



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9 November 2010

Excellency,

Upon request of the President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Mr. Hamidon Ali, I have the honour to bring to your attention his letter dated 2 November 2010 as well as his Summary and the background note of the ECOSOC Retreat that took place on 29 and 30 October 2010 with the theme “Building on Progress: Defining New Actions.”

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deiss'.

Joseph Deiss

All Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



The President
of the
Economic and Social Council

02 November 2010

Excellency,

At the initiative of the Bureau of ECOSOC a Retreat was convened on 29 and 30 October 2010, with the sponsorship of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations. The Retreat was convened by me together with the Permanent Representative of Mauritius and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, with the theme "Building on Progress: Defining New Actions".

I have the honour to share with you my Summary of the discussions that took place during the Retreat. This event was arranged with the purpose of bringing together a cross-section of Permanent Representatives of Member States, senior level United Nations officials and experts to review the contributions of ECOSOC to multilateral cooperation. A total of sixty-five participants attended the Retreat, which was characterized by a mix of presentations and interactive discussion. The programme for the Retreat focused on ECOSOC's role in global economic governance and prepared for the review of resolution 61/16 during the current session of the General Assembly. The experience of ECOSOC to date with the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) was highlighted in the deliberations, and the Council's relations with the Peacebuilding Commission as well as its role in enhancing system wide coherence were reviewed.

The discussions demonstrated that there appears to be satisfaction among Member States with the implementation of ECOSOC's broadened mandate and scope of work since the 2005 Summit. No major adjustments to these mandates were emphasized.

The Summary of outcomes which I have prepared is intended to inform the General Assembly review of resolution 61/16. I would also be grateful if this Summary be circulated as an informal note of the General Assembly, along with the background note for the Retreat which was prepared by the Secretariat. It is my conviction that this timely retreat and its outcome will enrich the process of review of GA resolution 61/16 during the 65th General Assembly.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Hamidon Ali

His Excellency
Mr. Joseph Deiss
President of the 65th General Assembly
United Nations
New York

President's Summary

Retreat on the Economic and Social Council

“Building on Progress: Defining New Actions”

Tarrytown, New York, 29 and 30 October 2010

I. The role of ECOSOC in global economic governance

- ECOSOC has a unique legitimacy and convening power as a Charter body of the United Nations. These characteristics should be maximized and built upon in developing its role in global economic governance.
- ECOSOC should be seen in its entirety as a system including its functional commissions and other subsidiary machinery. The comparative advantages of this system should be optimized. Its strength in bringing integrated consideration of global issues should be utilized more effectively, as there is no other international forum which brings together economic, social and environmental issues.
- The role of ECOSOC as a global coordination body of the United Nations system should also be maximized. The capacity of the United Nations system should be strengthened to increase accountability and ensure the implementation of commitments and agreements enshrined in legislation.
- A major challenge for the future is to strengthen the relationship of the Council with the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) and the World Trade Organization. ECOSOC Spring meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions could aim to include more systematically the Executive Directors of the BWIs. ECOSOC representatives could meet in Washington, D.C. at the time of spring meeting of the BWIs, to increase ECOSOC's coordinating role in macroeconomic matters and facilitate the participation of Ministers of Finance in ECOSOC.
- The focus of ECOSOC's agenda should be more evenly balanced between economic and social issues; in particular, there is a need to enhance and increase the focus of the economic and finance aspects of development through the selection of the themes for the Annual Ministerial Review.
- The relationship of ECOSOC with the G20 should be improved. The interface between the two should be developed and issues for such an interaction should be identified.
- Consideration should continue to be given for establishing a body, such as an Economic Security Council, that is vested with the power to oversee the implementation and follow-up of economic decisions and hold Member States accountable.

II. The review of resolution 61/16

- The 2006 reforms of ECOSOC have helped establish the Council as a key international forum on development policies, particularly on the MDGs.

- The review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 should aim to refine these reforms rather than try to introduce fundamental changes. The flexibility envisioned by this resolution should be preserved.
- The Council nonetheless needs to be further strengthened so that it can address the implications of the changing development paradigm in an integrated way. A weakness of ECOSOC remains the lack of a mechanism to implement its decisions.
- The MDGs must remain the key framework for ECOSOC's work. The Council can help to advance the implementation of the MDG Summit outcome document. It needs to look at the way forward beyond 2015. It should address not only social aspects but also economic dimensions which are essential to the sustainability of the MDGs. Cross-sectoral themes such as sustainable development, employment, equitable growth and human rights also need to be better integrated in its work.
- ECOSOC clearly has a role as a mutual accountability forum, in both the AMR and the DCF. But this role needs to be developed carefully in a non threatening way.

a. The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR)

- AMR ministerial reviews are going from strength to strength. The AMR has advanced the international agenda on specific issues. It has had an impact on the outcome document of the MDG Summit.
- The National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) need to be progressively strengthened and broadened. Their voluntary nature should be preserved while incorporating greater stakeholder involvement and technical inputs. The NVPs could build on good practices such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and OECD/DAC peer reviews. A stronger analytical framework would be useful.
- Follow-up to NVPs should be improved at national level. The NVPs' outcome could be captured in a summary by the ECOSOC President, listing some of the success stories, gaps and challenges as narrated by the presenting country. Countries having made an NVP could also report back to ECOSOC on follow-up actions.
- The AMR can address important themes after 2011, such as capacity building, decent work and youth employment, infrastructure, countries in special situation.

b. The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)

- The DCF is a unique forum for dialogue among development cooperation ministers/practitioners and with civil society actors from the South and the North. It also opens up a space for policy debate with countries that provide South-South cooperation.
- It has the potential to become a platform for mutual accountability on the implementation of the MDG outcome document, but this role should be developed carefully.
- The DCF should discuss not only aid but also policy coherence, South-South cooperation, and technical cooperation.
- Annualizing the DCF could enable it to better discharge its broad mandate, respond to emerging issues and engage Geneva based agencies. There are, however, differing views on whether this should be done. There is likewise no agreement on whether the DCF should have a negotiated outcome document. This could strengthen the impact on policies but could also stifle the debate which may become more straitjacketed.

c. The relationship between ECOSOC and the Peace-Building Commission

- ECOSOC has an important role to play in peacebuilding. It should highlight the linkages between development, peace and security.
- There has to be coordination between the Council, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and other actors. The various players, including the PBC and the Council should do what they do best. There has to be clarity about the objectives of cooperation and the tasks to be undertaken.
- ECOSOC's ability to bring together Member States, the UN system and other peacebuilding stakeholders is a unique asset. The Council's subsidiary and expert bodies can also provide advice on development challenges in post-conflict settings.
- ECOSOC may transform lessons learned from country-specific experiences of the PBC into policy advice with wider applicability. It can promote implementation of this guidance by the UN system at the country level.
- The Peacebuilding Commission could advise ECOSOC on its specific needs.
- Cooperation could focus on the 22 countries which are farthest away from meeting the Millennium Development Goals.
- The recent informal and ad hoc interactions between ECOSOC and the PBC have been useful (e.g. the Joint Special Events and the informal briefings by the Chair of the PBC to ECOSOC on African countries emerging from conflict"). The Chairs/Bureaux of the two bodies should meet more often.
- A half day meeting could be organized between ECOSOC, the PBC and the UN system to discuss the nexus between peacebuilding and development.
- Peacebuilding themes could also be addressed in the various segments of the Council's annual substantive session.
- ECOSOC can add value on issues such as resource mobilization in countries transitioning from conflict to development (which the DCF could address); Youth unemployment; How to transform "war" economies and integrate them into the global economy; and Reintegration of former combatants.
- ECOSOC should become faster in responding to emergencies.

III. ECOSOC's role in System-wide coherence

- ECOSOC can bolster coherence in the normative agenda through better coordination of the UN system.
- Coherence is needed not only in the UN system, but also in governments. The "Delivering as One" pilot countries and a more strategic UNDAF process have helped governments to be more coherent in prioritizing the requests for UN system support.
- The AMR and DCF are a part of answers in bringing coherence at home.
- Middle-income countries have managed to mobilize in a more coherent manner the specialized agencies, including non-resident agencies, because of the priorities clearly identified by these countries.

- Joint sessions of executive boards of Funds, Programme and Agencies should be organized with ECOSOC. The decision to present one common programme to each executive board is a step forward.
- At the regional level, regional commissions promote normative coherence through the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) and meetings of the Regional Directors Team (RDT) promote coherence in operational activities. Back-to-back meetings of RDTs and RCMs are a practical solution. Both entities should increase their linkages to ECOSOC.
- To strengthen coherence between normative and operational aspects, a joint session could be organized between all UN funds and programmes, the Chairs of functional commissions and the Bureau of ECOSOC to hear feedback on what is happening on the ground. This could be organized either at the coordination segment or operational activities segment, depending on the focus of the discussion. The Chairs of the functional commissions could then report back to their commissions on the challenges and actions to overcome them.
- The creation of UN Women provides a good model in pulling existing normative and operational institutions together.
- There has to be the political will to give ECOSOC the means and resources to deliver on its Charter role. There have been very little additional resources as a result of the reform and this would need to be corrected.

**“Building on Progress: Defining New Actions”
Background note for the Retreat on ECOSOC
29 and 30 October 2010, Tarrytown, New York**

The outcome document of the 2010 United Nations MDG Summit reaffirmed the role of the Economic and Social Council for the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly through the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. The upcoming review of the strengthening of ECOSOC during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly will provide a good opportunity to see how ECOSOC could better discharge this role. This review will focus on the implementation of General Assembly (GA) resolution 61/16 on the “Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council” adopted in 2006 in follow-up to the 2005 World Summit.

This resolution set in motion the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) to assess the progress made in the implementation of the UN Development Agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It also mandated ECOSOC to hold a biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) to review trends and progress in international development cooperation. The Assembly sent a clear message for the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to benefit from the Council's experiences in the area of post-conflict peace building. The Council was also given the mandate to convene ad-hoc meetings on humanitarian emergencies as and when they are requested.

This note reviews progress in implementing the above mandates and presents possible steps forward. It aims to inform the discussion of the retreat on ECOSOC reform to be held on 29 and 30 October in Tarrytown. The recently adopted GA resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence complements resolution 61/16 with proposals to improve the functioning of ECOSOC. The implications of the resolution are also discussed in this note.

I. Recognizing and securing achievements

The past few years have seen a revitalization of ECOSOC in the international dialogue on the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs)/Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in policy development. Innovative and practical solutions have emerged from the AMR and the DCF, with potential impact for national development strategies. The debate in the Council has become increasingly relevant, focused and interactive, attracting a broader range of stakeholders. At the same time there continues to be a weak linkage between the Council's decisions and their implementation on the ground as well as a lack of feedback from the operational level to the Council on what works and what does not work. Nonetheless, achievements of ECOSOC are as follows:

1. A country-focused voluntary approach to assessing progress towards the MDGs through the AMR

Since 2007, the Council has held four AMRs, with focus on poverty and hunger, sustainable development, public health and gender respectively¹. These reviews drew on a combination of global reviews, thematic assessments, and national voluntary presentations (NVP).

¹ The focus of 2011 AMR will be education.

The global reviews, based on the reports of the Secretary-General, have resulted in in-depth analyses of progress towards the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs. The regional meetings have injected regional perspectives to the debate. The National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) have raised awareness about challenges in implementing national development strategies and the IADGs/MDGs. Thus far, 34 countries, both developed and developing, have shared their best practices and lessons-learned through NVPs. For the 2010 AMR, a record number of 13 countries made presentations. The same number of countries are volunteering for 2011.

The AMR preparatory process gives the opportunity for all stakeholders to assess the implementation of MDGs, in particular the focused theme, and national development strategies. The broad consultative process, contributes critical lessons and new recommendations towards the achievement of the MDGs.

The NVP process in particular has helped countries to conduct comprehensive national reviews of their development strategies, in some cases for the first time. Countries participating in the NVP process have established valuable contacts with different stakeholders that have proven to be beneficial in pursuit of the IADGs/MDGs. Overall, during the past four years, the AMR has built a critical mass of information, which can be useful for policy-makers².

While progress has been made in building political support and ownership by stakeholders, the AMR faces several key challenges in moving forward, including: 1. How can the experiences, lessons learned and policy recommendations from the AMRs improve data collection and empirical evidence and be applied to policy making at the national, regional and global levels? 2. How can the AMR assist with the mobilization of support from the international community and the building of partnerships, including through technical cooperation from the UN system? 3. What is the potential of the NVPs to evolve into a mutual review mechanism by other Member States and would Member States continue to volunteer for NVPs if it were decided to evolve in this direction? and 4) How can best practices and lessons learned from the NVP exercise be followed-up on and better disseminated, especially at the regional level and among countries facing similar developmental challenges?

2. A multi-stakeholder dialogue on trends and policies in development cooperation at the Development Cooperation Forum

Since the launch of the DCF in 2007, two Forums have been held (in 2008 and 2010), building on in-depth analytical studies, five country-based high-level symposiums, one regional forum and two global preparatory meetings. The 2008 forum took an important step towards establishing ECOSOC as a principal forum for global dialogue and policy review on development cooperation and its quality and coherence. The 2010 DCF showed that it can move beyond a goal of presenting innovative analysis, to develop global assessments and recommendations, which are used to improve results on the ground (its work on mutual accountability is an example of this). As a result, the 2010 MDG Summit reaffirmed the role of the DCF as the focal point within the UN system for a holistic

² Member States highlighted progress of the AMR in an ECOSOC Expert Group Meeting on "Accelerating Implementation through National Voluntary Presentations: Next Steps", held at United Nations headquarters from 28 to 29 January 2010,

consideration of issues of international development cooperation with the participation of all stakeholders.

Overall, the DCF has shown that it can:

- Provide quality, independent analysis, setting the stage for balanced discussions on development cooperation;
- Provide a neutral forum where developing and developed countries, multilateral organizations, as well as other key stakeholders can express strong voices on development cooperation;
- Broaden the debate on the quality of aid by raising issues which go beyond e.g. the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness;
- Have a significant impact on development cooperation discussions in fora such as the Doha follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development and the GA High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Accra High-Level Forum on aid effectiveness;
- Establish development cooperation principles and benchmarks through a multi-stakeholder process on such issues as mutual accountability and aid transparency, and the gender impact of development cooperation, opening the door for better development results on the ground;

The initial success of the DCF has benefited from, among others, the following:

- The convening power, universal legitimacy, neutrality and credibility of the UN;
- Strong commitment of many developed and developing Member States;
- On-going process of reflection (in various international fora including the UN, OECD/DAC and think tanks) on the global aid architecture and the important role the DCF can play in it;
- Close engagement of stakeholder groups in all stages of preparations (parliamentarians, local governments, NGOs etc...);
- Effective advisory support (through a multi-stakeholder DCF Advisory Group) shaping a clear vision and strategies guiding the preparatory process;
- Quality and politically balanced nature of the analytical work;
- Relevant high-level symposia with strong representation of national policy-makers and practitioners from governments and civil society;

In moving forward, the DCF is faced with at least two challenges. Firstly, the DCF should serve more effectively as a global forum where developed and developing countries hold each other to account on development cooperation commitments. This would respond to the focus placed by the MDG Summit on mutual accountability in relation to the MDGs and on accountability regarding effective use of ODA.

Secondly, there is consensus that the ultimate value-added of the DCF rests with its impact on changing the behavior of development cooperation actors as well as on development results on the ground. However, the outcome of the DCF was not intended to be a legislative document bound for implementation. The practical results of the DCF thus hinge primarily on the level of buy-in to the DCF outcome by all stakeholder groups. Maximizing this buy-in requires 1) broad political

support for the agenda that the DCF will pursue; 2) reaching out even more to national policy makers and practitioners from all stakeholders in DCF related-events; 3) identification of issues with significant impact on country-level results, 4) deepening analysis on the issues and providing actionable solutions; and 6) establishing various channels and levers to transform DCF recommendations into development cooperation practice and to strengthen bottom-up feed-back (e.g. through cooperation with UNDP).

3. A more integrated approach to the continuum from emergency and relief to development

ECOSOC has long been involved in leveraging global support for durable peace and sustainable development in post-conflict and/or post-humanitarian crisis situations. This role was initially discharged through its ad-hoc advisory groups and subsequently institutionalized with the establishment of the Peace-building Commission (PBC) and ad hoc meetings of ECOSOC³.

A number of informal and ad hoc interactions have taken place between ECOSOC and the PBC, particularly in the last two years. The Chairs have met informally on a number of occasions. In July 2010, the bureaus and chairs of ECOSOC and the PBC met to discuss possible areas of cooperation. As requested by ECOSOC resolution 2009/32, the Chairs of the PBC have been invited to brief the Council on PBC's activities in July 2009 and 2010. ECOSOC and the PBC have also organized Joint Special Events on the impact of the food and economic crises (October 2009), and on the MDGs in countries emerging from conflict (July 2010). In spite of this, there is to date no clear definition of the modalities for interaction between ECOSOC and the PBC beyond the election by ECOSOC of seven members to the PBC Organizational Committee and the Council's prerogative to provide advice to the PBC on adding countries to its agenda.

ECOSOC ad hoc meetings have been convened only infrequently and mostly on global emergencies. On 10 July 2006, as part of its coordination segment, the Council held a special event on the Avian Flu. From 20 to 22 May 2008, the Council convened a special meeting on the global food crisis, the first intergovernmental meeting on the issue. On 24 June 2010, the Council held a special event on Haiti.

While these meetings have been successfully held, their impact has not been clear. In all instances, the issues had already been extensively discussed in the media or other fora. Consequently, their awareness-raising and advocacy value has not been well demonstrated. The ad hoc emergency meetings have also tested the Council's ability to meet at short notice once an emergency has unfolded: reaching agreement on holding an ad hoc meeting usually takes time.

³ The founding resolution for the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), 60/180, and ECOSOC Reform resolution, 61/16 defined the parameters for the relationship between ECOSOC and the PBC. GA resolution 61/16 calls on the Council to convene ad hoc meetings on specific humanitarian emergencies on the request of the affected Member States, with a view to raising awareness and promoting the engagement of all stakeholders in support of international relief efforts aimed at addressing those emergencies.

4. A new departure towards system-wide coherence

The adoption of GA resolution 64/289 successfully brought to a close the consultative process on system-wide coherence, launched during the 61st session of the GA.

With this resolution, the GA took the historic decision to create UN Women to improve coherence and effectiveness in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. ECOSOC was given the mandate to provide normative and operational policy guidance to the new gender entity through its Commission on the Status of Women and operational activities segment. The governing body of UN Women, to be elected by ECOSOC, is expected to participate in the existing coordination mechanisms, for example, the joint meeting of boards, to ensure effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the UN system.

The resolution also adopted measures to improve the governance of operational activities through (i) greater transparency (e.g. through mandated briefings to ECOSOC by the Chief Executives Board), (ii) enhanced accountability (e.g. through the institutionalization of a periodic “client satisfaction survey” on operational activities for development addressed to the Governments of programme countries); (iii) strengthened policy coherence (e.g. through a better sharing of responsibilities and coordination between ECOSOC and the Executive Boards), as well as (iv) better coordination (e.g. through an improved operational activities segment enriched by greater participation of national focal points for operational activities). The GA also made recommendations to improve the funding of operational activities and its understanding.

These measures, although targeting primarily the working modalities of the Council, are expected to generate greater coherence in policy making between the Council and other inter-governmental bodies.

The consultation process of the 64th GA session on SWC also took an important step in piloting constituency-based and issues-driven negotiations, with the plenary broken into smaller working groups focused on specific issues and comprised of a small number of interested Member States. This enabled Member States to dialogue at a more in-depth level than in the plenary and greatly eased consensus building. These lessons may be used to improve future consultations of the Council.

II. Moving forward: Ensuring sustainable impact of the work of the Council

The MDG Summit portrayed ECOSOC as a central mechanism to follow-up on its outcome. The Council must respond to this mandate building on the reforms launched by resolution 61/16. It must place its achievements on a firmer footing, and address challenges and shortcomings. The ultimate goal should be to increase the impact of the Council’s work by making the Council fully equipped in providing authoritative analysis, increasingly attractive to the key stakeholders, better able to match global policy recommendations with national experiences and more responsive to all kinds of emergencies.

1. AMR - a central repository of solutions within a new framework

The strategic positioning of the AMR must be viewed in the context of enhanced follow-up to the MDGs as mandated by the 2010 MDG summit. The Summit invited the international community to replicate and scale up successful policies and approaches for accelerating progress towards the MDGs⁴, which would require the AMR, building on its close interface with national realities through the NVPs, to establish itself as a central repository of successful policies and approaches.

Thus far, the MDGs have been the main analytical framework of the AMR, which focuses on a cluster of goals each year. Now that MDGs will have been reviewed by ECOSOC, a new approach is needed for the selection of the themes. Other issues beyond the MDGs could be considered, for example, sustainable development, countries with special needs and LDCs or cross-cutting issues such as the role of science and technology in development or youth training and employment. Addressing such themes could help in the development of a post-2015 framework. In addition, applying a standardized methodology for the NVP global review, including principles, criteria and standards, applicable to all themes, could make the AMR process more rigorous and comparable.

To help countries to integrate IADGs/MDGs into national development strategies, AMR activities at global, regional and/or subregional and national level would need to be further improved. The global review could feature parallel NVPs (i.e. two at a time) or several NVPs grouped along similar themes or challenges (e.g. crisis zones or SIDS) thus enabling a genuine dialogue among the presenters and interested stakeholders. An analytical framework could be developed to promote the mutual review of NVP reports at the regional level from the angle of regional priorities. The regional review could also identify follow-up initiatives that could be undertaken at regional level, with its outcome feeding into the global AMR. National activities should give equal priority to review and follow-up, with follow-up workshops held immediately after NVPs to implement recommendations contained in NVP reports or emanating from the debates at ECOSOC. Such meetings could also identify possible technical cooperation projects, including by the UN system, to facilitate the application of recommendations into national strategies and programmes.

Future AMRs should feature stronger national ownership and closer engagement of reviewers in the preparatory process. Guidelines could be drawn up to ensure strong national ownership in the AMR process, including during the preparation phase and in the follow-up. Reviewers could be invited to the consultative meetings/national workshops and follow-up meetings. AMR could also reach out to other review mechanisms; for example, African Partnership Forum, NEPAD, Africa Monitor, and OECD to make sure that these processes enrich the AMR discussions and facilitate the implementation of AMR recommendations.

Post-AMR follow-up should aim to address national challenges and promote best practices at global fora. A compendium of best practices and policy recommendations for countries could be prepared and a database established, together with a report to summarize concrete recommendations. As well, online regional networks should be strengthened to promote best practice and experience sharing on an ongoing basis. National developments after the NVP could be communicated to

⁴ OP24 of outcome document of the MDG Summit

ECOSOC at its coordination or operational activities segment and synergies could be built with the DCF on follow-up in the area of development cooperation and aid.

2. DCF – a powerhouse for global mutual accountability

The substantive focus of the DCF is determined by its mandates to review trends and progress in development cooperation and increase coherence among the activities of different development cooperation actors.

Within that broad framework, special attention will continue to be given to policy coherence which was a major theme of the DCF in 2009-2010 and was underscored again by the MDG summit.

A main focus of the DCF thus far has been aid and aid quality. These will continue to be high on its agenda. The work of the Forum in improving aid quality was recognized by the 2010 MDG summit. The issue of aid allocation also needs to be further studied, notably allocation by countries and sectors.

Member States – at the DCF and High-level symposia - have encouraged the DCF to work further on mutual accountability in development cooperation. The Forum should accordingly continue to gather and disseminate evidence on progress in mutual accountability and aid transparency at country level and improve the effectiveness of international mechanisms in promoting accountability and transparency of global and national development cooperation actors.

The DCF should also maintain a focus on South-South and triangular development cooperation, as well as decentralized development cooperation, an area which is insufficiently known.

The DCF needs to be carefully positioned vis-à-vis other fora, to ensure that it does not duplicate the work done elsewhere and injects innovative ideas into such processes. By addressing the above issues, the Forum can complement the Financing for Development Process where they receive less in-depth attention. Under some of these themes, and especially when it looks at aid allocation, the DCF could give particular attention to Least Developed Countries, as a curtain raiser for the UN Istanbul conference on Least Developed Countries in May/June 2011. It should also devote particular attention to the nexus between development cooperation and sustainable development, to contribute to the 2012 Rio +20 conference. It could help in particular to build international agreement on such issues as green growth or financing related to climate change.

Regarding the link to OECD/DAC processes on aid effectiveness, the DCF may continue to promote an agenda for aid quality broader than the one emanating from OECD/DAC processes on aid effectiveness, and more inclusive of the priorities of developing countries and other stakeholders. In this regard, the question arises whether the DCF should become the home for universal and multi-stakeholder discussions on the quality of aid, once the Paris Declaration process

comes to an end after DAC's Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011.⁵

In order to both position itself vis-à-vis other processes and maximize the impact of its work, the DCF should also develop its effectiveness as a forum for joint learning and exchange of best practices among countries and other development cooperation actors. The objective will be to develop common principles for action which may be applied at national level, and thus to increase the impact on development cooperation on the ground. This will involve the development of in-depth case studies.

The annualization of the DCF may be considered as a way to realize its practical value. More frequent meetings may enable the DCF to deliver on its vast mandate and to play more effectively its role as a forum for mutual accountability on development cooperation. However, the annualization of the DCF in its current format risks leading to repetitive debates, thus jeopardizing high-level participation.

Therefore, if the DCF were annualized, a different meeting format could be introduced in alternate years to cover its long agenda which includes policy coherence, a global review of trends in development cooperation, aid quantity and quality, as well as the link between cooperation and the MDGs. The agenda could be divided so that it is lighter and enable a more in depth consideration of fewer issues every year.

3. More systematic approach in post-conflict/ humanitarian-crisis situations

In order to enable a more integrated consideration of peace building and development, it is important to move from ad-hoc towards systematic and institutionalized interaction between ECOSOC and PBC. This can be achieved by joint agenda setting, cross participation and more regular briefings and exchange of advice. For example, peacebuilding can be addressed during the ECOSOC's annual substantive sessions, in particular at the AMR (as a way to assess how conflict is affecting the implementation of the IADGs and MDGs based on the themes under consideration) and the DCF (on issues linked to aid quality, and notably country ownership, in post conflict countries). ECOSOC could facilitate PBC's interaction with the Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes, and institutionalize regular joint events. Similarly, the PBC could invite a representative of the Council to PBC meetings when topics relevant to ECOSOC's mandate are discussed. The PBC could also regularly update ECOSOC on aspects of its work. ECOSOC could thus provide advice, through its expert bodies, on relevant peacebuilding topics. In the same vein, ECOSOC could request advice from the PBC on how to apply some of the lessons learned from the countries on PBC's agenda to other post-conflict countries, which could be examined during its Operational Activities Segment.

⁵ One key objective of the Fourth High Level Forum is to set out a new framework for increasing the quality of aid in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Developing countries have named their priorities for the event as: predictable aid; use of country systems; an end to policy conditionality; country-driven capacity development; mutual accountability and reduced transaction costs.

A more systematic approach to ad-hoc meetings would allow the Council to strengthen the global response to emergencies of various natures. The scope of ECOSOC's ad hoc meetings could be broadened beyond humanitarian issues to emergencies of an economic and environmental nature so that the Council can enhance its ability to act as an early warning mechanism on a wide range of issues within its mandate. These meetings could also serve to monitor more closely development progress in countries affected by conflict and disasters.

4. A coherent strategy for system-wide policy coordination

Implementing GA resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence requires a range of measures, including adjustments in ECOSOC's work programme and renewed Secretariat support.

With UN Women to be fully operational on 1 January 2011, the Council could invite the bureau of UN Women Executive Board to the inter-bureau coordination meetings in 2011 and beyond. UN Women may be requested by the Council to report on the alignment of its operational activities with the guidance of GA comprehensive policy reviews of UN system's operational activities (TCP/RC/QR) in the context of its annual reporting to ECOSOC starting 2012. As an interim measure, other funds and programmes under the Council's purview could also be asked to report to the Council on their support to the mandate and work of UN Women through their operational activities. The USG of UN Women could be invited to the Council's annual dialogue with the Executive Heads of Funds and Programmes. It is also important for the Council to ensure that the provisions of resolution 64/289 on common country programmes also involve UN Women.

The informal coordination meetings with bureaus of the governing bodies envisaged in resolution 64/289 could be held annually in January in conjunction with Joint Meeting of Boards of Funds and Programmes or biannually in January and September (e.g. prior to regular September meetings of Executive Boards to discuss follow-up to ECOSOC substantive session).

In order to further engage national policymakers, the President of ECOSOC could establish a working group composed of representatives of developed and developing countries to study this issue and prepare recommendations for further discussion at a resumed or organizational session of the Council in early 2011. This issue could also be discussed in the resumed or organizational session of the Council in early 2011, without a prior consultative process.

5. Deepening partnerships with a range of stakeholders

The recent years have seen a rise of the number of non-state actors involved in development cooperation as well as trends such as global pandemics, economic crises and climate change. ECOSOC would have a significant leverage in helping to achieve global development goals if it is able to engage networks of civil society actors to work together to build a more prosperous and just world.

There has been some progress. Growing numbers of NGOs have availed themselves of the right to make written/oral contributions to the Council, and civil society consultations are now traditionally held prior to ECOSOC's sessions. E-discussions have been organized to involve a wider range of stakeholders in the debate on the theme of the AMR with some success. NGOs have showcased novel solutions in AMR innovation fairs. GA resolution 61/16 opened new avenues for the participation of stakeholders: civil society organizations, parliamentarians, and local governments have provided strategic orientations and substantive support in the DCF process. The annual philanthropy events convened by the Council since 2008 have proven successful, attracting top-level corporate and philanthropic individuals. Academics are invited to participate in ECOSOC panels. A Committee for Development Policy, composed of independent experts, advises ECOSOC.

However, the Council has yet to attract sufficient numbers of large NGOs with expertise in the theme under consideration. Such NGOs lack the incentive to attend sessions of the Council, particularly when a negotiated outcome document has been already agreed beforehand, and networking opportunities outside the meetings are limited. Regarding interaction with the philanthropic community, the time has come to kick-start new initiatives that would help accelerate achievement of the MDGs by 2015. With regard to academia, ways have to be found for their input/dialogue to be more systematic and more relevant to ECOSOC's policy making role.

In order to encourage relevant NGOs to participate in the Council, mechanisms should be established – in cooperation with NGOs networks. This would also include engaging civil society in carrying out specific studies or analytical papers, as well as in inclusive consultation processes around the DCF and the AMR. The theme of the AMR could be addressed in a preparatory forum/hearings organized before ECOSOC's substantive session to provide an opportunity for NGOs to share their recommendations and approaches with Member States. An informal civil society advisory group could also be established to secure expert information or advice from organizations having special competence in areas of interest to ECOSOC. It could facilitate a coherent contribution of the NGO community to the work of ECOSOC and promote awareness of ECOSOC's agenda.

To strengthen engagement with the private sector and foundations, a high-level dialogue, similar to the high-level dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions, could be organized with these partners during the High-level Segment. A "Group of Friends of ECOSOC" from the private sector and philanthropy – or a Dialogue Series between the Private sector and Member States- could also be launched to advise ECOSOC's high-level segment on measures that could be taken to support the Council's work. Such processes should engage individuals in a position to influence key policies and help strengthen public-private partnerships to accelerate progress towards the IADGs/MDGs. Similarly, the substantive input of academia to the AMR and DCF could be sought through a group of Academic Advisors to ECOSOC, or Academic Fora held before the Council's session (as done in 2005/2006).

With regard to other public actors, an annual one-day meeting of parliamentarians, national Economic and Social Councils and local authorities could address strategies to ensure that key policy ideas generated in the High-level Segment process are implemented at the national level.

III. Questions for discussion

The following questions may be considered at the retreat:

1. What themes can AMRs focus on in the future considering that the MDGs will have been reviewed by ECOSOC by 2011?
2. Should the format of the NVPs, presently anchored in large number of plenary presentations, be changed? If so, what would be the best format to facilitate genuine dialogue and review?
3. Could a mechanism to follow-up on the NVPs be established?
4. How could the impact of the AMR and DCF at national level be reinforced?
5. Should the DCF aim to serve as the forum for universal multistakeholder dialogue on aid quality? If so, how could this evolution be facilitated and supported, and how could the impact of the DCF's work in this area be maximized?
6. Should the DCF be annualized? If it is, what would be the format of the meetings most conducive to assuring mutual accountability on development cooperation and attracting high-level participation?
7. Can ECOSOC and the Peace Building Commission institutionalize their interaction and what should be the main features of this interaction?
8. Could the focus of ECOSOC ad hoc meetings be expanded to cover both humanitarian emergencies and economic and environmental emergencies? What could be an appropriate format for these meetings so that they can be more timely and meaningful?
9. What would be the best mechanisms to strengthen the engagement of non-governmental actors in the Council's work?
10. How can ECOSOC ensure that the role of UN Women in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the UN system on gender equality and empowerment of women is reinforced, through its substantive session?