



2009 ECOSOC coordination segment- Panel I

“The role of the UN system in promoting sustainable development in the context of current challenges”

Friday, 10 July, 4:30- 6:00 pm

Concept Note

Background

The UN system has an important role to play in promoting sustainable development and supporting countries to develop effective policies and strategies to implement the sustainable development agenda. From the Rio conference to Johannesburg the UN has provided an important set of guidance and guidelines in this area supporting a comprehensive and integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This normative work, however, has not been matched by a corresponding transformation of UN system policies, programmes and operations into a more integrated support to sustainable development. UN system interventions have continued to focus for the most part on specific interventions in on the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. This approach has not facilitated greater synergies between programmes and activities of the system. The CEB/HLCP has an important role to play in promoting greater cooperation and coherence system-wide. Greater coherence and coordination is especially important in the face of current challenges, such as the food crisis and its long-term effects, the energy crisis and climate change, which have highlighted the weaknesses of current approaches.

To discuss these issues in details, it is proposed that a panel discussion be organized during the 2009 Coordination Segment of the annual session of the ECOSOC.

Objective of the panel

The proposed panel discussion on this issue will provide an opportunity to:

- Understand the short- and long-term impacts of current challenges to sustainable development;
- Identify ways to address short- and long-term implications of these challenges in the context of comprehensive strategies and approaches for sustainable development;
- Identify ways in which the UN system approach should be strengthened to ensure an effective and sustainable response to current threats and challenges.

Focus of the panel

There are a number of areas in which the UN system's current approach to sustainable development could be improved:

- 1) Strengthening the link between poverty, inequality, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, and the protection of natural resources;
- 2) Promoting coherence among UN system policies and programmes addressing agricultural development, environmental management and disaster mitigation, and use of appropriate science and technology;
- 3) Mainstreaming climate change issues in UN system, policies, programmes and activities supporting sustainable development.

In this regard, panelists could address the following questions/issues:

- What can be done to reaffirm that agricultural development, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and the protection and effective management of natural resources are overarching objectives essential of and requirements for sustainable development strategies?
- How can they be best translated into effective UN system strategies and timely assistance programmes? –e.g. programmes providing financial and technical support to countries for mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into their

national development planning processes (see UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative); or programmes delivering improved financial services to rural households and businesses (see Rural and Finance Learning Centre developed by FAO, IFAD and World Bank);

- Under the chairmanship of CEB, what kind of efforts are necessary to mainstream further the issue of climate change in the UN system programmes and activities to lead to more concerted UN system action on climate change, with the involvement of all relevant United Nations entities?
- What should be the appropriate mechanisms for the UN system to increase coherence and synergies in its approaches to poverty eradication, food security, social inequity and climate change?