



## **Informal High-Level Roundtable**

**High-level Segment - Geneva, 2 July 2007  
5:30 – 7:00 p.m.**

### **Issues Note**

#### **Emerging challenges to efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger**

##### ***Climate change, desertification and health crises***

#### **1. Background**

There are a number of emerging challenges that are placing serious constraints on the efforts to realize the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, threatening to undo decades of development efforts. Major challenges include, climate change, desertification and disease burden exacerbated by AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. These directly impact national and international endeavours for the eradication of poverty and hunger, which prevent people from realizing their potential and contributing to the progress of their societies. “*Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development*” is also the theme of this year’s ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review.

Climate change is already hampering the achievement of MDG-1 in certain regions, particularly in developing countries. Adverse climate change impacts natural systems and resources, infrastructure, and labor productivity, which leads to reduced economic growth. The poor are often affected the most because of their vulnerability. There is an urgent need to accelerate actions for mitigation and adaptation as an integral part of development planning. This is fundamental to achieving the overarching goals of eradicating poverty and hunger by 2015, and sustaining progress beyond 2015.

At the most recent summit meeting of the G8 in Heiligendamm, Germany, G8 leaders agreed that they will consider seriously the decisions made by the European Union, Canada and Japan, which include at least a halving of global emissions by 2050. Acknowledging the need for urgent and concerted action, they accepted their responsibility to show leadership in tackling climate change.

The United Nations community is also making its contribution to generate political momentum for tackling the issue, in particular through the global negotiation under the United Nations, and to raise broad public awareness. The United Nations Secretary-General has appointed three special envoys who will solicit the views of a representative group of heads of State and Government and assist the Secretary-General in his consultations with Governments and other key stakeholders to facilitate progress in the multilateral climate change negotiations within the United Nations. The Secretary-General has also announced that he will hold a high-level event on climate change on 24 September 2007.

Moreover, the rising pace of desertification is posing a threat to food security through soil degradation and decreasing crop yields, contributing to increased poverty and hunger. Drought and desertification, salinity, erosion from floods and other natural disasters as well as man-made causes all

contribute to poor soil fertility and land degradation, which threaten the livelihoods of people, especially those living in rural areas. Climate change is likely to increase areas affected by drought, land degradation, and lower crop yields and increase livestock deaths. Land degradation translates into poverty by depriving poor people, including many indigenous peoples, of all or part of their livelihood. At the same time, poverty itself contributes to desertification as a lack of alternative sources of income encourages poor people encroach on and over-exploit environmentally sensitive areas.

The global impact of AIDS has already been so devastating that the Human Development Report 2005 of the UNDP concluded that the AIDS pandemic had inflicted the single greatest reversal in human development. While some progress has been made, the pace of the epidemic continues to outstrip current efforts. The AIDS epidemic demands an urgent and focused response. Among the main challenges ahead is the need to work more closely and openly with populations at high risk of HIV, as well as addressing the underlying drivers of the epidemic such as poverty and gender inequality. There is a need to move from short-term emergency response to a longer-term response that recognizes the exceptionality of AIDS and is integrated with national development planning and implementation. We need an ambitious and balanced strategy of both prevention and treatment and adequate urgent funding.

Climate change, desertification and AIDS are serious challenges that call for a formidable collective response.

## **2. Objective**

The new functions of the Economic and Social Council, especially the Annual Ministerial Review, provide a platform for discussing impacts of these development challenges and how the international community can and should respond to these threats. To this end, the Council will host an Informal High-Level Roundtable on "Emerging challenges to efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger" on Monday, 2 July 2007 from 5.30 pm to 7 pm at the UN Office in Geneva during the High-Level Segment of the Council.

The Roundtable focuses on the major emerging development concerns posed by climate change, desertification and the AIDS pandemic that pose a threat to the achievement of MDG-1. The Roundtable aims to provide a platform and bring together a wide range of experts, political leaders, civil society and private sector organizations to discuss *what is being done; new and innovative strategies that can be employed; and ways we can promote collective action to respond to these imminent challenges.*

More specifically, the participants may like to address the following questions/issues:

- 1. How to ensure urgent collective action to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? How to increase support for mitigation and adaptation measures, particularly for the poor and vulnerable?*
- 2. How to strengthen health systems and ensure access to life saving drugs and vaccines? What role can the public-private partnerships play in this regard?*
- 3. What are the immediate steps that we need to take for halting and reversing desertification? How to mobilize the international community to support these measures, particularly in Africa?*
- 4. How to ensure that national development strategies address these issues in order to more effectively reduce poverty and hunger? How can the UN system strengthen its support to these efforts?*