

**Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA)  
Informal meeting of Deputies  
5 July 2006  
Geneva**

**Co-chaired by Mr. Patrizio Civili and Mr. Paolo Garonna**

**Conclusions and further steps**

- 1. Deputies expressed appreciation to ECE and in particular Patrice Robineau for the paper he had prepared in collaboration with DESA and the Secretary of ECESA on “Enhancing ECESA Processes”, as the basis for the meeting’s discussions.**
- 2. A brief (two-three pages) note will be prepared on ECESA’s shared vision of development. By setting a coherent view of the UN development agenda and of the UN’s own role in advancing that agenda, the note will serve as the political conceptual backdrop for ECESA’s work. Deputies will reconvene in September to review progress on that paper. *The heads of the macroeconomics units in DESA, ESCAP and ECLAC will be invited to prepare the first draft.***
- 3. Deputies identified the following “priority thematic clusters”, as these which can benefit the most from programmatic coordination and have the greatest potential for joint approaches/undertakings: Trade; Macroeconomics and finance; Sustainable development; Social development/ social integration and the advancement of women and Population. *Lead entities for these clusters will be asked to step-up consultations and collaboration.***
- 4. Deputies will provide comments on proposed priorities for the thematic clusters (contained in Annex I of the paper on Enhancing ECESA Processes).**
- 5. Deputies endorsed the proposals contained in the paper concerning the working methods of the clusters and of ECESA itself, notably on priority cross-sectoral issues.**
- 6. The paper “Enhancing ECESA Processes” will be finalized in light of the comments made by Deputies, and submitted to Principals for approval. *A revised version of the paper will be circulated by the secretariat.***
- 7. All clusters should start immediately consulting on budget preparations even prior to the circulation of the budget instructions. They should also seek to identify issues on which questions are likely to be raised during the upcoming session of the Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC). Heads of Programme Planning will consult ahead of the CPC session so as to coordinate their positions for the session. A half day meeting will then be held in New York**

for that purpose when representatives of all ECESA member entities will be there for the relevant CPC discussions.

8. **Deputies considered that enhancing of knowledge management and knowledge sharing was a key component of the effort to enhance ECESA processes. All clusters were invited to identify knowledge sharing priorities and the procedures and mechanisms that are needed in their respective areas. The resulting insights will then be built on in pursuing the ongoing reflection on the architecture of ECESA and in considering the most suitable configuration for knowledge sharing system for ECESA as a whole. Knowledge sharing mechanisms that the clusters may wish to consider could include the creation of dedicated private Web Boards, which would require dedicated staff time to moderate, as well as deepening participation in existing networks such as UNDP's knowledge networks (four of which are currently open to external partners). A project will be developed to seek funding for an overall ECESA knowledge sharing system.**

### Summary of discussions

1. Deputies had before them a paper on Enhancing ECESA processes prepared by Mr. Patrice Robineau (ECE) in collaboration with the ECESA secretariat.
2. Mr. Patrice Robineau noted the potential of ECESA to become a global “think tank” on development. A key thrust of the paper was to outline steps to ensure that ECESA focuses on issues of priority importance for development and UN reform, within a clear framework and with clear objectives.
3. Against this objective, the paper identifies first a few priority clusters corresponding to areas that are central to developing a UN coherent approach to development and where a strengthening of programmatic coordination appears to be particularly important in advancing ECESA's overall goals. It also suggests a few priorities within each thematic clusters, distinguishing between “time-bound” tasks that have to be completed by a given deadline, and tasks that are recurrent, and identifying some themes that would most benefit from examination by the cluster. Priority cross-sectoral issues, to be pursued by ECESA as a whole at the level of Deputies and Principals, are also identified. These include both structural issues (such as support of ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Reviews and Development Cooperation Forum) and substantive issues (such as energy, science and technology (see in this connection, para. 10 below), the economic and social dimensions of post conflict peace building). The paper concludes by making suggestions for improving the methods of work of the clusters and of ECESA as a whole.
4. Deputies concurred that enhancing ECESA processes goes beyond considerations of efficiency: It is a political exercise, aimed at enabling ECESA entities to work together with a clear sense of common priorities and, in so doing, enhancing the collective role and impact of the UN in advancing the development agenda.

5. ECESA has to provide intellectual leadership on the UN development agenda. It has to produce a compelling and articulated statement on the UN approach to development, pointing to ways of bridging the current North-South divide and accelerating development progress.
6. This statement should build on the work and lessons learned of all ECESA entities, particularly regional experiences and their implications for the development paradigm. The representative of UNCTAD referred to the report of the panel of eminent persons on strengthening UNCTAD's development impact, as a good example of a policy statement that can serve to guide practical action and generate concrete improvements.
7. Deputies decided that a two-three page note will be prepared on ECESA's shared vision of development. This note should help set out a coherent view of the UN development agenda, building on agreed development goals and on ongoing work of the different economic and sectors of the Organization. It should serve as the political conceptual backdrop for ECESA's work, and should help mobilize cooperation among ECESA entities on priority issues and areas where a collective intellectual contribution is most needed. Deputies will reconvene in September to continue the discussion on this issue.
8. Deputies identified a few "priority thematic clusters" corresponding to areas which, in view of the relevance of the theme to ECESA's over-all goals and the number of entities involved, would most benefit from enhanced programmatic coordination and possible joint undertakings. Those include Trade; Macroeconomics and Finance, Sustainable Development, Social Development/Integration and Advancement of Women and Population.
9. While for purposes of consultations on the preparation of programme planning submissions, all existing thematic clusters may need to be maintained, some greater selectivity is desirable in activating clusters on an ongoing basis, or in identifying a single theme on which attention should be focused within a cluster.
10. Deputies concurred with the need to keep under continuing review the structure and functioning of the clusters. The view was expressed for example that, within the cluster on science and technology, the focus for the time being should be on delivering what Member States expect on ICT, while the policy stance in relation to science and technology as a whole, as a cross-cutting theme, could most profitably be addressed by ECESA itself, particularly from the point of view of the UN response to the renewed attention that science and technology received in the outcome document of the 2005 Summit. As another illustration, while statistics was recognized by all as a priority area for collaboration, some Deputies felt that there is no need for a dedicated ECESA cluster given that there exists already well-functioning interagency coordination mechanisms in this area. Discussions on these issues should continue at upcoming Deputies' and ECESA meetings.

11. Deputies took note with interest of the proposal in the paper on “Enhancing EC-ESA progress” on possible priority areas of work within each thematic cluster. They will provide comments on these proposals as contained in Annex I of the paper, in consultation with their colleagues participating in the clusters.
12. Deputies generally endorsed the proposals contained in the paper concerning the working methods of ECESA and its clusters. They appreciated in particular the emphasis on “timebound and output oriented” modes of work. While the intent of the proposal in the paper to have two co-chairs (typically from a global and a regional entity) was appreciated, some doubted that it would prove practical, and suggested that a single lead entity might be more efficient. In general, Deputies agreed that the clusters should be delegated as much planning and substantive responsibilities as possible in their respective areas, while retaining for the Deputies and ECESA, general policy/strategic oversight and responsibility for the over-all management of the structure.
13. The paper on ‘Enhancing ECESA processes’ will be finalized in light of the comments made by Deputies and submitted to Principals for approval.

**Preparations for the Budget and the session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC):**

14. ECESA has an important role in the process of preparing the programme budget – to avoid duplication and maximize synergies in the work of its entities. However, for ECESA to play this role effectively, its thematic clusters need to devote more time for consultations and to do so at the early phases of budget preparations. Deputies decided to ask the thematic clusters to start working immediately on the budget’s preparations, without awaiting the budget instructions. They decided that all clusters rather than only those identified as “priority clusters” will need to engage in that process so as to be able to show, in presenting the programme budget proposals, that there is concertation and collaboration across the whole of the UN work programme in the economic and social sector.
15. The clusters will also be asked to seek to identify issues on which questions are likely to be raised during the upcoming session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in New York. Heads of Programme Planning will consult ahead of the CPC session so as to coordinate their positions for the session. A half day meeting will then be held in New York for that purpose when representatives of all ECESA member entities will be there for the relevant CPC discussions.
16. In the same context, Deputies considered that it is particularly important that ECESA has a common strategy on issues addressed in the context of UN reform processes, such as the regular programme of technical cooperation.

## **Knowledge management**

17. Ms. Kim Henderson (Knowledge and Information Manager for UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy) and Mr. Nikhil Chandavarkar (Chief, DESA's Communications and Information Management Services) participated in this part of the discussions via teleconference.
18. Ms. Henderson introduced UNDP's knowledge sharing approach. UNDP has 20 knowledge networks, four of which are open to other UN agencies and external partners. She highlighted two of these, namely the MDG Network and the Human Development Report Network, which have active external participation. UNDP's approach has centred on connecting people who want to share their knowledge, rather than on compiling knowledge on online repositories. It is focused around UNDP's five "development practices" (corresponding to the five strategic goals for UNDP in 2004-2007). The main focus has been to cross fertilize work between headquarters and country level, and to link policy and programming. UNDP is now interested in supporting knowledge sharing in other UN system entities.
19. Mr. Chandavarkar noted that ECESA clusters were the equivalent, for ECESA, of UNDP's community of practices, and also forms the basis of ECESA architecture for knowledge purposes. As the architecture is redefined, specific tools could be engineered for the clusters to exchange knowledge, such as private Internet WebBoards. Existing methods and tools for information and management sharing could be more actively utilized by ECESA members and by the clusters. Some of these tools include the UN website on economic and social affairs, iSeek (the UN Intranet), and IMDIS and the Mandate Review Registry. Developing and maintaining a good system of knowledge sharing requires dedicated human and financial resources.
20. Deputies noted that UNDP's approach, while geared to its unique presence at country level, might be relevant for other ECESA organizations, particularly non-resident entities wishing to interact more actively with country teams. Involvement in UNDP's networks could help ensure that ECESA capacities are made known and better used by Resident Coordinators and the Country Teams. However, this potential may be limited due to the rules governing external participation in these networks (some involving restrictions in this regard, and some being entirely open to any external participants). Electronic knowledge sharing can also be a way of supporting organizational change - for instance by breaking down silos, and promoting cultural changes within the organization. Internet-based knowledge sharing is however only one among several approaches to knowledge sharing.
9. Deputies considered that enhancing of knowledge management and knowledge sharing is a key component of the effort to enhance ECESA processes. They decided that all clusters will be invited to identify knowledge sharing priorities and the procedures and mechanisms that are needed in their respective areas. The resulting

insights will then be built on in pursuing the ongoing reflection on the architecture of ECESA and in considering the most suitable configuration for knowledge sharing system for ECESA as a whole. A project will be developed to seek funding for an overall ECESA knowledge sharing system.