



## TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

### 2017 INTEGRATION SEGMENT

#### **“Making eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies: what will it take?”**

8 – 10 May 2017

### SUMMARY

#### Introduction

The 2017 Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council was held at United Nations Headquarters from 8 to 10 May 2017, focusing on the theme “Making the eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies: What will it take?”<sup>1</sup> In seven panel discussions, the Segment provided a platform for dialogue and exchange of views on lessons learned and recommendations for ways forward in policy integration for poverty eradication. It facilitated discussions between Member States, the UN system and other relevant stakeholders, offering policy recommendations to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition to the panelists, representatives of 22 Member States made statements during the general discussion of the Segment.<sup>2</sup> Many delegations reiterated their commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

#### Main messages from the 2017 Integration Segment

1. Policy integration for poverty eradication, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its monitoring and review remains a challenge. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that is not fully captured by income measures.
2. Capacity development is needed to strengthen statistical data collection, processing and analysis. Innovative approaches such as “Big Data” could provide real-time support to policy makers.
3. Empowering women, endowing rural communities and unlocking the potential of youth are critical.
4. Multi-stakeholder participation is integral to the success of poverty eradication initiatives.
5. Sustained political engagement and will are essential to turn positive trends into reductions in poverty.
6. Many tools exist that could support integrated policy making such as the nexus approach and network analysis technique.
7. Poverty eradication must be mainstreamed in the work of the United Nations system. A proposal was made for a UN interagency task force to provide guidance on policy integration and support national efforts towards poverty alleviation. ECOSOC could play a leadership role in this effort.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed information about the 2017 Integration Segment is available on the dedicated web page of the Segment: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/node/984039>

<sup>2</sup> Viet Nam, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador (for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), Ecuador (for the “Group of 77” developing countries and China), Turkey (for Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia), Grenada (on behalf of the Community of Caribbean Community), Philippines, Tajikistan, South Africa, Brazil, Ethiopia, Mexico, China, Thailand, Zimbabwe, Azerbaijan, Cameroon (on behalf of the Africa Group), Norway, Ireland, Algeria and Switzerland.



The Integration Segment is rooted in General Assembly resolution 68/1. Its main functions are to consolidate the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders and to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The Integration Segment brings together key messages from the Council system on its main theme and develops action-oriented recommendations on integrated policy making for poverty eradication.

The objectives of the 2017 Integration Segment were to: (1) provide a platform for key stakeholders to identify and discuss opportunities and challenges in developing integrated approaches to tackling poverty in a sustained, inclusive and sustainable way; (2) consider national experiences, best practices and lessons learned on integrated policymaking for poverty eradication; and (3) extract policy recommendations to guide integrated policymaking for poverty eradication as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. A Conference Room Paper reflecting the inputs received was made available as a background to the discussion.<sup>3</sup>

### **An integrated agenda towards achieving SDG1**

In his opening address, the Vice-President of the Council, H.E. Mr Nabeel Munir (Pakistan) noted that poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that must be addressed in all its dimensions, with the engagement of all stakeholders through effective partnerships.

Participants highlighted the importance of social inclusion. In order to leave no one behind, empowering women economically and politically, as well as properly educating and training youth and protecting smallholder farmers against disasters and other risks were deemed fundamental to the shared goal of eradicating poverty and fostering sustainable and inclusive development.

Employment generation is another way to guarantee inclusion. In Egypt, for instance, over 1/3 of the population classifies as poor, in spite of a 6% annual economic growth rate. Social protection, social justice and employment generation, through programmes such as Takaful and Karama, are key to translating economic growth into poverty eradication. Social inclusion can also be reinforced through microfinance, as demonstrated by the work of the Al Tadamun Microfinance Foundation. At the global level, the United Nations is using its convening power through the *Global initiative on decent jobs for youth*, a system-wide effort to tackle the challenge of youth unemployment. This highlights the need for multi-stakeholder approaches to poverty eradication, in order to leverage the expertise and comparative advantages of different actors. Integration lies not in the dilution of expertise but rather in better coordination mechanisms.

Tackling poverty in an integrated manner requires measurements of progress that go beyond GDP. In her keynote address, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, stressed the importance of an enhanced evidence base for policy making. In order to maximize the constructive interaction and synergies between the SDGs and their targets, capacity for policy integration needs to be developed. Scientific research, including through universities, is required to establish baselines on which integrated policies can be designed. As there are currently no indicators to measure policy integration, it was also suggested that a UN task force be set up to guide policy integration both conceptually and in delivery, at the global, regional and national levels.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/integration/2017/conference-room-paper.pdf>

## Policy Integration Across Borders

In most governmental structures, water, energy, land, agriculture and food production are managed by different agencies. However, these sectors are physically, economically and socially related, especially in sustaining people's livelihoods. The "nexus" approach promotes the links between these areas. The cross-boundary nature of such issues, as well as the magnitude of resources needed for initial investments, mean that solutions for developing them cannot be limited to the national level.

To promote sustainable development, regional policies need to be developed that are aligned with international policies. Panellists noted the role of the UN Regional Commissions in supporting policy integration efforts to eradicate poverty in a cross-boundary manner. To that end, analytical frameworks should be developed further to analyze the interlinkages between the different dimensions of poverty and their impact on different policies, sectors and sub-sectors. At the same time, coordination is required with actors implementing poverty reduction strategies on the ground to identify best ways to operationalize integrated approaches. Nexus approaches should be harnessed to overcome disciplinary boundaries, such as connecting natural resource managers with health experts for example. Data disaggregation and statistical capacity are crucial to quantify spillover effects at the regional level and design evidence-based policies. The regional sustainable development fora, supported by the Regional Commissions, provide Member States with an opportunity to share knowledge and to provide expertise on goals that require harmonized cross-border approaches.

## National Experiences

Concrete national case studies were used to showcase institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms, policy initiatives, as well as strategic approaches to policy integration.

- *Institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms*

In the *Maldives*, a national steering committee brings together all actors within the government to engage in a national dialogue process to identify gaps and mainstream focus areas across key sectors.

To foster integration across the three dimensions of sustainable development in policy making, *Kenya* has introduced groups of stakeholders that bring together relevant actors to strengthen coordination.

The Government of Sri Lanka made a matrix of all activities of government departments against each SDG and applied network analysis techniques to actionable policies, which highlighted interlinkages and gaps between policies.

- *Policy initiatives*

*Finland* is conducting a basic income experiment to measure the effect of basic income policies on work incentives and the unemployment rate. This is a pilot study using a randomly selected group and the results will be analysed to determine next steps.

In *Brazil*, the Zero Hunger policy framework was created to integrate various programmes promoting agriculture, nutrition, health and education. Social protection schemes like the Bolsa Familia cash transfer were combined with a variety of programmes, such as support for smallholder farmers and school meals. The implementation of the programme highlighted the importance of conducive socio-

political conditions: political traction, inter-sectoral coordination, and institutional capacity. These include: internal integration around shared values, policy preferences and expected outcomes; social and political embedding with support from citizens, social groups, and the government; and the strong presence of a reference institution to guarantee centrality in the integrated policy network and influence over sectoral policies. The Brazilian experience also exemplified the role of the United Nations in supporting integrated policy making through the establishment of joint policy centres.

- Strategic Approaches

*Peru's* long-term national framework for poverty reduction was based on poverty reduction strategies that went beyond income generation to include infrastructure, health, information and communication technology, trade, agriculture, mining and other sectors in an integrated framework.

*Pakistan* has adopted the *Vision 2025* strategy which reflects a holistic view of anti-poverty efforts and a customized multidimensional poverty index. Institutional coordination is also being strengthened to better focus resources and efforts.

*Mexico* has launched a national inclusion strategy as a joint effort of the Government, local authorities, the business sector, academia and civil society. Sustained leadership at the highest levels allows for coordination through a whole-of-government approach and to maximize interdependencies.

### **Policy instruments for an integrated approach to poverty eradication**

This session explored innovative instruments used for poverty eradication, as well as the policy environment and capacities that are necessary for their effective deployment.

At the international level, the importance of integrating all sustainable development frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the COP 21 agreement, and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, was emphasized. Regional roadmaps are also to be taken into account, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). Other processes such as the Multi-stakeholder forum on Science, Technology and Innovation were also seen as crucial means to support integrated policy making for poverty eradication.

At the national level, panellists stressed the importance of political will and a focus on longer-term objectives. Policies should encourage constructive behaviour from all stakeholders through incentives rather than enforcement. Sustainable development policies should also be tied to government budgets, rather than confined to a particular ministry. It was also deemed important to align domestic and international policies towards the SDGs and sustainable development as well as to involve local authorities at the subnational level.

Furthermore, integrated policy-making must be informed by people themselves. Citizens must be involved in planning, implementing and monitoring their own development agenda. This requires a flexible institutional mechanism, with adequate resources, to provide financial and administrative support and for the establishment of independent, non-governmental and national-level stakeholder organizations.

This session also presented big data as an innovative way to gather immediate, real-time information to guide policies and actions in all areas of sustainable development. In order to manage the risks associated with the use of big data, it is necessary to invest in public data science research. It is also critical to build institutional capacity and advanced regulation in order to better integrate new data and reinforce anonymization and data sharing standards.

### **Eradicating poverty in Africa**

The opportunities and challenges of Africa and the variety of complex situations that confront the continent were addressed in this discussion. It highlighted efforts to adopt an integrated approach to poverty eradication against a backdrop of economic growth, climate change impacts, political fragility and structural constraints. The discussion also addressed the alignment of Agenda 2063 with the 2030 Agenda.

Rapid economic growth has provided fertile grounds for the achievement of SDG1. Nevertheless, positive trends have not yet translated into sustainable poverty reduction on the continent. One key challenge of integrated policy making is to target policies on poverty drivers, most notably unemployment. Planning is a key prerequisite for policy integration, with the support of improved capacity in data gathering and analysis. For instance, a Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics was adopted in South Africa (SHaSA) to support policy making. In addition to international support, mutual capacity building can happen at the continental level. For example, the Africa Symposium on Statistical Development has brought together statistical offices from across Africa to exchange lessons learned and improve processes and approaches to adapt to new trends.

Africa is rich in natural resources, which has brought significant wealth albeit highly concentrated in narrow sectors of the economy and society. A more integrated approach is needed in order to create more resilient and productive economies and inclusive societies. Three strategic approaches were presented that could foster development in Africa: (1) Fast-tracking agricultural and rural development; (2) Stimulating industrialization and value-addition in the agro-industry to foster growth; and (3) Strengthening trade policies to reap the benefits of open trade. A coherent regional approach to infrastructure development must be considered to support trade across the continent. It was also deemed important to target the informal economy and to improve the business environment.

A new paradigm is needed with regards to resource mobilization. A balance must be struck between encouraging foreign investments and safeguarding workers' rights. It was suggested that the African Union's Peer Review Mechanism could be broadened and strengthened so as to better address illicit financial flows, among other critical issues. Fostering fair global economic and financial systems was also deemed a prerequisite for sustainable development in Africa. The UN system has an important role to play in this regard. One way of achieving this is to upgrade the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

Finally, sustainable financing models need to be developed, given the reductions in ODA and other sources of financing. Droughts and famines and the impact of climate change in Africa provide a further sense of urgency. ODA commitments must be met, and used in a catalytic manner together with domestic resource mobilization and the development of innovative finance mechanisms.

## Bringing the ECOSOC System together

Representatives of Functional Commissions and other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council presented highlights of the conclusions of their respective bodies on the overall theme of the Council and of the Segment. Speakers showcased the breadth of unresolved challenges for achieving the SDGs, building on the expertise that the Functional Commissions can bring to the Council in addressing the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment, persons with disabilities, youth unemployment, ageing, and the demographic dividend. There have been significant advances in lifting people out of poverty, yet there are many risks that could reverse these gains, including high dependencies on natural resources and informal activity, as well as vulnerability to shocks, such as economic or financial shocks or weather-related events.

Making the ECOSOC system work in support of the implementation of the SDGs will be crucial for governments as well as for entities of the UN system. Some ways need to be found to strengthen cooperation and collaboration across Functional Commissions, including better aligning working cycles of the Commissions to guide policy making by Member States. These issues can also be brought to the High-level Political Forum.

## Fostering Partnerships

The meeting participants discussed the role of partnerships at local, national, regional and international levels, in furthering poverty reduction objectives within integrated frameworks.

Multi-stakeholder participation (including citizens) and sustained leadership are important for ownership and, ultimately, the success of poverty eradication initiatives. For the business community, entering into partnerships with non-governmental organizations in least developed countries has helped to re-invest funds into communities. It was noted that trust is an essential element for effective and strategic partnerships, including public-private partnerships and innovative models of collaboration. To that end, roles, responsibilities and results need to be clarified.

## Closing session

The Vice-President of the Council noted that the 2017 Integration Segment had reinforced the need to empower women, educate youth and protect smallholder farmers. He called on the United Nations to intensify efforts to promote multilateralism, underscoring the role of Regional Commissions in supporting policy integration. He observed that a paradigm shift was needed to mobilize resources for African development.

In his closing remarks, the Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs stressed the importance of maintaining a universal dialogue. Integrated approaches offer the opportunity to maximize synergies between economic, social and environmental dimensions. He cautioned that social policies alone could not bring forth solutions, calling for a mix of well-integrated policies to fully address poverty. Fiscal, monetary, financial, trade, industrial and labour policies all have an impact on poverty and inequality, underscoring the need to streamline the fight against poverty by aligning practices globally and nationally.

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