

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 review of progress towards the MDGs, which will be held in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030.

- § **Tapping innovation** -- The AMR should also serve as a global platform, with multistakeholder participation, where knowledge on successful innovative policies in implementing the UN Development Agenda is reviewed and lessons learned on how to internalize these goals into national development strategies are shared.

WHAT WILL THE AMR LOOK LIKE?

- § **Format** - The actual AMR will be held as a two-day ministerial-level meeting during the ECOSOC high-level segment in July. It consists of a *global review* of the United Nations development agenda, a *thematic review* related to one of the eight MDGs or an other selected

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*

Climate Change