

Enhancing ECESA processes

Introduction

At the EC-ESA meeting of Deputies of 9 June, the proposals of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions on strengthening EC-ESA processes and reviewing the thematic clusters were further discussed. Participants confirmed the need to prioritize and select a few areas of common concern on which EC-ESA would focus, using the cluster approach for sectoral themes or other forms of collaboration for cross-sectoral issues of political relevance to the UN work in the development field.

The 2005 World Summit reaffirmed the commitment of the world leaders to the UN development agenda and decided to initiate a number of processes aimed at strengthening its implementation. The following are particularly relevant for the work of EC-ESA: the reform of ECOSOC (Annual Ministerial Reviews and Development Cooperation Forum), the call for more tightly managed entities, the review of mandates and the need to strengthen linkages between normative/analytical and operational work.

Through the collaborative efforts of its members, EC-ESA is called upon to play an important role in responding innovatively and effectively to these reform demands. For doing so, it has to fulfill a number of functions corresponding to its very nature and overall mandate, namely: (i) strengthening policy coherence in the analytical and normative development work of the UN; (ii) contributing in a consistent manner to the monitoring and follow-up of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs); (iii) facilitating coordination and promoting cooperation among the EC-ESA entities; (iv) making full use of the centres of excellence located in the various EC-ESA entities through knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices; (v) fostering the linkages between policy and normative work on one hand and operational and capacity building activities on the other hand; and (vi) bringing selected major development issues (particularly emerging ones) up to the highest level for policy debate.

This note makes a number of methodological and substantive proposals in order to enable EC-ESA entities to effectively carry out these functions. The first part is devoted to the clusters' work. The second part is devoted to broader issues which EC-ESA members have also the capacity and responsibility to address.

I. Clusters

Proposals below relate to the identification of priorities (both in terms of clusters and within each of them), and the way to perform collaborative work on these priorities.

A. Identification of substantive priorities

It is proposed to identify "priority thematic clusters" in which ECESA would effectively foster collaboration. These clusters correspond to areas which, in view of the number of entities involved, require programmatic coordination and possible joint undertakings. A tentative list of

clusters falling under this category would include: Trade, Macroeconomic and Finance; Sustainable Development; and Statistics.

At the other end of the list, it is felt that, at this stage, the cluster on Governance and Institutional Building might be kept dormant while the need for the existence of a Human Rights cluster should be reviewed on the occasion of a meeting of the EC-ESA entities with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, taking into account the decision of the 2005 World Summit to make human rights a third pillar of the U.N. It should also be noted that the cluster on Countries in Special Situations would involve only those entities addressing the development issues related to these countries.

Furthermore, Annex 1 to this note reviews the priority areas of work within each of the eleven clusters. For each of them, proposals are made to select and specify these priorities according to the three following categories:

- a. time-bound tasks: these are well-defined tasks which have to be terminated by a given deadline (*e.g.* development of a unified view of the world economic outlook and macroeconomic policy implications).
- b. recurrent tasks: these are tasks to be performed on a regular basis (*e.g.* joint publications, programmatic review and coordination);
- c. possible themes: these are issues which could possibly be the object of brainstorming, coordination, or joint activity but for which no concrete commitment is taken at this stage.

It is proposed that the Meeting of Deputies comments and possibly revises this Annex which will then be submitted to EC-ESA Principals for endorsement.

B. Methods of work

The Ec-ESA clusters have been initially set up with the following objectives: (i) consultation at the time of the preparation of the programme budget for ensuring consistency and avoiding duplications among the ECESA entities in a given area of work (ii) information-sharing on the implementation of the work programme; and (iii) identification of joint activities. In addition to this original purpose, the use of clusters for networking/knowledge sharing has been increasingly highlighted as a key function. Therefore, it is proposed that, at least, all priority thematic clusters engage actively in such knowledge-sharing. Participants in these clusters should review and use the most appropriate tools for this purpose *e.g.* use of IMDIS and EC-ESA Website, creation of webboards, establishment of expert networks, etc.

Concerning the functioning of the clusters, a number of improvements should be made, including:

- Adjusting lead entities, with the nomination of two co-chairs, preferably one from a global entity and one from a regional commission;
- Defining the objectives and expected outcome for each priority tasks, with a calendar to perform these tasks;
- Requesting lead entities to regularly report to Deputies or Principals on key achievements/progress in the priority areas; convene regular meetings; and ensure regular communication in-between;
- Engaging Funds and Programmes in clusters' work (e.g.UNDP on social issues, UNFPA on population, UNEP on sustainable development)
- Possibly engaging BWIs and other organizations on ad hoc basis.

Finally, at the request of the Principals or Deputies, or at their own initiative, two or more clusters should engage, where, appropriate, to work together on inter-related issues (e.g. socially inclusive macroeconomic policies).

II. Cross-sectoral substantive and structural issues

In addition to the thematic clusters, EC-ESA should consider selected cross-sectoral issues of a substantive or structural nature. A number of them are suggested below as well as possible ways to address such issues.

A. Identification of priority cross-sectoral issues

1. Structural issues

Three issues could be addressed as a matter of priority as they are linked to current processes which are expected to lead to intergovernmental decisions in the forthcoming months. These are:

- The preparation of the AMR's multiyear programme of work: EC-ESA could provide views on how to conceptualize the articulation of the internationally agreed development goals from which this multiyear programme would derive;
- The way that the different parts of the ECOSOC system could be involved in and contribute to the AMR as well as to the DCF; and the way to ensure an effective monitoring of the policy conclusions resulting from these high-level meetings;

- The positioning of the EC-ESA entities, both among themselves and with the other entities of the UN system (link with the work of the Coherence Panel on more tightly managed entities).

In addition, it is proposed to consider the building up of linkages between normative and operational work as an issue to be addressed by EC-ESA on a recurrent basis. Such reflection should be guided by the fundamental concern of operationalizing the international development goals and would cover, inter alia, the following issues: (i) increasing cooperation between UNDG and EC-ESA (both institutional arrangements and specific issues to discuss); (ii) contributing, in a coordinated manner, to the preparation and review of CCA, PRSPs and national development strategies; (iii) producing and disseminating toolkits; and (iv) making available knowledge sharing networks to policy makers at the country level.

2. Substantive issues

On an annual basis, EC-ESA could plan to address collectively selected substantive cross-sectoral issues - for example among the following ones: South/South cooperation; Science and Technology; Energy; the effective implementation of the Monterrey consensus; and the economic and social dimensions of post conflict peace building

B. Methods of work

The above-mentioned cross-sectoral issues are of a strategic nature and should be addressed at the level of the Principals and/or Deputies. They should therefore be selected and organized in time according to the political agenda of the UN. For example, when an emerging and sensitive issue is taken up at an important intergovernmental meeting, EC-ESA members should brainstorm collectively on what should come out of such a meeting. It would then be on the basis of this common understanding that each entity, according to its experience and expertise, would contribute to the documentation for the meeting.

Along this line, it is proposed that each year, EC-ESA agrees on a number of cross-sectoral priority issues as well as on an indicative calendar to address them. It is also proposed that the method of work be as follows:

- defining the expected product (e.g. EC-ESA contribution to an intergovernmental meeting, recommendations presented to the Policy Committee, reflection to share with UNDG, etc.);
- fixing at the outset the steps, timing and modalities for the preparation of this product (including via the setting up of a time bound task force, with the involvement of one or several clusters when appropriate, and electronic communications among the entities and persons involved);
- ensuring that the product is effectively considered and used by the targeted actors and bodies.

More generally, for all major items put on the agenda of EC-ESA meetings, fundamental rules should be agreed upon and applied, in particular the identification of the expected outcome, an appropriate preparation, and a monitoring of the conclusions and recommendations made.

Conclusion

At their meeting of 5 June, the Deputies are invited to discuss this note which will be revised in the light of these discussions and subsequently submitted to Principals for final review and endorsement.

Thereafter, with respect to Part I of the note, the priority thematic clusters would be requested to convene a meeting by mid October at the latest in order to review and implement the conclusions of the Deputies and Principals. As a first step, the participants in the clusters should specify a calendar for implementing timebound and recurrent tasks. Furthermore, in the light of the agreed priorities, they should revise the list of focal points and nominate two cochairs, one from a global entity and one from a regional commission.

With respect to part II of the note, the Deputies will be requested to make proposals to the Principals on the calendar for the time bound issues (see A.1.) and to identify two/three substantive cross-sectoral issues (see A.2.) to be addressed by ECESA in the coming two years. These proposals would be submitted to the Principals for approval in September.

Annex 1:

Priorities of ECESA clusters defined in light of the World Summit Outcome Document *

A limited number of priorities are suggested below, with each of them placed under one of the following categories: time bound tasks; recurrent tasks, and possible themes

Trade

Recurrent:

- A joint annual report on trade, as of 2006
- Aid for Trade Initiative and Building productive capacities and trade related infrastructures

Possible themes:

- Convergence of multilateral and regional trade integration
- South-South Cooperation
- Trade and sustainable development

Macroeconomics and finance

Time-Bound:

- Coherent support to national development strategies (Initiative on socially inclusive macroeconomic policies/toolkits)
- Unified UN view of the world economic outlook and macroeconomic policy implications
- Revamp LINK project

Possible theme:

- Monitoring different forms of development cooperation and aid effectiveness

Sustainable development

Recurrent:

- Contribute strategically to CSD

Possible themes:

- Energy
- Sustainable production and consumption pattern
- [Slums]
- [Water and sanitation and how to help countries prepare integrated water management plans]
- [Climate change and meeting UNFCCC commitments]

Social development and social integration

Time Bound:

- Approaches for employment creation – follow-up to the 2006 High level segment of ECOSOC

Possible theme:

- Building inclusive societies and greater social equity

Advancement of women

Recurrent:

- Including gender perspectives in planning and programming processes of ECESA

Possible themes:

- Violence against women and women in peace and security
- Incorporating women’s human rights into work on human rights, implementation of CEDAW
- Gender and the economy

Countries in special situations

Time Bound:

- Support mid-term review of Brussels Programme of Action
- Develop indicators on transit transport systems

Recurrent:

- Further mainstream commitments to these countries into ECESA planning and programming processes

Governance and institution building

Possible theme:

- [Support reconstruction of governance and public administration after conflict (policy and technical advice, dissemination of good practices...)]

Science and technology

Recurrent:

- Monitor and advance progress in implementing WSIS and World Summit
- [Support access to and use of ICT (e.g. capacity building)]

Possible themes:

- Policies in support of innovations for development

Human Rights

Recurrent:

- [Mainstreaming human rights into development policies]

Statistics

Recurrent:

- Statistical norms and standards (Development/application) and UN official population estimates and projections
- Strengthen statistical capacities in countries

Population

Time Bound:

- International migration and development (preparation and immediate follow-up to the High-level Policy Dialogue)

Possible theme:

- Population ageing and its consequences

* The issues in brackets are those in which only a limited number of EC-ESA entities are involved at the programmatic level