

Regional Coordination Mechanism



Deputy Secretary-General chairs Regional Coordination Meeting for the UNECE region

The Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, chaired the annual formal meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for the UNECE region on 24 October in Geneva. The RCM, convened by the UNECE Executive Secretary, brings together regional directors of UN agencies, funds and programmes to address issues of high priority on the UN development agenda that call for policy coherence at the regional level and require inter-agency cooperation. Eighteen agencies participated in the meeting.

UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj said: "When it becomes difficult to agree on global solutions, we have to try to achieve progress at the regional level first and then share the regional approaches and solutions at the global level. This is where the RCM, in close cooperation with the UN Development Group's Regional Teams, can play an important role."

In his opening remarks, Jan Eliasson stressed the importance of regional cooperation recalling that "regional cooperation was enshrined in the UN Charter even before most regional organizations existed...When we contribute to regional cooperation, we implement the UN Charter", he said.

The Secretary General's Special Adviser for the post-2015 development agenda, Assistant Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, also took part in the meeting. She provided an overview of the on-going global processes with regard to the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The main discussion of the RCM focussed on perspectives and ideas from the region to be brought into these processes. The meeting agreed to prepare a regional inter-agency report on post-2015 challenges and opportunities in the region, which should be ready by September 2013 for the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals. UNECE and UNDP, in close cooperation with the other agencies present in the RCM, will provide inputs and coordinate the work on this report.

The other main issues discussed were:

- Follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference in the area of green economy in the region
- Possible areas of cooperation with UN Women at the regional level
- The need to reconsider traditional development assistance frameworks, tools and planning processes for middle-income countries in the region, and to take this issue into account when developing the post-2015 agenda. □

Expert Opinion

Why innovate?

This week, Charles W. Wessner, Director, Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, The National Academies, asks:
Why innovate? □

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Trade



UNECE launches Trade Facilitation implementation guide

On 25 October, UNECE launched its Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide. This is a web-based interactive tool designed to help countries simplify cross-border trade. Trade facilitation has become a key policy issue for both governments and business as it helps cut the costs of doing trade, reduce delays at the border, and make public agencies dealing with trade more efficient. It is at the heart of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round negotiations.

The Guide shows policymakers and implementers how to identify relevant trade facilitation measures and instruments for dealing with issues such as:

- avoiding waiting times at border crossings;
- setting up a Single Window for exports and imports;
- using modern information technologies for trade facilitation.

Case stories from Cambodia, Jordan, Mozambique, Pakistan, Senegal and Thailand illustrate with concrete examples how developing and transition economies have succeeded in dealing with these issues.



The Guide includes the work of key organizations involved in trade facilitation and covers the related measures currently being discussed at the WTO. It is available in English, and will be translated into French and Russian. It is published on the UNECE website at <http://www.unece.org/trade/tfig>.

The Guide was developed by UNECE, with the support of its UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), the contribution of numerous experts from international organizations, national entities, and financial support from the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency.

Speaking at the launch, UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj recalled that "according to OECD, every extra day required to ready goods for import or export reduces trade by around 4%". Mr. Alkalaj and Ambassador Reiter, Swedish Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO, said the Guide will be a valuable tool for both national reformers and international negotiators engaged in trade facilitation efforts, and thus will support a better and more inclusive international trading system in the future.

Delegations participating at the launch also welcomed the Guide. The representative of the European Union said that at the current critical phase of the WTO negotiations, the Guide is a very useful practical tool to help trade-facilitation-related reforms in developing and less developed countries, which is very helpful. □

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PPP



Philippines launches first International Specialist Centre on Public Private Partnerships in Health

Working with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and other agencies, the Philippines Department of Health has recently launched an International Specialist Centre on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Health. PPPs are becoming an increasingly important response to the rising costs in medical care, the growing incidence of chronic diseases and the introduction of new technologies for medical treatment. However, while many Governments are interested in such innovative financing models, the Philippines to date has had no single agency providing information about PPPs in health and best practice.

Speaking about the Centre, the Minister of Health, Dr. Enrique T. Ona, said that this was an opportunity for the Philippines "to showcase some of our successes in PPPs and it will receive global recognition as a centre for PPP, especially as the UNECE has the capacity to make it known to the rest of the world. This partnership will continue and we're very happy, honoured and privileged to be setting up this specialist centre for health in this part of the world".

The Centre was launched in Manila from 23 to 25 October at an International Conference on "Developing Models, Ensuring Sustainability: Perspectives from Europe and Asia", which was held at the Headquarters of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The event was co-organized by UNECE, ADB, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Department of Health of the Philippines, the Development Bank of the Philippines, the Philippines Health Insurance Corporation and a number of other key stakeholders in PPP in health. It was the first regional event in PPPs in health to be held in the Philippines and attracted around 250 participants, including top-level speakers and experts from all over the world.

When fully operational, the Centre will :

- Identify best practice in the design and implementation of PPPs in the health sector.
- Prepare and disseminate actual PPP case studies, including information on contracts and the financial arrangements.
- Strengthen in the medium and long-term PPP capacity building amongst government officials.
- Establish a knowledge management platform to improve the evaluation of PPP projects in health and their replicability specifically through the feedback of end users.

The event itself, which was opened by Mr. Stephen Grott, Vice-President of the Asian Development Bank, and Dr. Enrique T. Ona, on behalf of the President of the Philippines:

- Showcased salient case studies and best practices from Europe and Asia.
- Discussed the key barriers to promoting successful PPPs.
- Identified some of the PPP models in health care that are most appropriate for developing and transition economies. □

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