

Salle XIX

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
60th Anniversary Session, Geneva 25-27 April 2007

Item 5: The United Nations for the ECE Region

The Role of the Regional Commissions in the UN Development Work at the Regional Level
Thursday 26 April: 10.00-11.00 hours

Panellists: M. Belka, A. Janneh, H. Kim, J.L. Machinea, and M. Tallawy

Concept Note

The Panel will be composed of the Executive secretaries of the five Regional Commissions and will be an opportunity to highlight the position and role of the Regional Commissions within the UN before an audience of high-level representatives of ECE member States.

The **general objectives** of the Panel will be as follows:

- To demonstrate the importance of the regional dimension of the UN work in the development field.
- To show that all Regional Commissions perform the two-core roles assigned to them by ECOSOC: be the regional arm of the “global UN” and be part of the institutional landscape of their respective region.
- To highlight that this double role leads them to have common functions while their work also result from the specific characteristics of each region (diversity of situations, needs and institutional history).

Within this framework, the Panel is expected to **convey key messages** to the ECE member States in the perspective of the forthcoming discussion on system-wide coherence. Such key messages would be:

- (i) in view of their convening power, re-asserting the role of the RCs in offering a platform for forging regional agreements related to the achievement of the IADGs, and in setting norms, standards and policy guidelines on issues of a transboundary nature;
- (ii) reaffirming the RCs role as catalysts for forging regional partnerships with other regional organizations on such issues as addressing major regional integration challenges, promoting the provision of regional public goods and linking development with peace and security;
- (iii) providing a coordinating role of the RCs in the analytical and normative fields as well as on issues of a transboundary nature for further system-wide coherence at the regional level in these fields;
- (iv) recognizing the legitimacy of the RCs in undertaking technical assistance activities in their areas of competence, as this creates a direct link between analytical/normative work and operational work and thus maximizes efficiency in capacity building activities.

(v) strengthening the linkages between the RCs as lead for coordination of regional normative work, and the regional UNDP offices as lead for support to operational activities at the country level.

The panel should also be an opportunity to show that the RCs have in common **key strategic objectives**, namely:

- promoting the implementation of the internationally-agreed development goals (IADGs), including the MDGs.
- fostering economic integration at the subregional/regional level.
- supporting national efforts in achieving sustainable development.
- Promoting the economic, social and environmental aspects of security and peace-building at the regional/subregional levels.

In addition to these common strategic objectives, it should be highlighted that the RCs have **common areas of expertise** which no other organization has at the regional level. This is particularly the case for trade, transport, statistics, energy and gender.

It is proposed that each Executive Secretary **focus on one of the above-mentioned key messages** and common strategic objectives. For example:

- For ECLAC: the focus on analytical work in support of policy-making for achieving the IADGs, including MDGs, in the Latin American and the Caribbean region.
- For ECA: the partnerships with other regional organizations, both UN (in particular, UNDP) and non-UN (African Union and NEPAD).
- For ESCAP: regional coordination among UN entities, focusing on development issues of a transboundary nature.
- For ESCWA: the focus on activities which ensure linkages between economic development activities and peace and security in the region.
- For ECE: the focus on setting norms and standards in specific areas of expertise and the development of technical assistance activities which are directly related to these norms.

After a brief introduction by Mr. Belka, each Executive Secretary will be invited to make their presentation. The statements should be limited to 7 minutes and elaborate on the above-mentioned key messages, thereby illustrating the validity of all of them. A few questions from the floor might be addressed to the panellists before closing this first part of the High-Level Segment.