CONCEPT PAPER

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Annual Ministerial Substantive Review (AMR)

BACKGROUND

Seven years after the Millennium Declaration was adopted by heads of state and government, we are off-track in many regions of the world in terms of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. This was recognized by the world's leaders when they gathered for the 2005 World Summit. At the Summit they envisaged several concrete steps to speed up implementation. One of these steps was to mandate ECOSOC to hold an annual

theme, and *voluntary national reviews* where countries will present the progress they have made in terms of implementing their national development strategy.

- Š Not an event, but a process The AMR should however not be seen as a two-day event but rather as a process. The whole UN system has been asked to provide input to the meeting. A month-long *e-discussion* hosted on UNDP's mdg-net will capture important feedback and insights from the country-level. A global AMR *preparatory event* is planned to take place in New York in March 2007. In addition, in preparation for the AMR thematic debate, three tentative *country-led meetings* are planned in Mexico, Bangladesh and Morocco in spring 2007. Moreover, countries volunteering for AMR review at the 2007 ECOSOC substantive session in July are envisaged to hold *national consultative meetings* with key stakeholders, including from civil society, on the implementation of their national development strategies.
- š **Hands on** -- The AMR will be complemented by an AMR Innovation Fair. The Fair will promote an exchange of practical examples of what has worked and what has not worked to help identify which polices merit scaling-up.
- Š **Reaching out** The AMR will have broad-based participation. Getting the private sector and civil society engaged in the AMR will be imperative for the success of the new forum.

THE 2007 ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW THEME

The Council has decided that the **theme for the 2007 Annual Ministerial Review will be MDG 1, i.e. Eradication of Poverty and Hunger.** Such a theme spans a very broad range of interrelated and complementary issues. The following highlights a few aspects that are seen as fertile areas for discussion.

POVERTY

Employment generation

Employment generation is known to contribute to economic prosperity and poverty reduction, and to strengthen economic and social development, yet it is proving to be elusive in the present economic environment. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) *Global Employment Trends Brief*, January 2007, more people were in work in 2006 than in 2005, yet unemployment reached an all-time-high of 195.2 million individuals, 6.3 per cent of the global workforce.

The year 2006 reinforced the trend in which robust economic growth has failed to translate into significant reductions in unemployment or poverty among those in work. While the percentage of working poor in total employment declined in the past ten years, the ILO reports that the number of working people living on US\$2 a day has continued to grow in absolute numbers, reaching 1.37 billion in 2006, almost half (47.4 per cent) the world's workers. The ILO projects that the pattern will continue in 2007, with a forecast growth rate of 4.9 per cent likely to ensure that unemployment remains near 2006 levels. The jobless growth of recent years confirms that growth alone cannot guarantee job creation – much less decent work – nor ensure the significant reduction in extreme poverty needed to attain the internationally agreed development goals.

Youth 15 to 24 years old represent around one quarter of the world's working population, but nearly half (43.7 per cent,8.5(atic6.1(t4.8(emnr)-5.4 forecaM0 TWhiMGo153 TD.The joblw)4(3 Tc.13736 lep7b20.6

macroeconomic policies with an appropriately designed and executed employment strategy at its core. At the international level, globalization has intensified the interdependence between States in macroeconomic policies, leaving countries little policy space to increase employment levels on their own through more expansionary macroeconomic policies. For this reason, better coordination of macroeconomic policy among countries is necessary in the pursuit of full employment and decent work.

Globalization and the drive for international competitiveness, along with rapid technological development, have greatly affected the employment situation in the last decade. They have helped spawn new job opportunities in some areas but widened the gap between skilled and unskilled workers. These phenomena have also generated job losses, employment insecurity and new risks for the workforce. Furthermore, many countries have seen an increase in part-time, casual and other forms of atypical employment.

In short, an enabling environment at the national and international levels that promotes decent work together with economic growth, enterprise development and poverty reduction is critical to generating employment as a means of reducing poverty levels.

Priority areas for discussion:

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- Implications of the rural-urban socio-economic gap
- Measures to prevent the urbanization of poverty

HUNGER

While poverty is undeniably a cause of hunger, hunger can also be a cause of poverty. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) underscores that hunger deprives impoverished people of the strength and skill to work productively. Widespread hunger and malnutrition impair economic performance of individuals, families and nations.

Food Security

According to FAO, there are more hungry people in developing countries today than there were ten years ago, and the number of hungry people in the world is currently increasing at the rate of four million a year.

Agriculture is not only a vital source of nutrition, it is also an important source of employment and income for the rural poor. Raising agricultural productivity is important for reducing poverty and promoting food security and nutritional wellbeing. To guarantee food and nutrition security, hunger must be confronted as part of a broader effort to address insecurity caused by chronic poverty, capability failures, social exclusion and marginalization, exacerbated by natural disaster and conflict. Moreover, such a strategy also needs to extend from short-term humanitarian problems to the longer-term aim of eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

Stresses on food production from growing populations and changes to the climate that affect agriculture threaten food security, but advances in the field of sustainable development and in biotechnology offer promise to safeguard the nutritional wellbeing of future generations.

Priority area for discussion:

• Strategies to ensure sustainable and secure food supplies

Biotechnology

According to FAO, biotechnology provides powerful tools for the sustainable development of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, as well as the food industry. When appropriately integrated with other technologies for the production of food, agricultural products and services, biotechnology can be of significant assistance in meeting the nutritional needs of an expanding and increasingly urbanized population in the next millennium.

In spite of its promise, biotechnology raises important ethical and social issues. These include equitable distribution of benefits, biosafety, and responsibility to future generations. The impacts cannot easily be confined within national boundaries and will often differ among countries, depending on local ecological, social and economic situations. Moreover, the extent to which biotechnology will contribute to the achievement of food security for all is still an open question. Science alone is unlikely to provide a complete solution to the problems of rural development. There are many processes, factors and socio-economic structures underlying poverty in rural areas, such as lack of access to land and other productive resources, low purchasing power, political powerlessness, fragile environments and distance from markets that biotechnology clearly does not address.

Priority area for discussion:

• Opportunities and risks of biotechnologies for eradicating hunger

<u>Climate Change</u>