



Economic and Social Council

Annual Ministerial Review

Global Preparatory Meeting

Aide Memoire

6 March 2008 – New York, UN Headquarters

“AMR Global Preparatory Meeting”

Background

The 2005 World Summit mandated the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to convene an Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) to assess progress made towards the MDGs and the implementation of the other goals and targets agreed at the major UN conferences and summits over the past 15 years, which constitute the United Nations Development Agenda (UNDA). The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland, during the high-level segment of the ECOSOC substantive session.

The primary objective of the AMR is to promote accountability of or fulfilling the commitments and to help accelerate and scale-up progress towards the UNDA. It also serves as a global high-level forum, where lessons learned are exchanged and successful practices and approaches that merit scaling-up are identified. The theme of the 2008 Review is *"Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development"*.

AMR Global Preparatory Meeting

The meeting is expected to make substantive contributions to the 2008 AMR by:

- Identifying steps that ECOSOC could take in order to make the AMR a central forum for reviewing progress on the implementation of UNDA;
- Identifying measures to make National Voluntary Presentations more effective and making them a process of continuous engagement rather than a one off event;
- Identifying major challenges in the area of sustainable development which require urgent action by Ministers at the AMR July session, including the need to take additional measures and launch new initiatives.

The meeting is organized as a half-day event. Following, the opening of the meeting by the President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ambassador Léo Mérorès, the first session will focus on how the AMR can help deliver on implementation. The second session will focus on ECOSOC's role in achieving sustainable development. Following each set of presentations, participants will have the opportunity to engage in a discussion with Member States and representatives of other stakeholders.

To facilitate a free exchange of views during the discussion, there will be no advance speakers' list and interventions should not exceed 3 minutes; prepared statements would be distributed, but reading them out would be discouraged.

a) AMR: *Delivering on implementation*

When mandated by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit, *the Annual Ministerial Review was conceived not as an end in itself, but as a means to improve accountability of partners on the progress made in implementing the United Nations development agenda and to help speed up implementation by (i) promoting policy dialogue; (ii) enhancing transparency; (iii) encouraging capacity building; (iv) fostering cooperation, and (v.) promoting follow-up to commitments made.*

In 2007, the Council successfully held its first AMR, which included national presentations by the Ministers of Bangladesh, Barbados, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Ethiopia and Ghana. The presentations became an occasion for knowledge sharing and information exchange. They prepared the ground for a candid discussion of the key challenges and obstacles as well as the opportunities which countries face in making progress towards the United Nations development agenda.

To ensure that the policy messages and ideas reverberate beyond the ECOSOC Chamber and enrich the development efforts of individual countries, regions, and international partners, the Council now needs to ensure that the ideas are translated into action. This will require an effective follow-up process which keeps stakeholders involved beyond the AMR session.

Several measures have already been taken to establish the AMR as a review process, rather than a one-time review event. The global preparatory event will provide an opportunity to (1) take stock of the measures that have been taken to date; (2) explore the steps that other, more established, review mechanisms, which faced similar challenges, have taken; and (3) identify new steps that ECOSOC could take to ensure a consistent follow-up process for AMR, particularly the National Voluntary Presentations.

The session will start with an intervention by Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who will share his vision on the future of the AMR and will brief the Council on the steps which the Secretariat has taken to assist the next group of countries with their preparations for the 2008 AMR and to assist last year's volunteers with the follow-up of their presentations. The discussion during the meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss how to build on these initial steps.

The Council will also hear from the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde, a country that has participated both in the 2007 Annual Ministerial Review and in the Delivering as One initiative on the role of the two initiatives in the country's efforts to achieve the MDGs.

The Council will also benefit from the presentation by the Chair of the OECD/Development Assistance Committee, Mr. Eckhard Deutscher. Reviews, many of which are mandatory, are a well established tool within the OECD to assess the quality and efficiency of a country's policies, laws, regulations, processes and institutions vis-à-vis those of other member countries of the OECD. A review in the OECD is the combination of the activity of several actors. The assessment of the performance of a country in implementing policy recommendations and guidelines is the most common form of review.

Possible questions for discussion

- *How to strengthen the follow-up to the AMR, particularly national voluntary presentations? How to translate ideas and proposals into concrete action?*
- *How to keep stakeholders from both developing and developed countries engaged? How to promote action in areas where volunteering countries need help from the international community?*
- *What has been the experience of other review mechanisms? What could be next steps?*

b) ECOSOC's role in achieving sustainable development – *moving beyond the mantra of the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development*

Environmental concerns need to be treated as part of the broader effort of promoting development. This is not a new message. Rather it seems like a mantra which has been repeated ever since the 1987 Brundtland report. With growing scientific evidence and increasing awareness, however, there is a new momentum built around the urgency of tackling the issue, and this opens a new window of opportunity for pursuing the goal of sustainable development.

The time for action on the sustainable development agenda is now, and to make concrete advances on implementation, we need the help of a broad set of stakeholders. This is a key message which emerged from the E-discussion¹, which the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and UNDP are currently hosting in preparation of the AMR thematic debate on “Achieving sustainable development, including through the global partnership for development”.

The E-discussion is focused in particular on three questions: (1) How can we foster the integration of sustainable development principles into policy making and development cooperation? (2) How can we move from commitment to action? (3) What can the international community and ECOSOC in particular do in order to advance sustainable development? The intention of the meeting is to build on these questions and to ask what role ECOSOC can play through its July meeting in addressing these questions.

Despite past efforts to integrate the different dimensions of sustainable development, in many instances countries still lack a comprehensive approach. Economic, social and environmental development policies are often dealt with by different departments, ministries, and organizations without a clear framework for coordination. The session will explore the obstacles which exist at the global, national and community level to make a paradigm shift towards sustainable development.

At the global level, the session will address the question to what extent the existing global normative and institutional framework promote an approach to development which is rooted in the three pillars of sustainable development. It will examine how the 2008 AMR, under the auspices of ECOSOC, which looks at economic, social and environmental issues in an integrated manner, can help translate the normative sustainable development framework into a framework for action.

At the national level, putting national development strategies on a sustainable footing will be at the heart of putting the world on a more sustainable consumption and production path. The meeting will consider the progress made to date in this regard and will discuss directions which ECOSOC could provide at its substantive session to advance this process.

¹ The E-discussion on *Achieving Sustainable Development* started on 4 February and will continue till 14 March 2008. For more information on the E-discussion please go to <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunc/amredis.shtml>

Getting the buy-in from the broader public is a sine qua non for translating commitments into concrete results, since behavioral changes ultimately need to happen at the level of individual citizens. The session will address the question how ECOSOC can reach out to civil society, academia and the private sector. How can the Council use established tools such as the NGO Civil Society Forum and the Innovation Fair most effectively?

Possible questions for discussion:

- *How can the 2008 AMR under the auspices of ECOSOC foster the integration of sustainable development principles in policy-making and development cooperation? Where is its comparative advantage? How can it add value?*
- *How can the AMR help in bringing different actors together? How can the Council secure broad based participation from the private sector and civil society? How should we best use the NGO Civil Society Forum and the innovation fair for this?*
- *How can ECOSOC help in strengthening existing initiatives and in bringing new ones on the way?*

Expected contribution

The meeting is expected to help the Council to get ready for the 2008 AMR by:

- *Identifying key issues for discussion in the area of sustainable development by Ministers at the 2008 AMR*
- *Collecting ideas on how we can keep on innovating in order to ensure that the AMR remains an attractive process which adds value and is well attended by a diverse group of stakeholders.*

The analytical summary of the meeting by the ECOSOC President, which will include key messages, will constitute an important input into the analytical report of the Secretary-General to be prepared for the AMR July session.

Participation

The meeting aims to provide a forum for an interactive dialogue between senior government officials, UN system entities, other international and regional organizations, civil society, private sector and academia. More information, including an updated annotated agenda of the meeting, will be made available shortly before the meeting on the ECOSOC website

(<http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amrpreparations.shtml>).

Contact for further information

For further information on the AMR, please contact Mr. Navid Hanif, Chief, Policy Coordination Branch, OESC. For further information on the AMR global preparatory meeting please contact Mr. Ajit Yogasundrum, Economic Affairs Officer, OESC, or write to ecosocinfo@un.org. For question regarding civil society participation, please contact Ms. Hanifa Mezoui, Chief NGO Section.