

10/5/06

ECOSOC 2006- Coordination segment

10 July

Second Special Event on Avian Flu

10 am-1pm

Background

At the initiative of the 2005 ECOSOC Bureau, a Special Event on Avian Flu was held on 3 November 2005. The Event intended to sensitize delegations to the spread of the virus and its potential economic and social consequences in order to prompt a more effective international response. It also intended to address the question of UN system support for national capacities, in line with the Economic and Social Council's mandate to improve system-wide coordination and provide policy guidance. The main message that emerged from the Event was that there is still an opportunity to prevent the avian flu from becoming a pandemic, provided immediate action is taken to control the spread of the virus at source, that is, in animals. For this to happen, international collaboration through strong and effective multilateral system was deemed indispensable. Several initiatives have been undertaken by the international community since the ECOSOC Special Event last year to organize a better response to this emergency. Despite these efforts, however, there is consensus that most countries remain unprepared to respond effectively to the spread of virus, or worse, to a pandemic. More is required to ensure that the most vulnerable countries are adequately supported, particularly those in Africa and the least developed countries. The spread of Avian flu is clearly a risk for the successful fight against poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Purpose

The second Special Event/meeting on this issue will continue the Council's effort to fulfill its mandate to "develop its ability to respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, environmental and social fields" as well as "support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies". To this end, it will follow up on developments since last year in the spreading of the virus and on the potential economic, social, environmental, cultural, political and security implications of a pandemic. It will assess the effectiveness of international efforts, including global and regional preventive and resource mobilization efforts, undertaken so far to face up those challenges; and will make suggestions for further action to forge a more coherent, comprehensive and timely response at the international level. In particular, the meeting will aim at: providing a clear picture of the current situation in terms of the spread of the disease and its economic and social impact; achieving a better understanding of the gaps in the international response; promoting coherence and coordination among the UN system organizations in their activities supporting Member States; providing a clear vision of the nature of cooperation between the UN system and other international stakeholders.