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Summary by the Vice-President
The 2005 ECOSOC Dialogue with the Chairpersons of the Functional Commissions
New York, 7 July 2005

The overall theme of the dialogue was “the role of the functional commissions in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits”. The meeting had before it the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions in 2005, as well as an issues note and two conference room papers providing background information on policy issues and methods of work. The dialogue was chaired by the Vice-President of the Council, H.E. Mr. Ali Hachani. In his opening remarks, he said that conveying the lessons that have been learned of the follow-up to the conferences that the commissions are responsible to promote, is key to the contribution that the coordination segment of the Council is expected to make to the outcome of the high-level plenary of the General Assembly in September.

The chairperson's of the functional commissions constituting the panel were: H. E. Mr. Ernesto Aranibar Quiroga, Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the UN, Chairman of the Commission for Social Development; H.E. Ms. Carmen María Gallardo Hernandez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the UN, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women; Mr. Hermann Habermann, Head of the US delegation at the 36th session of the Statistical Commission on behalf of Ms. Katherine Wallman, Chairperson of the Statistical Commission; H. E. Mr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations (Vienna), Chairman of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs; H.E. Mr. Mohamed Saleck Ould Mohamed Lemine, Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the UN (Geneva), Vice-chairman of the commission on Human Rights; H. E. Mr. Crispin Grey-Johnson, Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the UN, Chairman of the Commission on Population and Development; Mr. Javad Amin Mansour, First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN, Vice-chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development; H.E. Mrs. Judith Bahemuka, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN and Chairperson of the Forum on Forests; Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson, Tebtebba Foundation, Philippines, Chairperson of the Forum on Indigenous Issues; H.E. Dr. Pedro Teta, Vice Minister of Science and Technology of Angola, Chairperson of the Commission on Science and Technology (Geneva).

In view of several chairpersons, the annual sessions of the functional commissions assumed particular importance in 2005. There was a significant momentum to carry the UN development agenda originating from the goals embodied in the Millennium Declaration and outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits forward. Several key themes of the Agenda were addressed in the outcomes of the functional commissions that had potential for a tangible impact at the 2005 World Summit in September.

The Council had received a broad range of policy inputs as a contribution from the functional commissions to its substantive session in 2005. An immediate challenge was to ensure that these would have an impact on the Millennium Declaration review, given that the General Assembly will be receiving contributions from different fora. At the same time, projecting a comprehensive view of the MDGs and the follow-up to the conferences that the functional

commissions individually were responsible to promote was seen as a central contribution of ECOSOC to the outcome of the Summit.

There was a general view among the speakers that the existing system for assessing progress in implementing the UN development agenda was fragmented and too compartmentalized. While individual functional commissions carry out substantive reviews of specific conferences, this had led to a somewhat disjointed overall review of the development agenda, sometimes marked by avoidable duplication. Several speakers expressed their hope that the high-level plenary of the General Assembly would entrust ECOSOC with the monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the development agenda.

Many speakers underscored the need to find a way to connect the commissions' work more directly to ECOSOC's, through closely linked multi-year work programmes or an indicative list of themes to be established by ECOSOC. The functional commissions could then follow suit within the context of their respective mandates by adopting contiguous work programmes, while still allowing for the requisite periodic reviews of programmes of action. Individually and collectively, such work programmes, drawing on the broad themes of the development agenda, could strengthen coherence in the whole ECOSOC machinery. On their part, the functional commission would need to promote "clustering" to build stronger synergies across work programmes.

Several speakers noted that the past few years had seen both the growing contribution of the functional commissions to the Council's work and increased coordination within the wider ECOSOC family. The General Assembly had requested functional commissions and other relevant bodies of the Council in resolution 57/270 B to examine their work methods. This work had by now been undertaken by most of the functional commissions and was seen as leading towards closer collaboration among them and towards a more integrated implementation of the conference outcomes.

Highlights of the work of the functional commissions in 2005:

- The Commission for Social Development, at its forty-third session, adopted a Declaration reaffirming that people were at the centre of development efforts and seeking to link efforts on poverty eradication to the fostering of social integration and the promotion of employment strategies. It recognized that the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the attainment of the MDGs were mutually reinforcing. The Declaration also paid attention to financing for social development. In this regard, ECOSOC should urge Member States at the World Summit in September to deliver on existing commitments, including the achievement of Goal 8 of the MDGs.
- The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-ninth session, adopted a Declaration emphasizing that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, and stressed the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the high-level plenary meeting on the review of the Millennium Declaration. Since the Millennium Summit, the Commission had addressed various aspects of gender equality and the empowerment of women through its consideration of priority themes, including HIV/AIDS; discrimination, in particular racism and racial discrimination; poverty; environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters; ICT and media; violence against women; the role of men and boys; and conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building.

- The Commission on Narcotic Drugs focused on the link between illegal drug trafficking and poverty in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The cycle of poverty, terrorism and crime was among the clusters of threats to human security. The rule of law was a precondition to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. While the conventions on drugs had been widely endorsed, their implementation was far from universal. The promotion of development was a central element to reduce global drug supply.
- The Statistical Commission discussed several substantive issues, including demographic and energy statistics. It continued its work towards a global statistical system based on scientific methods and agreed-upon standards to produce comparable data at the national, regional and global levels. The Commission also continued to harmonize and rationalize conference indicators, as its main contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and its role as a focal point for reviewing conference indicators. The Commission was not well placed, however, for making decisions on priorities of indicators and on non-technical definitions, such as defining “poverty”.
- At its fifth session, the UN Forum on Forests held a policy dialogue addressing the linkages between forests and the internationally agreed development goals. It also addressed eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, and the linkages between forests and the establishment of an enabling environment for the achievement of the development goals.
- The Commission on Human Rights continued to address several of the internationally agreed development goals on its agenda, such as access to drinking water and improvement of sanitary conditions. Its special rapporteurs on food, education, health and violence against women highlighted among other things that effective enjoyment of human rights was indivisible from development. These goals should be pursued through interdependent and complementary strategies.
- The Commission on Population and Development, at its thirty-eighth session, recognized that the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation were essential to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and that the goal of universal access to reproductive health should be integrated into strategies to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Commission also made a contribution to the World Summit under its consideration of poverty, HIV/AIDS and international migration.
- The Commission on Sustainable Development had completed the first two-year cycle of its multi-year programme of work, focusing on the thematic cluster of water, sanitation and human settlements. The approximately 30 policy recommendations and 100 practical measures that resulted had been submitted as the Commission’s contribution to the Summit. Overall, the Commission’s emphasis on an integrated consideration of the three pillars of sustainable development opened up avenues for close collaboration with other functional commissions.
- The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues focused on the Millennium Development Goals with a view to ensuring that indigenous people were not left out of the global initiatives. A central challenge was to implement the outcomes of UN conferences and summits in a manner that would be inclusive of issues relevant to indigenous peoples. A

central weakness of the Millennium Development Goals was that they were not framed in a human-rights-based framework. In the achievement of the MDGs, there was need to reflect a rights-based approach to development with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in designing, implementing and monitoring development programmes, policies and projects.

- The Commission on Science and Technology highlighted the role of science and technology to the achievement of the UN Development Agenda. They were powerful tools for combating poverty by contributing to sustained economic growth, increased market efficiency and growth of employment opportunities. Most countries would not meet their development goals by 2015 if they did not place science and technology at the centre of their development agenda.

Conclusions:

- *Contributions to the HLPGA:* An immediate challenge was to ensure that the outcomes of the functional commissions have an impact on the Millennium Declaration review in September given that the General Assembly would be receiving many contributions from different forums. At the same time, however, there was need for greater efforts on forging linkages;
- *Key messages to the HLPGA:* A key message drawn from the 5 and 10-year reviews was that the outcomes of the UN conference and summits were largely mutually reinforcing and their achievement, and, generally, development should be pursued based on an integrated and comprehensive approach. ECOSOC should urge Member States at the HLPGA to inject the “missing links” (for instance, employment, social integration, indigenous peoples issues, ICT) into the Millennium review to establish a broader development agenda. ECOSOC should urge Member States to deliver on existing commitments, including the achievement of Goal 8 of the MDGs. Gender perspective should be integrated in the review of the Millennium Declaration;
- *Follow-up to the outcome of the HLPGA:* In addition to their own work programmes, the functional commissions should be encouraged to provide inputs in a systematic way to the overall monitoring and assessment of progress towards the Development Agenda ECOSOC is expected to undertake following the HLPGA, including peer review and development cooperation forum;
- *“Thematic follow-up”:* To ensure a focused and rational follow-up, ECOSOC should continue to focus the work of its coordination segment around the broad themes emerging from the major UN conferences and summits. (The consolidated report in 2005 is structured along themes common to these conferences);
- *Multiyear approach to introduce a certain degree of predictability:* To bring more predictability and certainty to its work, ECOSOC should complete its initial four-year multiyear work programme by the next substantive session in 2006 or consider other options such as an indicative list of themes. These would enable the machinery of ECOSOC to better prepare their contributions to its work;
- *“Clustering”:* ECOSOC should hold dialogue sessions among clusters of functional commissions in preparation of its substantive sessions (like its meetings with Rome based food agencies on food security in 2000 or its meeting on indicators in 2001). This would reinforce the subsidiarity principle whereby the Council should rely as much as possible on its functional commissions to prepare its own work on themes falling within their purview, and to address such themes;

- *Putting the UN development agenda into effect:* A central challenge was to translate the normative and analytic work of the UN into operational activities. At present, the work of the functional commissions did not influence the priorities of the UN funds and programmes. To help convey the commissions' valuable guidance to the UN system, the commissions should ease that process by clearly articulating specific points for action by the funds and programmes;
- *Methods of work:* The functional commissions met during the first six months of the year and ECOSOC held its substantive session in July. To create more opportunities to meet together, a proposal was shared with the ECOSOC President to hold a meeting among the chairpersons of the functional commissions in January, before the sessions of the functional commissions, so they could discuss their roles and agendas and ensure better follow-up to the Council's guidance. Another proposal was to encourage the chairpersons to participate in the meetings of each other's functional commissions under relevant agenda items. One chairperson cautioned, however, that, in view of the intergovernmental nature of all the commissions, the role of their bureaux might be limited. The commissions could also introduce a specific agenda item on coordination within their respective agendas to help strengthen linkages between the commissions.
- ECOSOC should continue to give impetus to improving and harmonizing the working methods of the functional commissions. It was underlined, however, that it was not desirable for all the commissions to use a single approach.
- Next year the Economic and Social Council will devote its coordination segment to the theme "Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger". The functional commissions, especially the Commission for Social Development that will review the first UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty in 2006 were invited to contribute to this theme, and enrich the debates of the Council, with their own perspective on coordinated efforts towards this central development objective.