

## STRENGTHENING OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)

*Non-paper*

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A strong and more effective Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can be realized within its current mandate by making optimal use of existing structures and processes and through changes of its work program.

The ECOSOC can build on its convening power and unique position as the central forum for system-wide coordination, and thus to respond to the need for better governance and coherence at the global, regional and national levels, and for effective follow up and review of the implementation of the outcomes of major UN conferences and summits, including the Millennium Summit.

### A. FUNCTIONS

In order to achieve these objectives, the ECOSOC should perform the following functions:

- I. **Promote global dialogue and partnerships on global trends in the economic, social, environmental and humanitarian fields.**
  - Serve as a quality platform for high level engagement of Member States, international institutions, private sector, and civil society for discussions on emerging global trends, policies and action. In this regard ECOSOC should:
    - Promote coherent and coordinated approaches
    - Provide analytical leadership
    - Proactively stimulate debate on topical issues
    - Consolidate links between the U.N. and Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) and WTO, i.e. by evolving a common framework for discussions with BWI and WTO and multi-year work programs of joint meetings.
    - Encourage participation of civil society and private sector in the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.
  - Develop ECOSOC's ability to respond better and more rapidly to developments in the international economic, social, environmental and humanitarian fields.

**II. Strengthen the role of ECOSOC to serve as a development cooperation forum:**

- Give greater focus to the themes of the Millennium Declaration, particularly MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.
- Explore how the Committee on Development Policy could act as a requisite think-tank of ECOSOC.
- Coordinate input from functional commissions around agreed themes, for integrated follow-up of UN conferences and summits.
- Encourage discussion about the best way to monitor and evaluate the actions taken by developed and developing countries in implementing their commitments made at the major international conferences and summits. The discussions could be based on existing approaches, including national MDG reports and peer review mechanisms.
- Develop a system of assessing the impact of the implementation of development strategies and commitments at the country level, i.e. by using indicators as appropriate.
- Encourage debate on new and innovative ideas on the enabling environment for development, including financing.-

**III. Focus on Peace and Development linkage**

- Accord particular focus on post conflict country situations building on the experience of recent initiatives.
- Maintain international attention and support, as well as enhance system-wide inter-agency coordination in support of governments during the longer-term reconstruction, recovery and reconciliation phase.
- Contribute to international efforts in addressing root causes of conflict, conflict prevention and peace building.
- Reinforce linkages between ECOSOC and Security Council on post-conflict management, building on the experience of the advisory groups on countries emerging from conflict.
- (Role of ECOSOC in the proposed Peace-building Commission pending separate discussions)
- Guide discussions on economic, social and environmental aspects of security threats based on well-researched reports by the Secretariat and other relevant inputs.

#### **IV. Strengthen operational coordination**

- Strengthen ECOSOC's role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination. This would help to operationalize an integrated and coordinated follow-up and implementation of major UN conferences and summits at the country level.
- Make greater use of the Chief Executive Board. The Executive Heads of the institutions represented in the CEB should be enabled to exercise a more proactive role in the work of ECOSOC.
- Take a lead, with inputs from the UN Development Group and others, in providing guidance on development cooperation to the UN funds, programs and agencies.
- Support and complement international efforts with regard to assessments, reconstruction and rehabilitation in post natural disaster situations.

#### **B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

In order to fully perform the above functions the organization of work, the agenda and reporting requirements of ECOSOC should be adapted, within the existing allocation of conference services and costs. In this regard, the following is suggested:

- Transform the present segmented organization of work into a more flexible calendar. It should be examined whether ECOSOC could meet throughout the year to consider items on its agenda. Appropriate procedures, including the option of holding short focused sessions throughout the year to discuss high priority or emergency issues of global concern with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, could be elaborated. The adaptation of the work program should be geared towards strengthening the role of ECOSOC to serve as a development cooperation forum.
- Make more optimal use of the High level Segment (HLS). In this regard:
  - One option would be to hold a session of the HLS separate from the annual substantive session together with other events with related topics, e.g. in connection with the Spring meeting of ECOSOC with BWIs, while maintaining the identity of the respective forums.
  - Identify only such themes for the High level segment, which are topical and relevant to the global economic, social, environmental and humanitarian trends. More efficient procedures to select themes should be developed.
  - The discussions at the HLS could contribute to the agenda for all other segments and activities of ECOSOC during the rest of the year.

- Ensure that the debate in the HLS attracts high-level participation from Member States and stakeholders.
- It could be considered to hold the Operational activities segment in conjunction with a relevant meeting of the UN Funds and Program, in particular the Annual meeting of the UNDP/UNFPA executive Board.
- It could be considered to hold the Coordination segment immediately after the Operational activities segment.
- It could be considered to hold the Humanitarian affairs segment separately from the annual substantive session, with an established multi-year thematic program.
- It could be considered to introduce a more flexible timeframe of the General segment. Rationalize the agenda of the General segment. Use clustering, wherever possible.
- The Secretariat should provide annotated agenda and relevant reports in time. Formats of the reports should be user-friendly. Enhance inter-divisional cooperation within DESA and between DESA and other Departments of the Secretariat.
- Avoid duplication in the work of the ECOSOC with the work of General Assembly's second and third committees. This would also be a basic element of having ECOSOC sessions throughout the year. DESA should prepare a study to delineate between the work of ECOSOC and the General Assembly.
- Strengthen the role of Presidency in guiding the work program of the ECOSOC through staff support to the office of the President and encourage a proactive role of the Bureau on organizational matters.