

Second Committee Side Event

Panel discussion on “Follow-up to the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting relating to MDG 1, and an introduction to the Multidimensional Poverty Index”

Friday, 22 October 2010

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Economic and Social Council Chamber (NLB)

Concept Note

[Background]

Although the world is on track to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, progress is uneven. Without additional efforts, many countries are likely to miss the Millennium Development Goal 1. Last September, at the High-level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs, Governments recognized that inequalities between and within countries in various social and economic dimensions remain a significant challenge, and thus addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable households and groups is a prerequisite to achieving the MDGs. The continuing effects of the global and economic financial crisis suggest that poverty rates are likely to be slightly higher in 2015 than they would have been had the world economy grown steadily at its pre-crisis pace. The loss of jobs triggered by the crisis has pushed many vulnerable individuals and households into poverty, and delays in job recovery remain a major challenge to poverty reduction in the years to come.

While the MDG 1 poverty target is based on an income measure, poverty has multiple dimensions. Hunger and malnutrition, lack of access to health, education and other basic services, inadequate housing, social discrimination and exclusion and, more broadly, lack of participation in decision-making and social and political life, also characterize poverty and deprivation, and the progress achieved across these different dimensions has been uneven. The need to look at poverty through a gender lens is also critical, since gender inequalities remain strong.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), together with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative of Oxford University, have launched a new poverty measure, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), that combines several of these dimensions or deprivations, including health and education outcomes and access to key services. The MPI assesses poverty at the individual level, with poor persons being those who are multiply deprived, and the extent of their poverty being measured by the range of their deprivations. According to the MPI, about 1.7 billion people live in multidimensional poverty in the countries covered. This exceeds the 1.3 billion people estimated to live on \$1.25 a day or less in those same countries.

[Objectives]

This Special Event will draw on experts to discuss the follow-up to the outcome of the HLPM relating to MDG 1 in order to accelerate progress towards reducing poverty, particularly in those regions and countries that are lagging behind. It will also discuss the usefulness of the Multidimensional Poverty Index for the achievement of the goals and on the need to ensure a job-rich recovery from the current crisis as a foundation for the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

[Proposed questions]

- The HLPM outcome emphasized that sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth is needed to accelerate progress toward achieving the MDGs. How can such growth be best supported? What crisis-recovery strategies have proven most successful in achieving such growth, and what can be learned from these strategies for a more even achievement of MDG 1?
- Full and productive employment and decent work for all have been recognized as critical to poverty eradication. What strategies are most effective to stimulate growth in productive employment? How can international cooperation contribute to moving the Global Jobs Pact forward?
- How can the international community support national efforts to raise agricultural productivity, especially among small-scale farmers?
- How can a social protection floor contribute to accelerating progress towards MDG 1? How feasible is it for countries with limited fiscal space to implement a social protection floor?
- What actions have proven most effective in making access to economic opportunities and social services more equitable? What institutional reforms are required to address social and economic inequalities, including gender inequalities?
- How can a composite index of poverty contribute to better poverty eradication strategies?

[Moderator and Panelists]

Panelists: Mr. Jomo K. Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (Moderator)

Professor James Foster, Professor of Economics and International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington, DC

Ms. Azita Berar Awad, Director, Employment Policy Department, ILO