



## Video

### Disabilities convention: An extraordinary accomplishment

Sha Zukang, DESA Under-Secretary-General, joined Ambassadors Espinosa of Ecuador, Mansour of Tunisia, and Al-Allaf of Jordan on 4 April to mark the twentieth ratification of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The treaty is deeply rooted in the UN vision of "a just and peaceful world," noted Sha, with better standards of life in larger freedom for all. The Convention enters into force on 3 May.

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2008/pc080404.rm> (57 minutes)

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## Feature articles

### Scarcity amid plenty

*The current surge in commodity prices threatens millions with hunger though there is enough food for everyone*

The recent spike in food prices has mobilized political efforts at the highest levels worldwide. The rise in prices represents fundamental underlying shifts in the supply and demand for food, rather than a mere transitory fluctuation. Most importantly, rising food prices put at risk the livelihoods and nutrition of people living in poverty, who spend up to 60 percent of their incomes on food alone, thereby further compromising efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Each year until 2015, there must be 31 million fewer hungry people in the world if the goals agreed by the World Food Summit and reaffirmed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Declaration are to be achieved. Of course not all countries face equal challenges, and many risk being left behind in the fight against hunger. Those that face the most serious difficulties and need to make the largest efforts are often those that have the least means to do so. Addressing the food challenge calls for urgent and concerted political and economic action across the world.

#### Food prices in perspective

In recent decades, the issue of food was seen above all as an access issue. The general perception was there was enough food supply. The problem was ensuring equitable access to it by all, particularly those living in poverty who could not afford a basic food basket. In fact the global food prices had

declined by over 75 percent from 1974 to 2005. Food prices were not perceived as the main problem. Recent developments in the world economy, however, have fundamentally changed the dynamics of food markets.

The long-term decline in food prices was aided by cheap energy from a low price of oil, which had kept down transport costs and input costs, particularly those of fertilizers. All of this changed starting in 2005, particularly as energy prices have surged. Food prices have again returned to their 1974 levels and threaten to rise higher still unless urgent political and economic action is taken across the globe.

### How did this happen?

Behind the dramatic surge in food prices lie six major causes: the adverse weather for crops, steep rise in oil prices, speculation in foodstuffs, increasing use of grains to make biofuels, the strong growth of meat consumption and the prevailing inadequate agricultural policies around the world.

Climate change has led to severe weather conditions for agriculture since 2005, with dry weather and droughts in wheat producing areas such as Canada, Argentina, Australia and India, heavy rains in the United States and Southern Africa. Adverse weather conditions have shifted back the supply of basic foodstuffs such as wheat, corn and rice.

Since 2005, the price of a barrel of oil has tripled from \$40 to \$120, driving up the costs of transporting and storing inputs for agriculture and the harvested products themselves, and the costs of fertilizers and operating costs of farm machinery. The rise in oil prices results in part from the growing demand in emerging economies.

The futures markets for foodstuffs have provoked a speculative bubble as investors have moved funds into commodity futures to hedge against the decline of the US dollar. Investors are betting on the continued rise of food prices in the face of supply constraints. The decline of the dollar against all major currencies has also cushioned the impact of rising commodity prices and maintained high import demand for them.

The rising prosperity in emerging economies in particular has led to an increase in the consumption of meat. Meat production places a disproportionate pressure on prices of grain as livestock feed and also on water resources as compared to the production of grain for human consumption. Policy measures and

consumer commitment to limit meat consumption in favour of more sustainable food sources would greatly temper the rise in grain and other food prices and spare other natural resources such as forests and water.



### A new green revolution needed

Prevailing agricultural policies have compounded the above factors and deserve special attention because the power to change them to address the current food crisis lies in the hands of Governments and other stakeholders. “The MDG challenge has been complicated by the alarming rise in global food prices,” warned the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, at the opening of UNCTAD XII in Accra, Ghana on 21 April.

High prices, he added, threaten to undo the gains achieved so far in fighting hunger and malnutrition. They call for a substantial increase in investment and expenditure in agriculture. And they underscore the importance of pushing for an open trading system in agricultural commodities – which would benefit countries around the world. In particular, he concluded, trade and investment should be used to bring about a new green revolution of improved agricultural productivity across Africa.

The timely meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development from 5 to 18 May addresses in large measure the issue of agriculture and rural development and how it has been affected by public policies and strategies and what might be done in the future, particularly in the light of the current food crisis.

In his report to the Commission on agriculture, the Secretary-General points out that with enough food produced in the world, more than 850 million people still suffer from chronic hunger. Despite a decline in rural poverty over the past 10 years, still there are an

estimated 883 million rural poor, the vast majority of whom depend on agriculture for their survival and livelihoods. With global population projected to grow to 9 billion people by 2050, mostly in the developing world, food production will have to expand, perhaps even double, to meet growing world demand.

At the same time, new uncertainties and factors such as climate change, high energy prices and resource scarcities, along with globalization, urbanization and changing consumption and market trends, including the new surge in world agricultural prices, increase the challenges faced by agriculture. In all these efforts, the role of farmers and other rural stakeholders is critical. It is therefore timely that attention is turning again to the role of agriculture as a crucial sector in national, regional and international efforts to reduce hunger and poverty, to improve rural livelihoods and to achieve sustainable development.

### Economic policy

Around the world, economic policy has favoured urban development and industry at the expense of rural development and agriculture. As a result, domestic public expenditures by countries in their agricultural sectors have declined as a share of total public spending, from 11.3 percent in 1980 to 6.7 percent in 2002. In Africa, a region where the food crisis is particularly acute, countries have committed under the 2003 Maputo Declaration to a 6 percent annual growth in food production by 2015, and to allocate at least 10 percent of national budgetary resources by 2008-2009 towards agriculture and rural development. The goal is still far off. In 2004, African countries spent only 4 percent of their budgets on agriculture.

Agricultural policies in the industrial countries have acted for decades as a constraint to the growth of food supply in developing countries. It is essential, therefore, that international action resolve the obstacles in the Doha Round of WTO trade negotiations regarding the removal of agricultural subsidies on both domestic and export prices. As the Secretary-General cautioned at the closing of UNCTAD XII, "we cannot be for free and fair trade in the midst of a global trading system rife with unjustified tariffs and subsidies."

The food crisis has moved up high on the agenda of the United Nations both at intergovernmental and the Secretariat level. At the April meeting of the Chief Executives Board, chaired by the Secretary-General, executive heads of the UN system agreed on concrete Secretariat-level actions within their authority to

address the crisis. The Economic and Social Council has decided to hold a high-level meeting on the food crisis in May. The FAO will convene a high-level conference on food security in Rome from 3 to 5 June, and the General Assembly and the Security Council will hold also high-level meetings to address the crisis in June. Outside the United Nations, the G-8 meeting in July will also devote an important part of its agenda to addressing the world food situation.

The political will has clearly been mobilized and is gathering considerable steam. However, the resolution of the food crisis will depend on the behaviour of billions of consumers and producers the world over whose actions collectively determine the demand and supply for foodstuffs and the course of prices in food markets. Ultimately, it is only by placing the world on a path of sustainable consumption and production patterns with a view to achieving sustainable development that the food crisis will be solved in a lasting manner beneficial to current and future generations and to the planet.

*For more information:*

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm>

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon discusses the food crisis and development during an open lecture in Geneva on 29 April. "Trade, economic growth, social progress and even political security" are at risk.*



<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/on-demand/specialevents/sg/sg080429geneva-orig.rm> (1 hour and 53 minutes)

## UN public administration celebrates six decades of achievement

*While societies and technology have changed since 1946, good government is as relevant as ever*

Since the birth of the United Nations, Member States have looked to the organization as a standard setter and substantive resource for public service and public administration. The international civil service was itself modelled on the best practices in public management from around the world, as a beacon to others with the principles of integrity, accountability, transparency and diversity at its core.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations programme on public administration and development, which was intended to respond to the needs of Member States in norm setting and capacity development. The programme has come a long way since 1948 when it was created by the General Assembly. Overall, the UN membership has benefited from this well-established programme, noted Léo Mérores, President of the Economic and Social Council, at the April session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, underlining in particular its knowledge sharing and capacity building activities.

The United Nations has always placed a strong emphasis on international cooperation to promote economic and social development for human well-being and as a foundation for international peace and security. In the early years of the organization, effective public administration was identified as a means to promote economic and social development. From its very first session at Westminster's Central Hall in 1946, the General Assembly mandated the organization to provide technical assistance to national public entities in various economic and social fields, as an important form of support to its Member States.

### Changing with the times

The General Assembly, following on its resolution 200 (III) of 1948, decided to build activities for strengthening public administration into all development programmes of the United Nations. This led to its approval, the next year, of the expanded programme of technical assistance, including all the public administration activities that were originally authorized in the 1948 resolution. In the six decades

since then, the role of the public administration programme has evolved significantly, as the organization and its membership have grown and changed.

During this period, we have witnessed sea changes in the world, moving from East-West confrontation to greater international partnerships and cooperation. We have also seen rapid economic development, science and technology development, innovation and their application, globalization and so on. Additionally, the use of information and communications technologies as a tool for development and for improvement of governance and public administration has become a common feature.

Changing realities have shaped the public debate on public administration, and lessons learned from public administration have, in turn, informed the debate. This is the context in which the contribution of the UN programme in public administration and development can best be understood. The programme has largely set the agenda on public administration at the global level and continues to do so.

### Achievements and challenges

The programme set up at least 14 national public administration institutions in newly independent states in the 1960s and 1970s which flourish to this day. They are Brazil (1952), United Arab Republic (1954), Argentina (1955), Ethiopia (1956), Libya (1957), Laos (1959), Colombia (1960), Sudan (1960), Ghana (1961), Somalia (1964), Yemen (1964), Libya (1967) and Niger (1968). The programme also helped establish another eight such institutions at the regional and sub-regional levels – in Turkey and the Middle East (PAITME), Central America (ESAPAC), Africa (CAFRAD), Latin America (CLAD), Asia (ACDA), the Arab States Region (ARADO), East Africa (EACMDI) and Eastern Europe (ICPE). Many of these institutions are still active and working in partnership with the programme.

Throughout the 1980s, the Group of Experts in Public Administration and Finance, the predecessor to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, grappled with the questions surrounding the public sector fiscal crises and debt defaults. The Group sought to advise on how public administration could diminish the negative impact of austerity measures so as to promote people-centred development. The Group stressed that public administrations should work more in partnership with the private sector and

civil society, within a larger framework of public governance.

During the 1990s, as a series of UN world conferences and summits emerged on the interconnected dimensions of development, the General Assembly dedicated its 50<sup>th</sup> resumed session, in 1996, to public administration and development. At the session, Member States reaffirmed that the promotion of social justice, equity and equal access to quality services and productive assets, participatory mechanisms, and strengthened public administration and financial management capacities are all essential for sustainable development.

The Millennium Summit served to crystallize the set of internationally agreed development goals that has emerged from the conferences and summits, with governance and civic engagement among the key cross-cutting issues. Since then, the programme has intensified its focus on the public administration and governance components of the United Nations Development Agenda, which represents the synthesis of the internationally agreed development goals.

#### Public administration today

The programme pools and facilitates access to information, promotes research and training, facilitates advocacy and exchange of experiences, and provides technical advisory and capacity-building services, in support of national development strategies. To support these efforts, the General Assembly, in 2002, endorsed UNPAN, the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance. In 2003, the Assembly also mandated the UN Public Service Day and Awards, and UN support to the Global Forum on Reinventing Government.

The contributions of the programme cannot be fully separated from those of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, which provides the United Nations valuable expertise and advice on strengthening governance and public administration for development. Although established in 2002, the Committee has its roots in the Group of Experts created in 1967. During its seventh session in April, the Committee focused especially on state capacity-development. With the spiralling costs of life's necessities, such as food and energy, and projected downturns of many economies, the strengthening of state capacity to deal with development and emergencies is as relevant today as ever.



According to Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, “Public administration continues to provide the foundation for maintaining confidence in the stability and continuity of the state.” It also enhances professionalism and integrity to buttress impartiality, legality and transparency which are critical to effective governance.

In the years to come, the United Nations will further disseminate new practices and tools to improve governance and public administration capacity, such as public management techniques and e-government applications, and will do more to assist Member States in building those intrinsic capacities of the state that ensure its effectiveness in public service and ultimate accountability to citizens.

*For more information:*  
<http://www.unpan.org/dpepa.asp>

## Global dialogue on development

### ECOSOC to take up emerging food crisis

The President of the Economic and Social Council has announced plans to hold a special meeting next month to sharpen the UN response to the growing food crisis. The meeting, scheduled to take place on 23 May in New York, is being organized by DESA's Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in close collaboration with FAO, IFAD, WFP and other key stakeholders. Council President, Léo Mérorès, has indicated his intention to issue a ten-point action plan to minimize the impact of rising food prices around the world.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26351>



*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and other executive heads of UN agencies brief the press in Geneva on 30 April on the global food crisis.*

[http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/onde/mand/specialevents/sg/sg080429\\_geneva\\_press-orig.rm](http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/onde/mand/specialevents/sg/sg080429_geneva_press-orig.rm) (46 minutes)

## Sustainable development spotlight on agriculture, land resources

*Commission on Sustainable Development gets underway in New York on 5 May with a focus on land matters*

The Commission on Sustainable will hold its sixteenth session in New York from 5-16 May. This year, the Commission will work toward identifying the barriers and constraints, as well as the lessons learned and best practices, in six thematic issues: agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa. Close to 1,000 representatives from 95 major groups have registered for the session, and the high-level segment is expected to be attended by a large number of ministers.

Two parallel plenary sessions will be held during the first week, including expert panels, regional discussions and thematic discussions focusing on linkages among issues. The high-level segment promotes ministerial interactive dialogue focusing on how to make a difference in the context of the given themes and to make the way forward.

A day for small island developing States will be convened on 12 May to consider progress towards sustainable development of island nations within the framework of this year's thematic cluster. A general debate on the review of Mauritius Strategy of Implementation as well as two panel discussions will be held. Sessions for the review of previous Commission decisions on water and sanitation will be organized on 12 and 13 May, which will include interactive discussions led by panelists.

In addition, the popular partnerships fair and learning centre will return for another year. The partnership fair will include interactive discussions as well as presentations and information desks. The learning centre will continue to offer a wide selection of courses related to the current Commission themes. Nineteen courses have been scheduled covering such issues as agriculture financing in Africa, capacity building for sustainable rural development, linking sustainable land management and climate change and innovative technologies for water resources management.

There are also many requests for side events sponsored by governments, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm>

## Doha review session on international trade

*Last thematic review session on the Monterrey Consensus to unfold 19-20 May in New York*

The General Assembly will hold its sixth and final review session in preparation for the Doha review conference on the Monterrey Consensus in November. On 19 and 20 May, the theme of international trade as an engine of development will be covered. International trade was also an important subject of discussion at the recent high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton

Woods institutions, the WTO and UNCTAD, held in New York on 14 April.

In his statement to delegates, the Secretary-General noted that it was particularly important for middle-income countries to be integrated into the world trade system. As for the least developed countries, trade could best benefit development if they diversified their exports, particularly given the high volatility of prices for primary products. Diversification and capacity-building required increased investment and technology transfer from donors and, for that reason, support for aid-for-trade schemes should be bolstered. In addition, innovative and robust regulation was needed to keep up with and sustain the enormous economic growth of recent years.

Léo Mérorès, President of the Council, said new initiatives on financing for development could play a crucial role in increasing and complementing existing official development assistance. "In a true partnership for development, developed and developing countries have come together to explore further innovative ways of financing for development," he said, adding that the Council could play an important role in strengthening that international cooperation.

Despite the progress already achieved, many middle-income countries continued to face challenges to the alleviation of poverty and inequality, the improvement of trade competitiveness and the building of solid infrastructures. Greater international cooperation could help resolve some of those issues in the future.

Describing trade as one of the most important factors in the development process, Petko Draganov, President of UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board, stressed that in order to make trade work to finance development, countries needed to put the right policies in place as they built their productive capacities and competitiveness.

*Based on UN press release ECOSOC/6328. For more information: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>*

## Urban growth tops population agenda

The Commission on Population and Development held its forty-first session from 7 to 11 April. The theme for this session was population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development.

The Commission adopted a resolution on the theme of the session, which called upon governments to address the challenges and opportunities of urban growth and internal migration. The resolution also called upon the international community to support the efforts of developing countries in this regard, including through capacity building.

The Commission adopted the provisional agenda for the forty-second session, which would be devoted to the contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission also adopted a decision on the special theme for the forty-third session in 2010, which will be health, morbidity, mortality and development.

*For more information:*

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2008/com2008.htm>

## Trends and analysis

### Keeping track of today's youth

*DESA meeting from 19 to 21 May aims to strengthen research on young people's well-being*

The DESA Division for Social Policy and Development is organizing an expert group meeting on goals and targets on youth in civil society and youth and their well-being, to be held in New York from 19 to 21 May. The meeting will be preceded by a preparatory forum on 16 May that will give young participants an opportunity to debate the topics at hand and develop a clearer understanding of the issues.

The aim of the meeting is to develop a set of goals and targets in areas deemed to have a critical influence on youth development with particular reference to civil society and well-being. These areas include the environment, leisure activities, participation in decision-making, intergenerational relations, information and communication technology, health, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, girls and young women, and armed conflict. The resultant targets will provide a further framework for monitoring progress towards implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 and reaffirmed and expanded ten years later.

Youth, defined as persons aged 15 to 24 years, account for nearly 18 per cent of the world population. In many ways, youth today are better poised than ever before to participate in, and benefit from, global development. The majority of young people around the world are healthy, having survived their childhood years, while only a few decades ago, infant and child mortality rates were considerably higher. Compared to previous generations, young people today are the most highly-educated generation ever. In terms of opportunities in civil society, youth today have the chance to influence society in unprecedented ways, especially through their participation in decision-making and their keen abilities and facility in information and communication technologies.

Although youth today exhibit considerable strength and initiative, they also face a complex and rapidly evolving economic and social environment where new opportunities coexist with major constraints and

obstacles. Indeed for many young people, opportunities for self-development and participation in civil society are often constrained by a number of challenges. Changes in family structure and the erosion of traditional values mean that, while young people have more opportunities to exercise their independence, the support systems they were once able to rely upon in times of difficulty are now, in many cases, absent or weakened. As traditional norms are superseded by contemporary mores and values, new lifestyles are emerging that can place many young people at risk in their personal and social lives.

*For more information:*

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/egm\\_unhq\\_may08.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/egm_unhq_may08.htm)

### Lawyers, judges, activists meet on anti-violence legislation

*Experts will gather in Vienna on 26 May to analyze legal means of preventing violence against women*

The DESA Division for the Advancement of Women and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime are convening an expert group meeting on legislative action to counter violence against women from 26 to 28 May in Vienna. Experts from around the world – lawyers, judges, practitioners and activists representing a range of legal systems – are being asked to analyze approaches taken to eliminate violence against women, identify lessons learned, and recommend good practices for others to follow.

The experts will examine the effectiveness of legislation, legislative reforms over time and the reasons for such reforms, along with methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of legislative frameworks. They will also present prevailing approaches, in different legal systems, for addressing violence against women, with attention to laws that target different forms and manifestations of violence against women.

Since the 1990s, many States have adopted or revised legislation on violence against women. These laws vary significantly both in terms of the forms of violence they address and the type of action they mandate. Some laws cover specific forms of violence while others deal with multiple forms. Some laws deal solely with the definition and criminalization of violence against women while others provide civil



remedies, including protection orders and actions for damages against the perpetrator. Additionally, some laws include provisions mandating preventative and educational measures, services for victims, the establishment of special courts and/or police stations to deal with violence against women, and the application of appropriate procedural law in cases of violence against women.

While progress has occurred, legal responses to violence against women in many instances remain piecemeal and inadequate. A 2006 study undertaken by the Secretary-General on all forms of violence against women notes that only about half of UN Member States legislative provisions in place that specifically address domestic violence, while fewer than half have legislation on sexual harassment, or on trafficking. Even where legislation exists, it is often limited in scope and coverage.

For the Secretary-General, the aim ultimately would be to bring national laws, policies and practices into compliance with international commitments. This would mean ensuring that legislation is in place that adequately addresses all forms of violence against women, acting with due diligence to prevent such violence, investigating, prosecuting and punishing perpetrators, providing access to redress for victims, and removing all laws that discriminate against women.

*For more information:*

[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw/legislation\\_2008/vaw\\_legislation\\_2008.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw/legislation_2008/vaw_legislation_2008.htm)

## National accounts and sustainable development

*Leading statisticians will gather in Luxembourg from 6 to 8 May to consider methodological harmonization for sustainable growth and development*

The DESA Statistics Division and Eurostat will host a joint conference on international outreach and coordination of national accounts from 6 to 8 May in Luxembourg. The conference is seen as an opportunity to bring together producers and users of statistics from all regions of the world, along with technical and financial partners. The main objective is to promote the System of National Accounts, bearing in mind the international cooperation necessary to support poverty reduction, sustainable growth and development.

More specific objectives include facilitating the outreach of the SNA in developing countries; promoting international coordination in an area where different partners are particularly active at bilateral and multilateral level; establishing directions for development co-operation in the field of national accounts in order to improve coordination and efficiency of aid and sustainability of project results; orienting national statistical systems at country level to improve the quality, production and dissemination of data in a sustainable way.

It is expected that, at its conclusion, the conference will adopt an action plan for implementation in addition to operational recommendations for the attention of the developing countries and their technical and financial partners.

*For more information:*

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=2313,68881303&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=2313,68881303&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

## Public-private partnerships for ICT in Asia-Pacific

*Business leaders join forces with development practitioners at annual meeting of ICT alliance in Kuala Lumpur starting 18 May*

The Global Alliance for ICT and Development will hold its annual meeting in Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 20 May. The annual meeting will bring together officials from ESCAP, ITU, the World Bank, Islamic Development Bank and other regional and international organizations, as well as experts from civil society and academia.

Access and connectivity, particularly for Asian and island developing States, will be at the top of the agenda, along with innovative funding mechanisms for implementation of ICT infrastructure, services and applications. The aim is to encourage stakeholders who are active in the region to work together to provide affordable ICT for economic growth, employment and development throughout Asia and the Pacific. To that end, participants will have an opportunity to showcase their ICT development projects to potential partners and donors, while public and private sector leaders meet to forge partnerships for the future.

Specific areas of potential collaboration include expansion of broadband backbone infrastructure,

regional interconnectivity, rural connectivity, workforce training, localized ICT content and services, and an enabling regulatory environment.

For more information: <http://www.un-gaid.org>

## Coping with climate change

*Leading climate change experts discuss carbon footprints at ECOSOC event on 2 May*

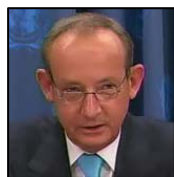
Against the backdrop of a rising tide of public concern, the Economic and Social Council will devote a special event on 2 May in New York to addressing the risks posed by climate change to the realization of the eight Millennium Development Goals. Andrew Revkin, science writer for the New York Times, will moderate two panels. The first panel will be on learning to cope with climate change and the second on reducing the world's carbon footprint.

"While the worst effects will occur in the future," says Council President, Léo Mérorès, "climate change is no longer a far-off prospect. It is already happening." And the world's poor and most vulnerable are the one suffering most from its negative effects. Investment in adaptation and mitigation will be needed to strengthen the ability of the poor to cope with the negative impacts of climate change. While it will not be possible to avert all impacts of climate change on development, integration of adaptation measures into development planning can help.

Indeed, to ensure timely realization of the United Nations development agenda, countries need to systematically include climate considerations in development planning, notes Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. The Economic and Social Council provides a useful forum for discussing together how to do that.

For more information:

<http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/climatechange.shtml>



*UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Yvo de Boer, briefs the press on 10 April on the outcome of negotiations held in Bangkok from 31 March to 4 April on a new global climate change agreement*

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressbriefin/2008/brief080410.rm?start=29:31&end=50:26>

## Technical cooperation

### Review of women's rights in Liberia

As part of its ongoing support to the Government of Liberia in the preparation of its report under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, DESA's Division for the Advancement of Women will conduct a three-day workshop in Monrovia, from 19 to 21 May. Two experts will work with a government team to review the current draft, identify gaps in content and structure, and provide suggestions for completing the report.

Countries that are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. While Liberia acceded to the Convention in 1984, the country has yet to produce a report on implementation.

*For further information:*

[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/TechnicalCooperation/tcprog\\_tw.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/TechnicalCooperation/tcprog_tw.htm)

### Local government, local leaders in Africa

*African public officials gather in Yaoundé starting 26 May for leadership development conference*

Experts from DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management will head to Yaoundé to moderate a conference of African ministers on leadership development and decentralized governance. The three-day event, from 28-30 May, is being organized by the Municipal Development Partnership – an association of mayors, town clerks and local government officials – in collaboration with DESA, UNDP, and UNCDF, and hosted by the Government of Cameroon. A pre-conference seminar for local women leaders will take place from 26-27 May.

African countries are increasingly adopting and applying a policy of decentralization as part of efforts to structure governments to promote participation of citizens in decision-making processes. It is widely held that devolution of authority to sub-national entities can not only accelerate local development, but also enhance the role of low-income groups in the fight against poverty.

If decentralization is to result in improved service delivery and pro-poor development, there need to be clear powers and functions of local government, adequate financial resources, autonomy over human resources management, committed leadership, accountability, and public participation. African public administrators attending the Yaoundé conference will be invited to consider how best to achieve these prerequisites, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of reducing poverty on the continent.

DESA's support is part of a larger effort to build national capacities for implementing the Millennium Development Goals which depend on good governance at all levels. The last such conference on strengthening local government in Africa was held in Maseru, Lesotho in 2006.

*For more information:*

[http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference\\_id=4883](http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_id=4883)

### Building Ugandan statistical capacity

*National data experts meet in Kampala from 5 to 8 May to upgrade and streamline operations*

The DESA Statistics Division will hold a workshop in Kampala from 5 to 8 May to enhance Uganda's capacity to monitor progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Intended to guide national statistical offices in the production of MDG data at the national and sub-national level, participants will delve into a number of practical methodological and operational issues during the three-day session.

The first day will be devoted to discrepancies between national and international data while on the second day participants will turn their attention to reconciling national data with international estimates and adjustments, improving coordination of statistical systems, and streamlining reporting mechanisms. Finally, participants will hear about the new MDG

monitoring framework, and explore data collection practices at the sub-national level.

Since the periodic assessment of progress towards the MDGs started, the international statistical community has been concerned about the lack of adequate data to monitor trends in many developing countries and to inform the global monitoring and political debate. To bridge the gap, DESA and other agencies have undertaken a range of activities from advocacy for the strengthening of official statistics with good statistical governance to knowledge transfer and technical training on data collection, analysis and dissemination. The Kampala workshop is one such initiative.

*For more information:*

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Capacity/Capacity.htm>

## Technology to bolster censuses in Western Asia

*Innovations in statistical data collection will be highlighted at Doha workshop on 18 May*

The DESA Statistics Division will hold a regional workshop on census data processing in cooperation with the ESCWA and the Qatar Statistical Authority, from 18 to 22 May in Doha. Those attending will hear about international standards for conducting population and housing censuses and explore the significant capabilities of contemporary technology for data capture and editing. Optical character recognition, internet data collection, and the use of handheld devices will be featured.

Population and housing censuses are one of the main sources of data for effective development planning and objective decision-making. Recognizing the value of reliable demographic data, the Economic and Social Council is encouraging every country to conduct a census at least once between 2005 and 2014. The Statistics Division is supporting the Council's initiative, formally known as the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, by developing census methodological guidelines, facilitating exchange of experience, and assisting countries in improving their statistical capacity in census-taking.

*For more information:*

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/Qatar\\_18May08/default.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/Qatar_18May08/default.htm)

## Back office management for e/m-government

*Government practitioners from Asia-Pacific meet in Shanghai on 27 May for a DESA knowledge-management workshop*

Most government agencies are knowledge-based organizations that rely critically on the management, analysis, and sharing of information to deliver quality public services. Yet, with a worldwide trend towards leaner government, systematic control of information resources remains as great a challenge as it is an opportunity.

DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management is holding a two-day workshop in Shanghai, from 27-28 May, to help developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region cope with the demand by learning from the global frontrunners in electronic and mobile government. Government practitioners, decision-makers and academics will have a chance to upgrade technical skills with an emphasis on "back office" functions in support of policy-making and service delivery.

Issues to be discussed include organizational structures, process engineering, and systems design that can facilitate electronic and mobile government while linking management strategies to broader development goals. A South-South exchange of experiences will be an important feature of the workshop with participants discussing an extension of the popular UNPAN portal to include information on e/m-government tools and techniques in the region.

The Shanghai Municipal People's Government and the UN Governance Centre, a joint DESA/Government of Korea project based in Seoul, are co-organizers.

*For more information:*

[http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference\\_id=2227](http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_id=2227)

## Spotlight on environment data in West Africa

*DESA workshop in Abuja will focus on regional priorities such as freshwater, marine resources and land use*

A DESA Statistics Division workshop will unfold in Abuja from 19 to 23 May for national statisticians and environmental experts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Co-organized with UNEP and ECA, the main objectives of the training session are to introduce a recommended core set of environmental statistics and indicators for national and regional reporting, and train participants from national statistical offices and agencies responsible for environment on basic concepts, methods and best practices in environment statistics.

Availability of environment statistics in ECOWAS countries is generally low and it is not uncommon for several governmental bodies – such as environmental protection agencies, or energy, water, and rural development ministries – to be involved in data collection. Availability of trained staff in environment statistics is also a challenge. As of March 2006, only four countries in the region, out of sixteen, had a special unit dealing with environment statistics at their respective national statistical institutes.

In Abuja, the emphasis will be on the regional priorities of freshwater resources, marine resources, land use and land degradation, forests, biodiversity, air emissions, air quality, waste, natural disasters, and environmental health.

*For more information:*

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/ENVIRONMENT/technico.htm>

## Promoting distributive trade statistics

*Statisticians will meet in Addis Ababa from 27 to 30 May to learn about the latest standards and how to apply them*

To enhance the knowledge and use of good practices in the collection and compilation of basic economic statistics, the Statistics Division of DESA will host a workshop for Anglophone African countries in Addis

Ababa from 27 to 30 May. Participants will have a chance to reflect in particular on the needs of policy-makers and the business community for distributive trade statistics, and on implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts.

Specifically, the workshop will cover the 2008 International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics, the state of distributive trade statistics compilation in African countries, and the challenges and good practices in data collection, compilation and dissemination. ECA's African Centre for Statistics is a co-sponsor.

*For more information:*

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/WS2008/AddisMay2008.htm>

## Publications and websites

### Technical reports



#### **World Population Policies 2007**

This report delineates Governments' views and policies concerning population and development for 195 countries. In particular, it itemizes policies in the areas of population size and growth, population age structure, fertility and family planning, health and mortality, spatial distribution and internal migration, and international migration. Preparation of the publication was facilitated by the cooperation of Member States and non-member states of the United Nations, the regional commissions, and the agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system.

*For more information:*

<http://www.esa/population/publications/wpp2007/wp2007.htm>



#### **World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision – Sex and Age Distribution of the World Population**

The 2006 revision builds on the 2004 revision and incorporates both the results of the 2000 round of national population censuses and of recent specialized surveys carried out in countries around the world. These sources provide both demographic and other information to assess the progress made in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The comprehensive review of past worldwide demographic trends and future prospects presented in the 2006 Revision provides the population basis for the assessment of those goals. This volume presents detailed information about the composition of population by age and sex.

*To order:* <https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=15790>

### Handbooks

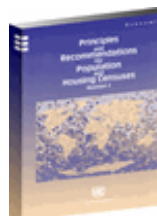


#### **Indicators of Sustainable Development: Guidelines and Methodologies**

The third revised set of sustainable development indicators contains 96 indicators, including a subset of 50 core indicators with detailed methodologies. The indicator set builds on the previous two editions, which have been improved and extensively tested by a group of experts from developing and developed countries. The guidelines on indicators and their detailed methodology sheets can serve as a reference for all countries to develop national indicators of sustainable development.

*For more information:*

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/isd.htm>



#### **Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2**

The population and housing census represents one of the pillars for data collection on the number and characteristics of the population of a country. The population and housing census is part of an integrated national statistical system, which may include other censuses (for example, agriculture), surveys, registers and administrative files. It provides, at regular intervals, the benchmark for population count at national and local levels. For small geographical areas or sub-populations, it may represent the only source of information for certain social, demographic and economic characteristics. This handbook focuses on the traditional census while also describing other approaches. Sales number 07.XVII.8.

*For more information:*

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/>

## Statistical compilations

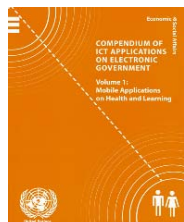


### World Statistics Pocketbook 2007

The United Nations World Statistics Pocketbook is an authoritative and comprehensive compilation of key statistical indicators in convenient country profile format. The 2007 edition presents available data for 215 countries and areas for 55 indicators, generally for the years 2000 and 2006, in the areas of population, economic activity, agriculture, industry, energy, international trade, transport, communications, gender, education and environment, based on over 20 international statistical sources. The notes on the sources and definitions of the indicators are provided to help users perform further research on the statistics. Sales number E.08.XVII.5. Publication symbol ST/ESA/STAT/SER.V/32.

To order: <https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=17342>

## Directory



### Compendium of ICT Applications on Electronic Government, Volume 1

The Compendium of ICT Applications on Electronic Government, volume 1, is now available in printed version. This volume focuses on mobile applications for health and learning.

To download:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN030003.pdf>

## Outreach material



### Population and HIV/AIDS 2007 – Wall Chart

This wall chart provides the most recent information on HIV/AIDS for all countries in the world. The chart includes information on Government measures implemented in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the number of people living with HIV, adult HIV prevalence, the number of deaths due to AIDS and the number of AIDS orphans. Additional data include life expectancy at birth and total population in 2007 with and without AIDS, condom use and antiretroviral coverage.

For more information:

[http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/AIDS\\_Wallchart\\_web\\_2007/Population%20and%20HIV-AIDS%202007.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/AIDS_Wallchart_web_2007/Population%20and%20HIV-AIDS%202007.htm)



### World Mortality 2007 – Wall Chart

The World Mortality 2007 wall chart presents key indicators of mortality at the global, regional and country levels. It highlights variations among countries regarding annual deaths, crude death rates, life expectancy at birth by sex, infant mortality, under-five mortality, and survival from birth to age 15, from age 15 to age 60, and from birth to age 60. The estimates of mortality are complemented by information related to major causes of death: the proportion of deaths due to three broad groups of causes, adult HIV prevalence, AIDS deaths, and the maternal mortality ratio.

To order: <https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=17712>



### World Population 2006 – Wall Chart

This wall chart provides the most recent information on population estimates and projections for all countries in the world. Included is information on key indicators of population change, such as crude birth and crude death rates, total fertility, under-five mortality, life expectancy at birth, or average annual population change. The chart also provides the mid-year population of all countries for 2007, 2020 and

2050 and a ranking of countries with 100 million inhabitants or more in 1950, 2007 and 2050.

To order: <https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=17312>

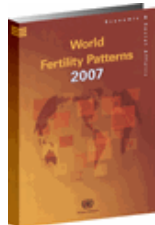


### World Contraceptive Use 2007 – Wall Chart

This item presents the latest country data available on some basic dimensions of reproductive health including two of the Millennium Development Goals indicators:

contraceptive prevalence (any method) and unmet need for family planning. In addition, it provides information on the number of women aged 15 to 49 who are married or in union, the methods of contraception being used and the rate of change of contraceptive prevalence. The information is provided both in tabular form and displayed by means of charts and maps.

To order: <https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=17703>



### World Fertility Patterns 2007 – Wall Chart

The wall chart presents fertility data from national sources for two points in time – around 1970 and the latest available. The selected indicators are total fertility, the mean age at

childbearing and age-specific fertility including the adolescent birth rate.

To order: <https://unp.un.org/details.aspx?pid=17713>



### Rural Population, Development and the Environment 2007 – Wall Chart

This wall chart displays 2007 information on various aspects of population, environment and development, including changes in

rural populations and their relationship with development and the environment. The chart includes information for 228 countries or areas as well as data at the regional and sub-regional levels.

For more information:

[http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2007/PopDevt/2007\\_PopDevt\\_Rural.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2007/PopDevt/2007_PopDevt_Rural.htm)



### Urban Population Development and the Environment 2007 – Wall Chart

This wall chart displays 2007 information on various aspects of population, environment and development, including changes in urban populations and their relationship with development and the environment. The chart includes information for 228 countries or areas as well as data at the regional and sub-regional levels.

For more information:

[http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2007/PopDevt/2007\\_PopDevt\\_Urban.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/2007/PopDevt/2007_PopDevt_Urban.htm)

## Websites



### AMR Innovation Fair Blogs

In 2008 and in 2009, the AMR Innovation Fair will include a Civil Society Pavillion where NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and their partners can display best practices in sustainable development. The Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination has created two blogs to help NGOs prepare, one for 2008 and one for 2009.

To read and comment:

<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>



### Committee for Development Policy – Pilot Blog

The Development Policy and Analysis Division recently launched a blog on a pilot basis to promote awareness and discussion of the issues before the Committee for Development Policy. CDP is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council that provides independent advice on emerging development issues. The Committee is also responsible for reviewing the status of least developed countries.

To read and comment:

<http://webapps01.un.org/dpadblog/>



## Comings and goings

### Comings

*The following staff members were promoted in April:*

Ms. Akiko Ito, Senior Social Affairs Officer,  
Division for Social Policy and Development

Ms. Seok-Ran Kim, Governance and Public  
Administration Officer, Division for Public  
Administration and Development Management

## Calendar

### May

#### **Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

7<sup>th</sup> session, New York, 21 April-2 May

#### Economic and Social Council

Special event on the MDGs and climate change, New York, 2 May

Workshop on Coordination of Reporting Mechanisms and Data Discrepancies in MDG Monitoring  
Kampala, 5-8 May

#### **Commission on Sustainable Development**

16<sup>th</sup> session, New York, 5-16 May

DESA/Eurostat Conference on International Outreach and Coordination in National Accounts for Sustainable Growth and Development  
Luxembourg, 6-8 May

UNCRD International Training Course on Regional Development

Nagoya, 15 May-25 June

GAID Annual Meeting and Global Forum on Access, Connectivity and Innovative Funding  
Kuala Lumpur, 18-20 May

DESA/ESCWA Regional Workshop on Census Data Processing  
Doha, 18-22 May

Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development  
Preparatory review session on international trade,  
New York 19-20 May

Expert Group Meeting on Youth in Civil Society and Youth and Well-being  
New York, 19-21 May

Workshop on Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
Monrovia, 19-21 May

DESA/UNEP/ECOWAS Workshop on Environment Statistics  
Abuja, 19-23 May

#### **Economic and Social Council**

Special meeting on the emerging food crisis, New York, 23 May

Expert Group Meeting on Good Practices in Legislation on Violence against Women  
Vienna, 26-28 May

Capacity-Building Workshop on Back Office Management for e/m-Government in the Asia-Pacific Region  
Shanghai, 27-28 May

DESA/ECA Workshop for Anglophone African Countries on the Implementation of International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics  
Addis Ababa, 27-30 May

DESA/UNDP/UNCDF/MDP Ministerial Conference on Leadership Capacity Development for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Africa  
Yaoundé, 28-30 May

#### **Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations**

Resumed regular session for 2008, New York, 29 May-6 June

### June

Workshop for Francophone African Countries on the Implementation of International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics  
Bamako, 17-20 June

Informal Hearings with Representatives of Civil Society and the Business Sector on Financing for Development  
New York, 18 June

#### **Economic and Social Council**

Substantive session for 2008, New York 30 June-25 July

### Observances

#### **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Entry into Force**

3 May

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities received its 20th ratification on 3 April 2008, triggering the entry into force of the Convention and its Optional Protocol 30 days later. This marks a major milestone in the effort to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal

enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

A commemorative event for the entry into force is being organized by the DESA Division for Social Policy and Development on 12 May in the General Assembly Hall. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kyung-wha Kang, as well as high-level government officials and civil society, are scheduled to attend. Registration required.

*For more information:*

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

### **International Day of Families**

15 May

The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to the family as the basic unit of society as well as to promote appropriate action to recognize and promote the importance of families. The day can become a mobilizing factor on behalf of families in all countries to avail themselves of this opportunity and to demonstrate support of family issues appropriate to each society. The 2008 observance of the International Day of Families also offers a valuable opportunity for families to demonstrate their solidarity in the quest for better standards of life. The theme for this year is fathers and families: responsibilities and challenges.

*DESA News is an insider's look at the United Nations in the area of economic and social development policy. The newsletter is produced by the Communications and Information Management Service of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with DESA Divisions. Prior to January 2007, DESA News was issued every other month. It is now issued monthly.*

*Inquiries should be addressed to [esa@un.org](mailto:esa@un.org).*