

Innovation



Secretary-General visits UNECE and FAO stand at ECOSOC Innovation Fair in Geneva

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the Innovation Fair held from 1-3 July 2013 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva during the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review. On this occasion, he visited the UNECE and FAO stand.

Activities on display at the stand included the UNECE [Innovation Performance Review series](#), which provides policy advice to countries on how to boost innovation, and a special display of innovative products by the [UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section](#).

Products showcased included private sector innovations that promote sustainable use of forest-based materials - wood-plastic composites produced from process waste and wood-based clothing textiles for example - sourced from sustainably-managed forests. The stand also raised awareness on the potential uses of innovative forest products in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, biofuels, construction, as well as consumer products.

A key area in UNECE's activities promoting knowledge-based development has been the Innovation Performance Review series, a participatory policy advisory service undertaken at the request of UNECE member States. Reviews consider possible policy actions to stimulate innovation activity and to improve the efficiency of national innovation systems. Reviews have thus far been carried out in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, with progress already noted in implementing recommendations. The latest review is being conducted for Armenia. □

ECOSOC



Regional commissions discuss regional perspectives on the post-2015 development agenda

The Dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions entitled "Regional perspectives on the post-2015 development agenda" took place on 5 July 2013 as part of the Substantive Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Noeleen Heyzer, current coordinator of the Regional Commissions and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in economic, social and related fields. She said that the report provided a visional perspective on efforts to accelerate progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to develop the post-2015 agenda. The report pointed out that the MDGs had not been designed to encompass national and regional disparities and thus do not reflect the relative performance of the regions. It was therefore suggested that the new post-2015 development framework should be more flexible and adaptable to regional and national circumstances and priorities.

The report noted progress and challenges with regard to MDG achievement in the regions. In Africa, average economic growth remained strong, and progress could be sustained by tackling infrastructure challenges. In Europe, vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and low-income families, had been hit hard by the financial crisis, and job creation was now a top priority for the entire continent. Latin America remained very heterogeneous and had the worst income distribution in the world. Environmental protection and economic equality were major issues for the post-2015 agenda. In the Asia-Pacific region, progress varied among countries, from economic power-houses to least developed countries and landlocked States. Addressing inclusive economic development and building resilience to the economic crisis and natural disasters was important for the region. In the Arab world, high-income countries would attain most of the MDGs, while least developed countries were off track. Conflict and the empowering of women were some of the main remaining challenges but attention should also be paid to governance issues and the creation of effective accountable institutions in the region.

Andrey Vasilyev, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary, observed that the MDG targets were only partly relevant when applied to high-income UNECE countries. The post-2015 agenda should go beyond the MDGs and, within a truly global framework, should be flexible enough to recognise specific regional and national challenges. It should be based on sustainable development, looking at the economy, society and the environment as a whole. A renewed emphasis on full





employment and decent jobs, greater investment in quality health and education services, stronger social protection, and a commitment to end gender inequalities were needed in the region. He emphasized that UNECE works to promote sustainable development in a variety of fields, including transboundary water cooperation, sustainable transport and cities. He recalled that the Conference of European Statisticians adopted in June recommendations for a framework to measure sustainable development, elaborated by UNECE, Eurostat and OECD. This framework, and associated sets of indicators, can work for the benefit of all regions.

Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, stated that education, gender equality and social justice were priorities for the Arab region, as was environmental sustainability.

The main gain from the MDGs had been to move from policy prescriptions to goals thus opening up policy space, said Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa. The MDGs had also contributed to rallying efforts, focusing the agenda and placing the United Nations at the centre of debates about development. He bluntly rejected the view that Africa had not done well with the MDGs, asking commentators to better assess the continent's performance "on a relative basis" and in view of its starting point.

Antonio Prado, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, stressed the rapid reduction of extreme poverty in the region: since 1990, it had gone from 22.6 per cent to 11.4 per cent but eradication had not been achieved and remained a goal. Inequalities were the main problem of the region and one of the Commission's priority issues to tackle.

Participating in the interactive discussion were the Russian Federation, Ethiopia, Sudan, Belarus, Jordan, Gabon and South Africa.

At the end of the meeting, ECOSOC adopted the resolution on the outcome of the review of the 2005 Reform of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/2013/15/Add.1), thereby endorsing it. □

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/julyhls/index13.shtml>

Statistics

Conference of European Statisticians – measuring sustainable development and poverty



In June, more than 160 statisticians and chief statisticians from UNECE and OECD member countries, and even beyond, came to Geneva for the 61st Conference of European Statisticians. They focused on two topics of growing importance for official statistics: the statistical community's contribution to the global discussion on the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, and innovative solutions in providing access to data for researchers so that they can produce valuable analysis to society.

The chief statisticians endorsed a set of recommendations on measuring sustainable development, which was a result of 8 years of dedicated work by an expert group, set up jointly by UNECE, the Statistical Office of the European Commission and OECD.

Several countries from different sub-regions volunteered to carry out pilot testing of sustainable development indicators. The Conference also asked for further work to improve these indicators, especially to account for the transboundary impacts of sustainable development and to measure how human and social capital contribute to sustainable development. These transboundary impacts concern the ways in which countries affect the development of other countries, for example, through international trade, financial transfers, migration, etc. New work to develop better measures of human capital was also launched.

Statistical offices have a lot of environmental, social and economic data with relevance for analysing the consequences of climate change. The Conference reviewed interim recommendations on improvements needed in this area. In April 2014, the Conference will discuss the final report and consider key directions for future climate change-related statistics.

Participating countries agreed that poverty should be measured beyond traditional monetary indicators and that the comparability of countries' poverty statistics needs to be improved. Therefore, a seminar on "The way forward in poverty measurement" will be held in Geneva from 2 to 4 December this year. □

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2013.06.ces.html>

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