

ECOSOC BRIEFING NOTE SPECIAL EVENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT:

The UN Economic and Social Council's Special Event on Climate Change and Development, "Achieving the MDGs and coping with the challenges of climate change," took place on Friday, 2 May 2008, at UN headquarters in New York. The event, which was funded by the Government of Italy, included two panel discussions, on "learning to cope with climate change" and "reducing the world's carbon footprint." The outcomes of the event are expected to serve as input to the forthcoming ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review in July 2008, which will focus on sustainable development. This Briefing Note provides an overview of the panel presentations and discussions.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW

The 2005 World Summit mandated the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to convene an Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) to assess progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the implementation of the other goals and targets agreed at major UN conferences and summits over the past 15 years, which collectively constitute what is known as the "UN Development Agenda" (UNDA). The primary objective of the AMR is to promote accountability for fulfilling the commitments and to help accelerate and scale-up progress towards the UNDA. The AMR also serves as a global high-level forum, where lessons learned are exchanged and successful practices and approaches that merit scaling-up are identified. The first AMR was held in July 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland, during the high-level segment of the ECOSOC substantive session.

During its 2008 high-level segment in July 2008, the AMR will bring together Ministers of Finance, Development Planning and the Environment to discuss how to achieve sustainable development. The theme of the 2008 Review is "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development." The thematic discussion, with its focus on rural development, can examine the link between climate change, biofuels and food security.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EVENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

OPENING REMARKS

In his opening remarks, ECOSOC President Léo Mérorès (Haiti) stressed that climate change presented additional obstacles for the realization of the MDGs by 2015. Noting that many countries are not on track to meet the MDGs, he said climate



Dais during the Special Event on Climate Change and Development, "Achieving the MDGs and coping with the challenges of climate change"

change risks cancelling out much of the progress made by UN programmes. He said ECOSOC was well positioned to study the links between climate change and development, as well as to identify solutions to address the development-climate challenge. Regarding the AMR, he said a Ministerial Declaration should stress that, in order to achieve the MDGs, the international community will need to target efforts to deal with climate change.

Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said it was widely recognized that climate change was fundamentally a sustainable development challenge, involving not only environmental protection, but also economic and social development. He stressed that if left unaddressed, climate change could threaten the achievement of all the MDGs. Noting that it is already too late to fully prevent climate change, he said if we act in time, we can still hope to avoid even more disruptive climate change in a way that puts the world more firmly on the path to sustainable development. This was especially significant for the poorest and most vulnerable people. He expressed concern regarding the wide gap between words and action on reducing emissions. Without sacrificing economic growth or poverty reduction, and in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, he urged both developed and developing countries to redouble their efforts to reduce emissions, with industrialized countries taking the lead. He underscored that an effective response to climate change will require both a mix of policies and the systematic inclusion of climate change considerations into sustainable development strategies and investment decisions.

PANEL 1: LEARNING TO COPE WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

PRESENTATIONS: Andrew Simms, Policy Director and Head of the Climate Change Programme, New Economics Foundation, said unchecked climate change would not only block further progress on the MDGs, but reverse hard won gains made over many years. He reported that a series of regional reports undertaken by a coalition of environment and development organizations had concluded that irreversible global warming would mean not just greater hardships for millions, but the end of development as we have understood it for the last half century. He said the challenge of reducing poverty in a carbon-constrained world requires a new development model that is climate proof and climate friendly. He proposed that all decisions be examined

for whether they will increase or decrease vulnerability to climate change and whether they build resilience at the community level and reduce risk. He said the world needs a new development model, better measures of progress and a shift from relying on unequal growth towards redistribution of resources and wealth. Among the community-based coping strategies, he highlighted the need for vulnerability mapping and protecting ecosystems to support livelihoods.

Ogunlade Davidson, Co-Chair, IPCC Working Group III, observed that the increase in greenhouse gas emissions concentrations has made future warming inevitable, adding that climate change could worsen the gap in distributional goods and services between and within generations, with the poor and disadvantaged being the most affected. Stressing the IPCC's conclusions that climate change is more of a development than an environmental problem, he said climate policy alone will not solve the problem. He said strategic energy options to achieve the MDGs should ensure macroeconomic growth (such as improving the overall economy by increasing productivity), mobilize local investments, ensure cross-learning among institutions, promote external investments and introduce biofuels in the transport sector. Regarding options for providing targeted energy services for the poor in urban and peri-urban areas, he proposed the widespread use of liquefied petroleum gas and tariff systems with cross-subsidization for cleaner energy. On the options for energizing rural areas, he proposed scaling up existing interventions and the provision of low-cost, high-impact options. He further stressed the need for early actions, linking sustainable development with climate policies; and integrating development, equity and sustainability in national development strategies.

DISCUSSION: The panel discussion was moderated by Andrew Revkin, science writer for the *New York Times*. Belgium, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), presented the informal summary of the CSW's discussions on climate change and gender. He stressed that climate change was not gender neutral and that women are more vulnerable to climate impacts. He also said women can be important agents of change, but that in many cases there is a lack of adequate representation of women in the decision-making process.

Luxemburg said issues of equity and local problems may represent political and security challenges. He urged policy consistency, disaster prevention, financing, evolution of consumption patterns in developed countries, and technological advances. The Philippines said the gap between words and action would become unbridgeable unless urgent action was taken, and said 2008 should be a year of action. Malaysia stressed the need for political will and the establishment of an effective system of incentives that are both equitable and effective, at all levels, which will promote the idea of addressing climate change problems. He called for incentives for technology transfer.

Antigua and Barbuda called for a new pattern of development that addresses sustainable consumption and production in developed countries, particularly in the energy and waste sectors. He stressed the importance of technological research and the public domain rather than the private domain. He further outlined the need to look beyond the current aid system to address the financial needs of addressing climate change. Belarus underscored the importance of developing centers of technological development and addressing technology transfer needs without becoming stuck on issues of intellectual property rights.

Bangladesh said mitigation and adaptation are solutions but both must go hand in hand, adding that that climate change stabilization and development must also be go together. He underscored the need for climate resilience and adaptation funded from additional resources and proposed agreement on adding another small percentage of gross domestic product for adaptation. He also called for more public sector investment in research and development.

Italy presented the outcomes of the 2008 OECD ministerial meeting, highlighting, *inter alia*, that: tackling climate change and establishing low carbon economies requires structural changes;

developing good policies will create win-win options; strategies and technologies to increase economic efficiency and increase development are already available and affordable. She also stated that the costs of early action will outweigh the costs of inaction or indecision.

PANEL 2: REDUCING THE WORLD'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

Ji Zou, Professor, School of Environment and Natural Resources, Renmin University of China, said technology change was an important to assist developing countries achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication. He underscored the urgency of technology transfer, noting that a slow transfer rate with low-efficiency technologies will delay the opportunity for change. He said climate-friendly technologies should be seen as a public good, and identified different kinds of leverage points for international technology cooperation. He suggested establishing an inter-governmental body specifically for technology transfer issues. He then outlined the possible focus of the body, including conducting policy dialogues to provide a financial basis for research and development, and also promoting the direct transfer and diffusion of publicly-owned technologies.

Leena Srivastava, Executive Director, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), said that as an emerging economy experiencing economic growth, India should focus on building adaptive capacity, identifying and implementing adaptation measures and following low-carbon development paths. She identified several opportunities, closely linked to the MDGS, including making available resources to low-income farmers and providing access and provision of technological information. Regarding mitigation interventions, she stressed the need for more efficient technologies and cleaner energy technologies.

Mark Goldfus, Director of Public Policy, Merrill Lynch, noted the lessons from two public policy successes, namely cleaning up waterways and improving air quality in many regions of the world, while maintaining high economic growth and employment levels. Regarding the importance of incentives for creating new technology in mitigating industrial pollution, he said carbon emissions are to a considerable extent a technology issue, and therefore technology fostered by capital investment can assist in solving the problem. He also observed that a cap-and-trade system is not the only possible incentive for investing in environmental technologies.

DISCUSSIONS: Panel moderator Andrew Revkin proposed a new international framework on energy and an intergovernmental panel on technology change. Japan said climate change was a multifaceted issue, and reiterated support for the concept of human security with a focus on the empowerment of individuals. Indonesia said international financial institutions will play an important role in the carbon markets, technology transfer and innovation. Regarding the role of the private sector, he underscored the need for corporate social responsibility and an enabling environment for economic growth. He called for increased cooperation and partnerships for low carbon technologies and adaptation measures. Ecuador urged furthering implementation of agreements into public policy and presented Ecuador's proposal to keep certain amounts of fossil fuels in the ground.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM: The first biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) takes place from 30 June to 1 July at UN headquarters in New York. The 2008 DCF will take as its theme, "Towards more coherent and effective development cooperation." For more information, visit: http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/Draft_agenda.pdf

AMR: The 2008 AMR session will be held from 2-3 July 2008, at UN headquarters in New York. For more information, visit: http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/Draft_agenda.pdf