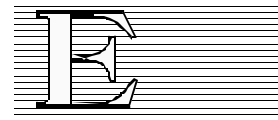




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FOLLOW-UP TO THE 2005 WORLD SUMMIT OUTCOME: ECA's RESPONSE

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005) reaffirms the key values and commitments of the United Nations, outlining a plan of action on a range of global challenges. In follow-up to the Summit Outcome, ECA has been closely involved in a number of United Nations-wide initiatives, including (i) preparations for a review of mandates, and (ii) review of programmes and priorities by UN economic and social entities coordinated by the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA). In addition to its involvement in these global level reform efforts, ECA has also launched some initiatives of its own to respond to the policy guidance contained in the World Summit Outcome. Following wide ranging consultations with ECA stakeholders, the Executive Secretary established a Task Force to review ECA's priorities and articulate a new strategic orientation for its work. The Task Force will also propose actionable recommendations in other key areas including strengthening partnerships with other organizations within and outside the UN system, including in particular, the African Union (AU) and African Development Bank (ADB); and strengthening management and other organizational processes towards a more results-oriented programme of work in support of the development efforts of member States.

The Commission is invited to review and provide its comments on the document.

Introduction

1. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1 of September 2005) has set a new work plan for the international community including the United Nations system by reaffirming the centrality of the MDGs and the global partnership required to achieve those goals. It also renewed commitments to the outcomes of the other UN conferences and summits, and address the current “implementation gaps”. The Summit Outcome as a whole provides comprehensive policy guidance for the ongoing work of the UN Secretariat and the wider UN system in four broad areas, namely development, including meeting the special needs of Africa; peace and security; human rights and the rule of law; and strengthening of the United Nations. All UN entities including the regional commissions have been requested to review their programme of work in light of this guidance.

2. For ECA, the Africa-specific issues and the other priorities related to development in the outcome document will have a significant impact in terms policy and programme re-orientation and resource utilization. The section on development expressed the unambiguous commitment of world leaders to ensure the full and timely realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, particularly through more ambitious national development strategies and efforts, backed by increased international support including that of the UN system. More than that, it emphasized the need to strengthen linkages between the UN’s normative work and its operational activities in support of national efforts for achieving the MDGs.

3. As regards Africa, the Summit Outcome highlighted several issues including the need for special measures to address the challenges of poverty reduction and sustainable development by promoting a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the external debt problems of African countries, building trade capacity to accelerate Africa’s integration into the international trading system, implementation of the NEPAD Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Plan; building peacekeeping capacity further, in cooperation with regional organizations; and providing assistance to strengthen the capacity of African countries in addressing HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

4. In his report to the General Assembly entitled, *Implementation of decisions from the 2005 World Summit Outcome for action by the Secretary-General (A/60/430 of 25 October 2005)*, the Secretary-General outlined a range of follow-up actions to be implemented by UN departments or entities. As an integral part of the United Nations Secretariat, ECA has been closely involved in a number of follow-up actions involving global coordination. These efforts have, in particular, focused on (i) the provision of inputs for the comprehensive review of mandates to be undertaken by the General Assembly (GA); (ii) close involvement, as part of the group of regional commissions, in the work of the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA) in response to the Summit Outcome; and (iii) provision of inputs to facilitate the work of the Secretary-General’s Panel on system-wide Coherence.

5. In addition to its involvement in follow -up efforts at the global level, the ECA secretariat has launched some policy initiatives of its own in order to reorient and reposition itself and improve on the delivery of its services to member States. In this connection, the Executive Secretary has established a Change Management Task Force to help redefine ECA’s priorities, improve cost-effectiveness, and identify key actions for strengthening management and other

organizational processes. The objectives and expected outcomes of the Task Force is contained in a separate note to be presented to this session of the Commission.

Review of mandates

6. The Summit Outcome asked the General Assembly and other relevant organs to review all mandates older than five years originating from resolutions of the General Assembly and other organs, which will be complementary to the existing periodic review of activities. The Secretary-General was requested to facilitate the review with analysis and recommendations, including on the opportunities for programmatic shifts, and submit it to the GA for consideration and decision by Member States. In response to this request, the Secretary-General directed the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive inventory and analysis of all mandates older than five years, including recent mandates as well in order to support the GA in updating and focusing the programme of work of the United Nations so that it responds to the contemporary requirements of Member States. In this connection, the Secretary-General also decided to postpone the finalization of the Strategic Framework for the biennium 2008-2009 until after the GA completes its review of mandates.

7. ECA, in close consultation with the other regional commissions undertook the assessment of mandates according to a common criteria agreed among the regional commissions. The information and data resulting from this assessment were entered into a global database established for this purpose. In addition, the Executive Secretary of ECA sent a cover note to the Secretary-General which highlighted the main outcomes of the exercise. The report noted that in recent years, ECA had significantly streamlined and rationalized its activities and structures including its mandates in response to the changing needs of its member States. The outcome of the most recent review in 2004 was taken into account in the preparation of the programme budget for 2006-2007, leading to the discontinuation of 160 outputs associated with low priority and obsolete mandates subsequent consolidation and redeployment of resources. Thus, the ECA programme of work and its outputs, as endorsed by the Commission's session and the General Assembly in 2005, already reflects activities and mandates of high priority.

8. The Secretary-General issued his report on mandate review in March 2006. The report was confined to mandates from three principal organs of the UN – the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and Security Council. A decision to extend the review to mandates emanating from subsidiary bodies such as the regional commissions will be made by the GA in due course. The report makes a number of important recommendations aimed at improving the existing architecture of reports to intergovernmental bodies, strengthening the link between mandates and resources and bringing about greater coherence in the work of the UN by streamlining existing mandates and better harmonization of activities. The report also called for suggestions and recommendations to Member States, in two areas relevant to Africa, namely promotion of sustainable growth and sustainable development and on the development of Africa. ECA is involved in the ongoing consultation within the context of EC-ESA to agree on how best to support Member States in their review of mandates.

UN response to the World Summit Outcome in the economic and social area

9. The Summit Outcome also reaffirmed the long-standing development role of the UN and its fundamental role in promoting the coherence, coordination and implementation of the development goals, within the UN system and in close cooperation with all other multilateral

financial, trade and development institutions. Accordingly, the Summit Outcome outlined a number of measures aimed at achieving greater coherence and intensifying the focus on the implementation and follow-up of the global conferences and summits, including establishing a unified implementation process by assigning substantial new functions to ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies including the regional commissions.

10. Addressing the wide range of recommendations related to economic and social development in the Summit Outcome implies a challenge to all UN economic and social entities to identify opportunities for closer collaboration and more integrated and coherent policies and actions in maximizing the overall contribution of the UN system to the international development agenda. In this connection, the Secretary-General requested the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to coordinate the review of programmes and priorities of their respective entities to ensure a coherent response to the Summit Outcome. Both Committees responded to this request.

11. The UNDG has developed an Action Plan for 2006-2008 which contains actions to scale up UN support to implement the MDGs at the country level. The plan also makes specific proposals for improving mechanisms for tapping the technical capacities of the UN system at the regional and subregional levels including the utilization of the analytical and normative capacities of the regional commissions and similar organizations not represented at the country level for the CCA/UNDAF process. EC-ESA has welcomed the initiative and will seize the opportunity to work more closely with UNDG in order to strengthen the linkages between the system's normative work and its operational activities, as called for in the Summit Outcome.

12. On its part, EC-ESA adopted a two-pronged approach in responding to the Secretary-General's request. First, its members came together to exchange views on common approaches and developed a common framework to guide the review of the Summit's implications in their respective entities, and the resulting realignment of priorities and programmes. Second, eleven task forces bringing together programme managers from EC-ESA organizations on the main themes covered by the UN development agenda reviewed the challenges and opportunities emanating from the Summit in their respective areas of work. They sought to identify shifts in priorities that the Summit demanded in the work of their respective entities, agree on modalities for deepening cooperation among the entities, and develop new joint initiatives in response to the Summit outcome.

13. Across development sectors, a number of priority areas emerged from the review as requiring a renewed joint effort from EC-ESA entities to enable the UN to respond effectively to the thrust and new emphases reflected in the Summit Outcome. These include supporting the elaboration of national strategies to implement the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs; financing for development; implementing the development dimensions of the Doha work programme; promoting productive employment and decent work; gender mainstreaming; science and technology for development; water; energy and its linkage with climate change; Science and technology for development; migration; post conflict peace-building and development. An important cross-cutting priority for all entities is to strengthen collective support to ECOSOC in its new functions, notably the ministerial reviews of progress in the implementation of the international development agenda and the new Development Cooperation Forum.

14. ECA, as a member of EC-ESA has been closely involved in the above-mentioned processes and contributed to the joint proposal submitted by the regional commissions on measures to improve the functioning and role of EC-ESA as an instrument for strengthening policy coherence, aligning the work of the eleven thematic clusters more closely to the proposal to the priorities in the Summit Outcome and strengthening collaboration between EC-ESA and UNDG in support of the UN development agenda.

Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, and the environment

15. The implications of the World Summit Outcome for the UN are many. Besides requiring that UN organizations adjust their priorities and programmes to carry forward the new commitments, the Summit demands stronger system-wide coherence across the various development-related agencies, funds and programmes of the UN. In addition to supporting current, ongoing reforms at building a more effective, coherent and better performing UN country presence, the Summit specifically requested the Secretary-General to launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of UN operational activities, including proposals for “more tightly managed entities” in the field of the environment, humanitarian assistance and development. In response to this request, the Secretary-General commissioned a high-level panel of prominent and experienced international figures from within and outside the UN system, to develop concrete and comprehensive analysis in this regard. The panel is expected to complete its work by June 2006, to allow for formal presentation of its recommendations to the next session of the General Assembly in September 2006 and possible implementation in 2007.

16. The overarching objective of the study is to examine options for the rationalization of UN operational activities to maximize available resources for relief and development and minimize costs. As such, the study will explore ways of fully exploiting synergies between work and the operational activities of the system. It will also address how the UN system works and can best exercise its comparative advantage with other partners such as the Bretton Woods institutions, the European Union and other regional actors, donors, civil society and the private sector. While the primary focus of the study is to increase impact at the country level, in making proposals for improved management, coordination and effectiveness, the study will also make recommendations with regard to linkages in the work of the UN at the global, regional and country levels. The work of the panel is intended to lay the groundwork for a fundamental restructuring of UN operational activities in the environmental, humanitarian and development fields.

17. The core UN entities in the economic and social fields have provided inputs and suggestions to the panel and its secretariat in support of their work. The five regional commissions including ECA have also come together to adopt a common strategic approach in responding to concerns about their future role in a reformed architecture of development cooperation, particularly as it relates to their technical cooperation activities. In this regard, it was agreed that the regional commissions seek the political support of the G 77 countries, and make a strong case to the Panel for strengthening the regional dimension in UN operational activities for development based on the following unique comparative advantages:

- The dual role of the RCs as regional outposts of the UN and as part of their respective regional institutional landscape which enables them to serve as a bridge between the national and global levels, in particular by providing regional

perspectives to global level processes, and translating global commitments to the regional level through regional action plans in support of country-level implementation.

- Their unparalleled convening power which allows them to bring together a wide range of stakeholders at various levels to reach consensus on key development issues;
- A distinctive capacity to link their normative and operational activities in strengthening national capacities in key sectoral areas where they have acquired deep expertise and have specific mandate;
- A unique capacity in bringing regional and transboundary perspectives into national policy making, and fostering regional cooperation and integration

ECA's response to the World Summit Outcome and other initiatives

18. In addition to its involvement in the UN system-wide reform efforts described above, ECA also launched some important initiatives of its own in response to the World Summit Outcome. Most notably, the Executive Secretary established a Change Management Task Force to propose actionable recommendations for repositioning ECA and defining a new strategic orientation for its work within the context of the broader reform efforts currently underway in the UN. To that end, the Task Force has already undertaken extensive internal consultations, with the Divisions and received valuable feedback from individual staff members. In addition, the Executive Secretary has consulted widely – with member States, regional and subregional organizations, bilateral partners, UN agencies, as well as the staff of the Commission. The outcome of these consultations will inform the work of the Task Force. **The highlights of the work of the Task Force is provided in a separate note to be presented to the current session of the Commission.**