

**ECOSOC Coordination segment - Panel IV**  
*“Coherence: Strengthening the normative and  
operational link in the work of the UN on rural employment”*

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Your Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to participate in this round table dialogue on a very importance issue. I regret not being able to be with you in person. I thank the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination for organizing this round table. I would like to assure you of the full support of the Commission for Social Development as well as my personal commitment to strengthening the coordination role of ECOSOC.

I want to take this opportunity to present to you the work of the Commission for Social Development in the area of employment.

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders made the commitment to strongly support fair globalization and resolved to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work a central objective of their national and international policies as well as national development strategies as part of efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the broader UN development agenda, with its central focus on improving the lives of poor people.

The following year, in 2006, the Economic and Social Council adopted a Ministerial Declaration on the crucial role of employment to poverty eradication and other key development objectives in 2006. The Declaration stressed that employment and decent work

need to be not a by-product, but the central objective of development strategies, and set out concrete steps to implement the 2005 Summit objectives.

In the wake of the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration by the Council, the Commission for Social Development devoted its first two-year, thematic cycle, under its new methods of work, to full employment and decent work as part of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

At its review segment in 2007, the Commission identified obstacles, best practices and approaches for promoting full employment and decent work. The Chairperson's summary that concluded the review segment served as a basis for the action-oriented, draft resolution that was adopted at the policy segment during the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission, last February and which is before the Council.

The resolution sets out a comprehensive policy framework to achieve full employment and decent work in the context of poverty reduction strategies that incorporates macroeconomic policies, enterprise and rural development, education, training and skills, social protection, and regulatory policies. Furthermore, the resolution requests the Secretary General to report on its implementation to both the Commission and the General Assembly, a significant step that aims at more firmly embedding consideration of productive employment and decent work in the work of the United Nations.

The resolution emphasizes the importance of creating an environment conducive to enterprise development in both rural and urban areas, by giving particular attention to policies that promote micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and the participation of women, including rural women, through access to micro-credit, social security systems and information on markets and new technology. It also urges the development and implementation of integrated policies and strategies that promote employment opportunities for youth, including those living in rural areas.

Special emphasis is also placed on providing access to vocational education and technical training, capacity-building and acquisition of new knowledge with the help of the international community, as well as on increasing social protection coverage for all, including in the context of the informal sector.

In addition, the resolution encourages all relevant UN agencies to collaborate in using and evaluating the application of the Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work developed by the ILO and endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). It calls on the UN system to assess and adopt, as appropriate within their mandates, the three-phased approach proposed by the ILO to promote the goal of employment and decent work.

Finally, it requested the UN funds, programmes, agencies and financial institutions to support efforts to mainstream the goals of full and productive employment and decent work in their policies, programmes and activities, and also take into account the ILO's decent

work country programmes in order to achieve a more coherent and pragmatic UN approach to development at the national level.

These are very concrete policy directives which resonate with the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration, and its resolution E/2007/2 on the role of the UN system in providing full and productive employment and decent work. They provide useful policy guidance for improving coherence in the promotion of employment and decent work by the UN system.

Among these policy directives, I wish to highlight the importance of concerted efforts to ensure that the Common Country Assessments, United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Poverty Reduction Strategies are aimed at promoting a sustained and well-coordinated implementation of full and productive employment and the decent work agenda.

Moreover, the UN system should develop an information and knowledge management network on employment and decent work and makes it accessible system-wide. In this regard, one area of priority lies in developing indicators and tools to assess the impact of supported policies and programmes on employment and the livelihood of the poor, with special attention to impact on gender mainstreaming. In all these activities special focus needs to be given to rural employment.

An increased focus on rural employment is crucial for achieving the Millennium development goals, particularly Goal 1. Three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas, and against the backdrop of current developments, including food crisis, the renewed attention to rural development and rural employment is fundamental. It requires comprehensive and coherent efforts and support from the international community and the UN system.

With this end in view, the United Nations efforts should be specifically designed to promote rural development, bolster economic activities in the rural areas and pursue an employment-led growth strategy. While expanding the traditional sectors of rural employment, bringing diversity would be the key to rural employment generation. In the absence of adequate level of industrial development in the developing countries, the emphasis should be on creating self-employment opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurship. Targeted investment in rural infrastructure and sectors like education and health would facilitate job creation for the rural poor. Priority should be given to growth-oriented areas like rural farm and non-farm sectors, small and medium enterprises development, communications and rural electrification and the non-traditional sectors.

The bottom line is to increase the employability of the marginalized rural workforce which is often low in education and skill. This can be achieved by creating low-end employment opportunities and at the same time setting up facilities for vocational skill-development and livelihood training. UN can play a pivotal role in these areas in complimenting or even spurring the national efforts particularly of the resource strapped countries. Micro-credit and micro-finance schemes could be sought to be one way of micro-enterprise creation and entrepreneurship development particularly for the rural women and youth. A significant

unemployed segment of the rural workforce being youth, the UN can also facilitate motivational and awareness-raising programmes so as to transform them into a productive workforce and integrate them with income-generating activities.

In conclusion, I wish to mention that *Social integration* is the priority theme for the Commission's 2009-2010 review and policy cycle, taking into account the relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all. Among the reports before the forty-seventh session, there will be a report of the Secretary-General on full employment and decent work with a particular emphasis on rural employment. We hope that the Commission will have a fruitful discussion on these important issues and will contribute to dialogue on promoting employment and decent work for all, including rural employment.

Thank you.