. Residents

urgently require more water, along with sewage treatment and refuse facilities. The innovation is that local people have been involved in drawing up a master-plan. No one knows better than they about the need to improve basic services, in an area of frequent sewage flooding and of eye and respiratory ailments that result from high levels of environmental pollution.

In other corners of the world, explains Ms. Tagashira, marginalized groups have also been empowered to run community schools or to change the language in which children are taught. Yet while programmes and budgets targetting excluded people are important to build capacity, she adds, they should be coupled with more mainstream action. The essence of a mainstreaming approach is to review whether the existing policies are inclusive and whether they incorporate people's needs and concerns in all stages of decision-making, including planning, design and implementation.

For example, participatory budgeting was launched in 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil by engaging local neighbourhood associations, NGOs and labour unions in city budgeting. The new local administration elected in Porto Alegre in 1989 decided to break the tradition of elaborating municipal budgets behind closed doors, by consulting citizens on how to spend scarce municipal resources. The experience of Porto Alegre highlights the major role local governments can play in promoting political, social and economic inclusion and participation.

These public consultations led to spectacular local development. From 1989 to 1996, households with access to water rose from eighty percent to ninety-eight percent; households with sewerage system soared from forty-six percent to eighty-five percent; school enrolments doubled and local tax collection increased fifty percent, reflecting people's satisfaction with public services.

The number of participants – initially estimated at 1,500 – swelled. Over 45,000 residents now take part in the annual budget process. In Porto Alegre, one hundred percent of the budget is regarded as participatory, and other towns in Brazil have begun to follow Porto Alegre's lead. According to the DESA publication on participatory dialogue, the secret of Brazilian success is a real and sustained commitment by city management to transparency and new ways of interacting, along with continuous education of citizens who are being asked to take part. César Busatto, Secretary of Political Coordination and

Local Governance of Porto Alegre, will be present at the expert group meeting to discuss the challenges of ensuring participation in local design and implementation.

Measuring social integration

Social integration is a dynamic and complex concept that is hard to pin down, but a number of instruments and indicators for the measurement of social integration are emerging. In order to measure progress made in implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action, Ms. Tagashira stresses, it appears useful to develop some specific indicators or a composite index to deepen our knowledge on social integration, as well as to measure progress in this field. Experts at the meeting – among them practitioners in local governments and private companies, academia and officials from the UN system – will review such methods. The question of how to make such an index methodologically valid and truly representative remains, though, as does the need to get beyond indicators that are overly context-specific. “Any indicator,” Ms. Tagashira reflects, “should be developed through people’s participation” in accordance with the Copenhagen message of a society for all.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egm'07/>

Global dialogue on development

Climate change expected to dominate GA general debate

High-level dialogue on financing for development will also take place on 22 and 23 October

The General Assembly general debate, which provides Member States the opportunity to express their views on major international issues, kicks off on 25 September in New York. This year, the debate will unfold under an overarching theme, “Responding to climate change,” that was proposed by the President of the 62nd session, H.E. Dr. Srgjan Kerim.

The practice of selecting a specific issue of global concern for the session dates back to 2003, when the General Assembly decided to introduce this innovation in an effort to enhance the authority and role of the world body. The annual debate traditionally features statements by dozens of heads of State and Government as well as foreign ministers.

Prior to the general debate, on 24 September there will be a high-level event organized by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on climate change. Mr. Ban has described climate change as the “defining issue of our era,” and hopes that world leaders will begin to map a way forward in advance of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali this December. The Secretary-General will also present his report on the work of the organization immediately prior to the general debate.

Rather than its usual period of nine working days, this year’s general debate will last only seven days, until 3 October, to allow for the convening of a high-level dialogue on inter-religious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, which will take place on 4 and 5 October. In addition, a high-level dialogue on financing for development will be held on 22 and 23 October, and a commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the 27th special session on children will be convened on 11 and 12 December.

At its 62nd session, the Assembly will address implementation of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals and follow-up on UN management reform. It will also continue to deal

with issues such as sustainable development, HIV/AIDS, system-wide coherence and revitalization of the General Assembly. The Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) and the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee) will discuss the items on the agenda related to economic questions and social and humanitarian issues, respectively. The Committees seek where possible to harmonize the various approaches of States, and present their recommendations, usually in the form of draft resolutions and decisions, to a plenary meeting of the Assembly for its consideration.

The Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN, a forum for multilateral negotiation. While it is empowered to make only non-binding recommendations to States on international issues within its competence, it has, nevertheless, initiated actions – political, economic, humanitarian, social and legal – which have affected the lives of millions of people throughout the world. The Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, for example, reflected the commitment of Member States to reach goals to achieve development, poverty eradication, promote the rule of law, meet the special needs of Africa and protect the environment, among others.

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

Thumbs up to eleven resolutions at the Geographical Names Conference

The conference hears special presentations from the UN, WHO and Google Earth

The UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names, the forum that ensures accurate use of geographical names, concluded its ninth session on 30 August looking to the future. It passed eleven resolutions, including a call for the creation of a Portuguese-speaking unit within the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Other significant developments included resolutions on the promotion of recording and use of geographical names common among indigenous, minority and regional language groups, continued support for toponymic training courses, and approval of a 25th session of the UN Group of Experts in Africa in 2009.

“The past five years have brought accelerated growth in digital aspects of geographical names standardization, as well as in communication of the names information around the world,” said Helen Kerfoot, Chairperson of the UN Group of Experts, which met on 20 and 31 August, immediately before and after the Conference. Ms. Kerfoot added that “much has been accomplished in different parts of the world in the past five years, but clearly much remains to be done in the field of geographical names standardization.”

The Conference, which was attended by over 300 delegates from 91 countries, heard special presentations from representatives of the UN, WHO and Google Earth. They said their need for consistent names data was vital to the provision of timely humanitarian relief, to political and administrative decision-making at the provincial and district level and to the provision of up-to-date information linked with satellite imagery presented on the world wide web.

A total of 250 papers were presented on a wide variety of topics ranging from the creation of national names authorities and the development of national gazetteers to activity in relation to the handling of names in different writing systems, the production of national toponymic guidelines and the safeguarding of names as part of a nation’s cultural heritage.

A new technical reference manual for the standardization of geographical names, compiled by three UN working groups and published by the DESA Statistics Division, was launched along with a prototype global database aimed at disseminating names of countries and major cities in the world with a population of more than 100,000.

Since the eighth conference held in Berlin in 2002, there have been two sessions of the UN Group of Experts, which was established in the 1960s to further the national standardization of geographical names and promote the national and international benefits to be derived from standardization. Between sessions much of the ongoing work has been carried forward by the twenty-two geographical and linguistic divisions and the ten technical working groups.

For more information:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/uncsgn.htm>

Trends and analysis

Tax policy and development

Experts to discuss environmental taxes, tax evasion, transfer pricing, and other thorny issues of finance

Tax as a means of development in developing countries and economies in transition is the focus of an expert group meeting taking place in Rome on 4 and 5 September. The DESA Financing for Development Office, in cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development, is organizing the event to provide a forum for informal discussion of key issues related to the tax aspects of domestic resource mobilization.

The discussion will revolve around opportunities for greater cooperation in resource taxation, environmental taxes, tax evasion and avoidance, transfer pricing, and other concerns. Taxation of resources is of special concern to many developing countries, whose economies tend to depend heavily on natural resources with volatile prices, such as minerals, oil, and forest products. Diversification of revenue sources and the positive and negative effects of trade liberalization on the domestic tax base will be considered.

Attracting investment often means offering tax advantages to foreign companies, explains Michael Lennard, Senior Officer in the Financing for Development Office. Yet the need for investment must be balanced against the need to have a sufficient domestic tax base for development of health care, education, and infrastructure. An important question that arises is whether tax advantages for transnational corporations crowd out investment by small and medium sized enterprises.

Environmental taxes will also be examined. Such taxes discourage the use of environmentally harmful products, reduce clean-up and restoration costs associated with pollution, and can create new revenue sources for government, which can in turn be used to address environmental challenges. In addition, environmental taxes are sometimes seen as preferable to technical standards due to lower costs of monitoring and compliance.

Ten internationally renowned experts have been invited to take part in the meeting. Eminent tax policy advisers, administrators, and academics will explore areas where international cooperation in tax

matters can have the greatest impact, and the role of the UN in fostering such cooperation. The outcome of the meeting will be reported to the third session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters next month in Geneva.

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

Financing for gender equality

Expert group meeting sets the stage for next year's Commission on the Status of Women

Injecting a gender perspective into all areas of development remains a challenge, not least due to a shortage of resources. From 2001 to 2005, for example, only \$5 billion of a total \$20 billion in bilateral aid were allocated to activities that had gender equality as a significant goal, with two thirds directed to the health and education sectors. Scarcely any bilateral aid was directed to the promotion of gender equality in such areas as agriculture, infrastructure and finance.

To lay the groundwork for next year's session of the Commission on the Status of Women, whose priority theme will be financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, the DESA Division for the Advancement of Women will convene an expert group meeting in Oslo from 4 to 7 September 2007 on this issue. The meeting will be hosted by the Government of Norway.

The experts will explore public finance, with an emphasis on the impact of fiscal policies designed to stimulate gender equality. They will map out ways to ensure that gender equality is at the heart of macroeconomic policy, and is adequately addressed in the follow-up processes to the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development. Participants will also look into opportunities available for mobilizing bilateral and multilateral assistance and new aid modalities, coupled with new sources of funding for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment.

They will also examine how funding for national machineries for the advancement of women compares to that of other ministries or departments at national level. Similarly, the role of women's organizations in the budget process deserves attention, as does the funding of these organizations.

The meeting will bring together experts appointed by the Secretary-General, academics, representatives of donor agencies, women's funds, foundations and development banks, as well as observers from governments, the United Nations, inter-governmental organizations and NGOs.

For more information:

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/financing_gender_equality/egm_financing_gender_equality.htm

Will carbon sequestration work?

Ways to speed up development and implementation of carbon capture and storage under discussion

Is the use of coal and other fossil fuels compatible with an atmosphere free of man-made carbon dioxide? Obviously not, but the adaptation of technologies to capture and store carbon dioxide emissions may allow continued use of fossil fuels while nearly eliminating CO₂ emissions. An expert group meeting will unfold from 10 to 11 September in New York to deepen understanding of the potential of carbon capture and storage technology to contribute to reduce the effects of climate change in the interest of sustainable development.

Carbon capture and storage entails trapping the carbon dioxide normally released from the combustion of fossil fuels or from industrial processes and then isolating it from the atmosphere for long periods by storing it in underground geologic formations. Although in some respects this technology is at an early stage of development, its use is already controversial. Since carbon capture and storage could translate into increased cost of electricity or risk of carbon dioxide leakage, the public attitude tends to be skeptical. In addition, uncertainties remain with regard to economic, environmental and regulatory aspects, while further research and development is needed to address technical challenges.

The meeting will bring together a small number of experts from academia, industry, and government agencies working to advance knowledge of carbon capture and storage options from different angles. Some are concentrating on such issues as economic and market analysis, and legal and regulatory frameworks. Others are examining environmental

and safety concerns, as well as opportunities for technology transfer to developing countries.

For more information:

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

Women gaining ground in African politics

Online discussion on women, political participation, and decision-making in Africa

Women are bringing down some of the walls they have historically faced in African politics, and the figures are eye-opening. The proportion of members of African parliaments who are female rose from 7 percent in 1990 to 17 per cent in 2007, which is close to the global average. In Rwanda, women hold about half of the seats in the Lower House, the highest percentage worldwide.

Pervasive barriers, however, still prevent full-fledged participation of women in decision-making. These obstacles range from entrenched poverty, lack of equal access to health, education, training and employment and gender stereotypes and, in some countries, the devastating impacts of armed conflict and natural disasters.

The DESA Division for the Advancement of Women and the Economic Commission for Africa in cooperation with the e-Network of National Gender Equality Mechanisms in Africa is organizing an online discussion on women, political participation and decision-making in Africa from 4 September to 14 October. The goal is to understand the map of women's political participation in Africa better, review measures taken at national and sub-regional levels to promote such participation, and highlight gaps where action is needed.

The online discussion will start with an assessment of the current level of women's participation in decision-making in Africa. The constraints faced by women entering politics and the strategies they use to overcome them will be discussed on the second and third weeks. The fourth week will be devoted to the role of women in the private sector, civil society and the media. The potential of building alliances among women in different decision-making processes will be taken up in the fifth week.

The e-Network was set up in 2006 in cooperation with the African Center for Gender and Social Development at the Economic Commission of Africa, with the goals of enhancing the exchange of knowledge, fostering partnerships among national women's machineries, and speeding up implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the national and sub-regional levels. The online discussion expects to receive input from representatives of national gender equality mechanisms in Africa, other ministries, political parties, NGOs, academia and the media.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/forum/forum-daw-politicalparticipation2007.htm>

Staying in the black by going green

Experts shed light on how to make the most of earnings for green local development

Oil, gas and minerals have generated windfall revenues in recent years for many countries that produce and export such products. Yet because resources are exhaustible, the issue for those countries is to use the current revenues with maximum efficiency for growth and sustainable development, explains David O'Connor, Chief of the Policy Integration and Analysis Branch in the DESA Division for Sustainable Development. How to do that? DESA is organizing an expert group meeting on the use of non-renewable resource revenues for sustainable local development on 21 September in New York.

The meeting will provide a platform to spur discussion on this issue. How to allocate those revenues? What kinds of investments have been undertaken by central and local governments? Furthermore, have those investments been translated into effective projects and development programmes? Experts will discuss the impacts on the ground of activities and projects financed by revenues from natural resources in selected countries in the developing world. They will identify institutional mechanisms and policies which have proven effective in ensuring that such revenues are used effectively, efficiently and equitably.

Perspectives of various countries – Chad, Ghana, Nigeria, and Peru – and different stakeholders, from field researchers to NGOs, will be brought together for the meeting. This will inform discussions of the

2008 Commission on Sustainable Development, focusing on review progress in implementation of inter-governmental commitments relating to the areas of agriculture, desertification, drought, rural development, and Africa, notably Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/institutionalarrangements/egm2007/>

Global forum celebrates the role of youth in ICT

The meeting explores ways to empower citizens through technology

The World Summit on the Information Society emphasized that young people are the leading creators and earliest adaptors of information and communication technology, while asserting that youth and ICT are agents of positive change in society. Two years later, the Global Forum on Youth and ICT for Development will repeat this message, recognizing youth as catalysts of change. From 24 to 26 September, young people from all corners of the world will meet in Geneva with policy makers from international organizations, government agencies and the private sector.

Participants will engage in an open discussion on the role of technology in advancing people's lives, while exploring ways to empower citizens through ICT. The meeting is a reminder of the importance of harnessing youthful creativity for the benefit of young people themselves as well as the communities in which they live. The World Summit made it clear that a people-centred and development-oriented information society is an important goal of ICT. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has put it, information and communications technologies have "a central role to play in the quest for development, dignity and peace."

The forum will open with a video hosted by a young conference participant, and will contain interviews with conference organizers and footage from programs sponsored by key conference partners. The video is intended to spur discussion among young viewers on the issues that will subsequently be addressed at the meeting. It will be streamed on the Global Alliance website as well as YouTube, and distributed on DVD.

An online blog is already up and running, with an emphasis on what is happening behind the scenes. A few guest bloggers have been invited to share their views and experiences with ICT in the areas of education, health, and entrepreneurship.

Attendees will also find a marketplace in Geneva that showcases ICT projects, initiated for and by youth in connection with development.

The Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development, sponsor of the event, was launched a year ago with the purpose of promoting effective use of information and communication technologies for development. Its mission was inspired by the World Summit on the Information Society, which forged a global consensus on the importance of ICT as tools for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

For more information: <http://www.un-gaid.org/en/node/587>

GAID executives take stock

The third meeting of the Steering Committee, the executive governing body of the Global Alliance, will be held on 19 September in New York. The meeting will be chaired by Craig Barrett, Chairman of the Alliance and Chairman of the Board of Intel Corporation. The Steering Committee, which provides the Alliance with executive oversight and guidance, is composed of twelve members representing governments, business, civil society, the media and international organizations. An interactive discussion will review the progress of the Alliance and chart its course for the coming year. This will be followed by a discussion on the Alliance's funding.

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

Technical cooperation

Upgrading manufacturing statistics in Latin America

A programme to develop comprehensive and comparable manufacturing statistics in Latin America is about to begin with a workshop on the issue to be held from 24 to 26 September in Rio de Janeiro. Participants from eleven Latin American countries will review the state of manufacturing statistics in the region, with an emphasis on scope, definitions, measurement and methodology used in data compilation. The workshop is being organized by the DESA Statistics Division in collaboration with the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística.

Regional electoral resource centres

A website on the administration and cost of elections (ACE) was launched by the United Nations in 1998. Almost ten years on, in July 2007, the project partners held a workshop in Stockholm to welcome the joining of nine regional centres to the project, and to provide them with background information and practical training on the use of the site. The main objective of the workshop, organized by the DESA Division for Public Administration and Development Management and the other seven ACE partner organizations, was to empower public administrators to disseminate information and support electoral managers in their own regions.

Ms. Almaz Atnafu of DESA delivered a presentation on the history of the ACE project and the role played by DESA as one of its three founding members. DESA is the author of four of the twelve sections of the ACE site.

The current members of ACE are Elections Canada, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the International Foundation for Electoral Assistance, the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE), DESA, DPA, and UNDP. The European Commission has been an ex officio partner since March 2007.

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

Publications and websites

Technical reports



Review of National Action Plans on Youth Employment: Putting Commitment into Action

Innovative initiatives to address youth employment at the country level are urgent. While young people make up a quarter of the total labour force, but they constitute almost half of the world's total unemployed, and are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. This report presents a review of national action plans, and is especially useful as it allows countries at all levels of development to share experiences in addressing youth employment challenges. The title, based on the report of the Secretary-General on global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment, shows that some countries are making significant strides to tackle youth unemployment while others are only beginning to address the issue in an integrated fashion. Measures to boost employability, entrepreneurship, employment creation and equal opportunities continue to be key. Produced in collaboration with the Youth Employment Network, a joint initiative of the UN, ILO, and World Bank.

For more information:

<https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=16938>



Toward Participatory and Transparent Governance: Reinventing Government

Participation and transparency improve the quality of governance within a society, and the living conditions of its citizens. Participation entails access to all stages of the policy process – policy formulation, implementation and review. Transparency enables all actors to participate as informed contributors. Building on discussions held at the sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government held in Seoul in 2005, this title focuses on public service ethics and trust in government, governance-oriented innovations to enhance state capacity, and e-government as a tool for participation and transparency. Produced by the Division for Public Administration and Development

Management, and issued as part of DESA's Government Reinvention Series.

For more information:

<https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=7399>

Statistical compilations



Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook, 2004

The Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook, 2004 is the thirty-eighth in a series of annual compilations of statistics on world industry designed to meet both the general demand for information of this kind and the special requirements of the United Nations and related international bodies. This edition of the Yearbook contains annual quantity data on production of about 200 industrial commodities by country and geographical region. The statistics refer to the ten-year period 1995-2004 for about 200 countries and areas. Publication symbol ST/ESA/STAT/SER.P/44. Sales no. E/F.06.XVII.14.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/industry/icsy_intro.asp



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. 6, June 2007,
ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Q/414**

Special features in this issue: Retail price indices relating to living expenditures of United Nations officials; Fuel imports of developed economies (unit value indices, volume indices and value); Indicators on fuel imports of developed economies; Registration of new motor vehicles; External trade conversion factors; Manufactured goods exports (unit value indices, volume indices and value); Selected series of world statistics.

Vol. LXI, no. 7, July 2007,
ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Q/415

Quarterly and annual tables included in this issue: Civil aviation traffic (passenger-kilometres and cargo net tonne-kilometres); Total exports and imports by countries or areas (volume, unit value, terms of trade and purchasing power of exports, in US dollars); World exports by provenance and destination.

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

Working papers



Humanizing the Digital Age

This book examines entrepreneurship, the need for global governance, and the importance of South-South cooperation in the ICT sector, drawing on country practices from Ireland, Spain, India, China and Turkey. Edited by Üner Kirdar, a senior adviser to the United Nations, the book argues that the information revolution provides unprecedented opportunities for economic and human development, as long as countries are capable of tapping its potential. Published by the Global Alliance for ICT for Development, in collaboration with UNDP.

For more information:

<https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=16003>

What We Do and Don't Know about Trade Liberalization and Poverty Reduction

Strong opinions about the impact of globalization on poverty are not always backed by robust factual evidence. As argued in this paper, however, it is not all that easy to lay our hands on 'robust' facts. Quantitative analyses of trade liberalization appear highly sensitive to basic modelling and parameter assumptions. Altering these could turn the expectation that, for instance, Africa's poor stand to gain from further trade opening under the Doha Round into one in which they would stand to lose. Most studies agree though that trade opening probably adds to aggregate welfare, but gains are small and unevenly distributed.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp50_2007.pdf

Openness and Growth: What Have We Learned?

This paper discusses recent evidence regarding the existence of a cross-country empirical relationship between openness to international trade and economic growth. I discuss the empirical contributions of Warner (2003), Dollar and Kraay (2002), and Wacziarg and Welch (2003), and argue that these studies fail to convincingly establish a positive link between trade and growth. I also discuss the 1990-03 experience and show that growth does not display a significant correlation with any measure of trade openness over this period.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp51_2007.pdf

Have Collapses in Infrastructure Spending led to Cross-Country Divergence in Per Capita GDP?

This paper explores whether the post-1980 decline in infrastructure investment in developing countries is a source of growing disparities in world per capita GDP. I start by reviewing the literature on the infrastructure-productivity link, arguing that a balanced reading of previous studies points to a significant effect of infrastructure provision on productivity. I then empirically study whether retrenchments in infrastructure provision have played a role in growing disparities using a data set of country-level infrastructure stocks for 121 countries since 1960. Cutbacks in infrastructure investment appear to be at most a minor cause of growing divergence in per capita incomes.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp52_2007.pdf

Industrial Policy and Growth

The paper highlights how the rationales and instruments of industrial policy have changed since the 1960s. It finds that theories of industrialization have come full circle, as many of the assumptions behind the market failure paradigm have made a comeback. The policy implications of these theories, however, have not been similarly resurrected. It makes an explicit comparison between the strategies of East Asia and Latin America, and reviews the explanations for their divergent performance. It identifies a back-to-the-future quality of Latin America's situation, pointing to the region's balance

of payments constraint and dependence on commodity-like industrial products.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp53_2007.pdf

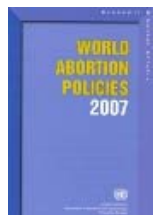
Governance, Economic Growth and Development since the 1960s

Liberal economists have developed a framework of good governance as market-enhancing governance, focusing on governance capabilities that reduce transaction costs and enable markets to work more efficiently. In contrast, heterodox economists have stressed the role of growth-enhancing governance, which focuses on governance capacities to overcome entrenched market failures in allocating assets, acquiring productivity-enhancing technologies and maintaining political stability in contexts of rapid social transformation. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but current policy exclusively focuses on the former, and ignores the strong empirical and historical evidence supporting the latter to the detriment of the growth prospects of poor countries.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2007/wp54_2007.pdf

Outreach material



World Abortion Policies 2007

This wall chart, published by DESA's Population Division, provides the most up-to-date, accurate and objective information available on the legal status of induced abortion for the 195 Member and non-Member States of the UN. Data on abortion rates, contraceptive prevalence, total fertility and maternal mortality are also included.

To download:

http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2007/Abortion_Policies_Chart/2007AbortionPolicies_wall_chart.htm

Websites



ECOSOC Innovation Fair

To showcase innovative experiences and mobilize a wide range of stakeholders in support of successful development activities, the United Nations organized an innovation fair during the main part of the annual substantive session of the Council on the theme of strengthening of efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development. Participants included UN system agencies, private sector and civil society organizations.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ecosoc/innovfair/innovfair.shtml>



Seminars on Global Statistical Systems

A collection of material from seminars offered by the DESA Statistics Division on the global statistical system and the challenges it presents.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/statcom_seminar/global_statistical_systems.html

Environment Statistics Country Snapshots

This site includes a selection of national environmental statistics, complemented by key economic and social indicators, organized by country.

For more information:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Questionnaires/country_snapshots.htm

Comings and goings

Comings



Mr. Richard Kozul-Wright was appointed Chief of the Development Strategy and Policy Analysis Unit of the Development Policy and Analysis Division on 8 August. Mr. Kozul-Wright joined DESA

in 1991 to work on the World Economic and Social Survey and in 1993 moved to UNCTAD where he was a contributor to the World Investment Report, the Trade and Development Report, and the Economic Development in Africa Report. He has published articles on a broad range of issues related to economic development and economic history in various academic journals. His most recent book, of which he is a co-author, is entitled *The Resistible Rise of Market Fundamentalism*. Mr. Kozul-Wright holds a Ph.D. in economics from Cambridge University.

The following staff member was also promoted in August:

Ms. Su Thwe Thant-Rivas, Statistics Assistant, Statistics Division

Goings



Mr. Kui-Nang Mak, Chief of the Energy and Transport Branch in the Division for Sustainable Development, retired on 31 August after 32 years with the United Nations. Among his many achievements, Mr. Mak

formulated and implemented technical cooperation projects in fossil fuel development, power sector reform and renewable energy commercialization in developing countries. He also undertook many studies on global energy trends and issues including those related to sustainable development. Mr. Mak coordinated the preparation of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2001, and was a member of the secretariat for the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002. Mr. Mak holds a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a professional degree in industrial engineering from Columbia University.



Mr. Yehia Abu-Alam, Adviser on Electric Power Systems and Information Systems, retired on 31 August after 23 years with the organization. Mr. Abu-Alam began his UN career in Cairo in 1984 where he was the national

director of various UN projects on electricity and energy data banks, specializing in computer applications for the electric power sector. Prior to joining the UN, Mr. Abu-Alam spent almost 20 years working as a systems analyst and project control manager for the Egyptian Electricity Authority. Mr. Abu-Alam holds a Master of Science in power system analysis from the University of Cairo, and a Ph.D. in the dynamics of power systems from the University of Ain Shams in Egypt.

The following staff members also retired in August:

Ms. Chan Rita Fong Lin Chung, Administrative Assistant, Division for Social Policy and Development.

Ms. Maria Pacchioni, Secretary, Statistics Division

Calendar

September

DESA/ECA Online Discussion on Women, Political Participation and Decision-making in Africa
4 September-14 October

DESA/IFAD Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Tax Aspects of Domestic Resource Mobilization: A Discussion of Enduring and Emerging Issues
Rome, 4-5 September

Expert Group Meeting on Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
Oslo, 4-7 September

Expert Group Meeting on Carbon Capture and Storage and Sustainable Development
New York, 10-11 September

DESA/UNESCO/UN-Habitat Expert Group Meeting on Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration
Paris, 10-13 September

General Assembly

62nd session, New York, convening 18 September

Meeting of the Steering Committee of the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development
New York, 19 September

Expert Group Meeting on the Use of Non-Renewable Resource Revenues for Sustainable Local Development
New York, 21 September

High-level Event on Climate Change

New York, 24 September

DESA/ITU Global Forum on Youth and ICT for Development
Geneva, 24-26 September

DESA/Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística Workshop on Manufacturing Statistics
Rio de Janeiro, 24-26 September

October

General Assembly, Second Committee

New York, convening 8 October

General Assembly, Third Committee

New York, convening October

High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development

New York, 22-23 October

Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

3rd session, Geneva, 29 October-2 November

Observances

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer

16 September

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Montreal Protocol, the landmark international treaty to protect the stratospheric ozone layer. To date, 191 countries have signed the Protocol, which prompts countries to phase out the production and consumption of ozone depleting chemicals. The Montreal Protocol has been hailed as perhaps the most successful international treaty to date and provides a message of hope for working cooperatively to solve major environmental problems.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/events/calendar/Edetail.asp?EventID=1059&BeginDate=9/16/2007>

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.