

ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Delivering the 2030 Agenda: The role of the UN development system in middle-income countries

26 May 2016, ECOSOC Chamber

CONCEPT NOTE

Mandates

Paragraph 65 of the 2030 Agenda and paragraphs 71 and 72 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize that middle-income countries still face significant challenges to achieve sustainable development, and that methodologies must be devised to better account for their complex and diverse realities. Paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 70/215 calls for the QCPR to “give due consideration to ways in which the United Nations development system could improve its support to different country contexts, including how to provide efficient, effective, better-focused and better-coordinated support to middle-income countries” and “invites the Economic and Social Council to discuss, inter alia, concrete proposals to this effect in the ongoing process of dialogues of the Council on the long-term positioning of the United Nations development system”.

Objectives

In line with the provisions of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and in compliance with General Assembly resolution 70/215, ECOSOC is convening an event dedicated to the role of the UN development system in response to the diversified needs and priorities of middle-income countries.

Discussions over the course of the event will aim to (i) identify the diversity of middle-income countries and the action priorities of the UN development system to respond to their existing and emerging challenges; (ii) look at ways to deal with the growing capacities and yet persistent gaps in MICs; (iii) further advance system-wide efforts to ensure the necessary and appropriate support to eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, working closely with national governments.

Background

The universal nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its promise to leave no one behind, requires that the United Nations development system should address the needs and priorities of all country contexts while at the same time adapting and diversifying its approach according to specific country needs.

Advances in addressing the social, economic and environmental challenges at global level have led to notable progress around the world, with an increasing number of countries graduating from low-income and many more moving from being mere recipients of aid to agents of change, both within and across their country and regional contexts.

The 2030 Agenda also called for ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions. Yet, over 70 per cent of the global poor currently live in middle-income countries with limited access to ODA. Different forms of inequality are deepening political, economic and social divides. Structural, environmental and demographic challenges risk reversing achievements so far. In addition, the use of national averages based on criteria such as per capita income do not capture specific circumstances, development needs and capacities.

The 2016 report of the Secretary-General on the QCPR and the 2016 ECOSOC Segment on Operational Activities for Development acknowledged the growing capacities and differentiated needs of middle-income countries and called for targeted action to address the paradox of improvements in economic growth and rising pockets of poverty, increasing inequality, and gaps such as in human capital, technology, and in productive and decent employment, particularly for the increasingly large youth populations in these countries.

The discussions in the context of the ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system stressed the need for individual “tailor-made” approaches by the system that reflect the specific circumstances of every country. Discussions also noted that ODA remains essential to realize the potential of some middle-income countries. A multidimensional approach to poverty that addresses the problem in all its aspects is critical to identify and better understand these specific circumstances and needs.

The outcome of the event will be a summary by the Vice President of ECOSOC. The event will contribute to the ongoing debates of the ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN development system, and will inform the QCPR process unfolding over the course of 2016.

The event will be convened under the leadership of the Vice President of ECOSOC for Operational Activities for Development, H.E. Mr. Hector Alejandro Palma Cerna, and will be held on 26 May 2016, from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, at the United Nations headquarters, in the ECOSOC Chamber. All Member State delegations, UN system entities and civil society representatives in possession of a valid UN ground pass are invited to attend.