



# PARTNERSHIPS FOR DECENT WORK



International  
Labour  
Organization

# Newsletter

September 2012, No. 31

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## ***ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review in New York focused on Productive Employment and Decent Work***

“High on the list of priorities is jobs – decent jobs, predictable and stable incomes... Only by generating decent – and decently paid – employment can we help the poor and vulnerable to escape poverty traps and build resilience,” remarked Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UNSG), on 2 July at the High-Level opening of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Participants called for strengthened partnerships and improved coherence and coordination at all levels. The Annual Ministerial Review focused on productive employment and decent work to sustain inclusive and equitable economic growth towards eradicating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Its outcomes reflect consensus-building among diverse stakeholders to address inter-linked challenges during major events of the year – the UNCTAD, Rio+20 and the International Labour Conference (ILC) – and a series of regional preparatory meetings. They will help further mainstream the Decent Work Agenda in the whole UN system. ECOSOC is the primary UN organ for discussing social and economic affairs, and forming global policy agenda and recommendations on how to address current issues for its 54 Member States and the UN system. The High-level Segment, which is at the core of the Council’s deliberations, attracted over 500 senior representatives of government, international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

### **High-Level Segment**

In the Ministerial Declaration adopted during the High-level Segment, ECOSOC reiterated its commitment to embrace policies embodying the Global Jobs Pact, which provide a coherent response to the economic and financial crisis (para. 9). The signatories reaffirmed their commitment to promote opportunities for full, freely chosen and productive employment. They emphasized that effective policies should be formulated and implemented through inclusive processes, notably “broad-based social dialogue with worker’s and employers’ representatives” (para. 40). While multiple measures are needed to counter the effects of the jobs crisis in the short term, concerted action should lay ground for a sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth in the long term. Building on the achievements of the recent ILC, the Declaration stressed the importance of “providing social protection schemes for the formal and informal economy as instruments to achieve equity, inclusion and stability”, and of universal access to social protection systems (paras. 10, 24 and 27) including by establishing and maintaining nationally determined social protection floors in line with the ILO [Social Protection Floors Recommendation](#).

ECOSOC urged “all Governments to address the global challenge of youth employment by developing and implementing strategies and policies that provide young people everywhere with access to decent and productive work”, inter alia through increased investment, active labour market policies, sharing best practices and partnerships (paras. 36, 42 and 44). Effective government involvement is required to adopt forward-looking policies aimed at sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth; responding in particular to the needs of youth, rural populations and the poor. The Declaration called attention to the need to achieve international labour standards and to universally respect, promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work, in accordance with the 1998 ILO [Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) (paras. 30, 31).

In its initial contribution to the report, ILO stressed the importance of policies to boost productive capacities and decent work. ILO Director-General Juan Somavia stated in his [keynote address](#) that the focus of this Annual Ministerial Review is particularly timely and relevant. He suggested that global political concern over jobs can be a unifying theme for international cooperation.

Tackling youth employment and effective social protection should be seen as a vital ingredient to sustain aggregate demand and employment, enhance resilience to shocks and reduce poverty. Consequently, the Declaration stressed “the importance of keeping full and productive employment and decent work for all as a key cross-cutting theme on the UN agenda” and in the post-2015 development agenda discussions.

## Development Cooperation Forum

Conceived as a mechanism to respond to the new challenges in development cooperation, the 2012 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) catalysed exchanges of ideas and coherence seeking among the development actors under the umbrella of the UN. As the DCF met 5-6 July in the wake of Rio+20, the issue of sustainability in its economic, social and environmental dimensions, remained at the core of the discussions. Discussion around the post-2015 process, which is closely linked to Rio+20 and its call for “sustainable development goals”, dominated much of the debate. Key issues included the future of development cooperation, mutual accountability, and the growing importance of new development methods such as South-South and triangular cooperation, decentralized cooperation, and public-private partnerships. South-South cooperation – often seen as complementary to traditional forms of aid, and elsewhere presented as an altogether different modality – appears to fit diverging perceptions of developing, emerging and developed countries as well as development agencies.. Representatives of civil society and the global South sought an equal role for developing countries to determine their own development patterns and highlighted the need for mutual accountability frameworks, with an active role and enhanced responsibilities for countries of the South, civil society, social partners, private funds and foundations. The Operational Activities Segment of ECOSOC (13-17 July 2012) also stressed the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation, and governments from the South and the North emphasized the importance of this modality.

Reviewing the [Report of the Secretary-General on trends and progress in international development cooperation](#), Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, noted that in spite of progress on most Millennium Development Goals, the global partnership for development (Goal 8) was lagging behind. Yet several coalitions of interest and parallel discussions had been formed. At least four parallel processes, initiated by leading countries or cooperation agencies, have arisen from the post-2015 discussion: (i) the High Level Panel set up by the UNSG and chaired by the UK, Liberia and Indonesia; (ii) the UN intergovernmental process which is taking place in ECOSOC and the General Assembly; (iii) the Development Cooperation Forum meeting biannually since 2008; and (iv) the Global Partnership for Development Effectiveness launched in Busan in 2011 and presided over by the OECD and UNDP. Together they represent efforts to consolidate the priorities of diverse actors, jointly respond to challenges such as the risk of deepening recession along with high unemployment, and give strategic direction to the post-MDG development agenda.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss in depth a number of key issues at side events with a view to improving the quality and effectiveness of international policies. Youth employment, green jobs, gender, food security and rural development were particularly noteworthy. Traditional donor countries presented innovative ideas such as employment-generating interventions to develop the green economy, and encouraged emerging donors to take part in addressing development challenges through partnerships. A side event on “*Promoting Decent Work in Rural Areas for Achieving Food Security*” underlined that over half of the developing countries’ population live in rural areas and many in extreme poverty, so new and better job opportunities should form a part of development strategies to ensure food security and maintain labour productivity. In the context of the 2012 [International Year of Cooperatives](#), the UN-DESA, FAO and ILO meeting on “*Promoting Productive Capacity for Sustainable Livelihoods: the Role of Cooperatives*” pointed to the centrality of the State in creating an enabling legal and institutional environment. Cooperatives are important for enhancing productivity, competitiveness and bargaining power, particularly in the informal and rural economy. Still, their functioning needs to adapt to globalization, including through “virtual cooperatives” using social media.

In parallel, an event of the ILO and the US Government on “*Partnerships to tackle the Youth Employment Crisis*” shared the policy conclusions of the recent ILC [Report of the Committee on Youth Employment](#). An ILO–UN Women roundtable on “*Decent Work and Women’s Economic Empowerment: Good Policy and Practice*” debated enabling policies; e.g. for facilitating women’s access to financial services and leadership positions and enhancing their productive capacity, as well as labour and social protection. The ILO Director-General highlighted successful policies and deliverables, including the participatory gender audit, women’s entrepreneurship for development tools, the Maternity Protection Resource Package, gender-responsive youth employment policies, and the normative framework including the Domestic Workers Convention.

Based on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review ([QCPR](#)), the General Assembly should provide the UN system in the fall 2012 with a new policy direction to shape the post 2015 agenda-setting process at the country level. In the framework of the operational segment, the ECOSOC considered the findings of the [Report of the Secretary-General on the QCPR of the UN operational activities for development](#) and addressed paradigm shifts and funding of global development assistance..

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