

## BRIEF II. ECOSOC Policy Dialogue and Guidance

*This brief is part of a series aimed to provide background information on ECOSOC strengthening. Briefs include (i) ECOSOC mandates and evolution of functions; (ii) policy dialogue and guidance; (iii) guiding and promoting a coherent and coordinated UN system; (iv) subsidiary bodies; (v) relationship with the General Assembly, Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council; (vi) countries in special situations; and (vii) addressing emergency issues.*

The Economic and Social Council is the central platform of the United Nations for policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development (A/RES/72/305). The UN Charter mandates ECOSOC to serve as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system (Chapters IX and X). The Council is also vested with the authority to prepare studies or initiate reports on a wide range of issues. It also has the power to assist the preparations and organization of major international conferences on economic and social and related fields. It is also mandated with the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields and ensuring the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

### « Major United Nations Conferences and Summits and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development »

The focus of ECOSOC's policy dialogue and guidance functions has broadened and changed over time to respond to various the evolving development landscape. The Council began promoting integrated follow-up to major UN conferences and summits in the 1990s and then reviewed progress, identified gaps in implementation and recommended priority follow-up actions for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the 2000s. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, ECOSOC has also focused on promoting coherent and coordinated UN system support to Member States in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and other international commitments.

ECOSOC fulfils its policy guidance function through its segments, forums, functional commissions and expert bodies. This includes the Council's High-level Segment, Coordination Segment, Operational Activities Segment, Humanitarian Affairs Segment and Management Segment as well as other ECOSOC forums discussed in a separate section below. The ECOSOC system, including the Regional Commissions and the ECOSOC functional commissions and expert bodies, have an important role in supporting ECOSOC's policy review and guidance. According to the 2030 Agenda, while the thematic reviews of progress on the SDGs, including cross-cutting issues, take place at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC, they are also informed by reviews carried out by ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums.

In its resolution 68/1, the General Assembly undertook a significant strengthening of ECOSOC's policy dialogue and guidance functions with a view to the establishment of a coherent and integrated ECOSOC system, where all components of the Council and its annual cycle are complementary and deliver results "greater than the sum of its parts". A key priority was improving the complementarity and effectiveness within the ECOSOC system, drawing on the different strengths of its segments, so as to best support policy dialogue and guidance.

The selection of an annual main ECOSOC aimed to improve the effectiveness and relevance of its policy dialogue and guidance on sustainable development for Member States and development actors. To the extent possible, ECOSOC and its segments and forums align their annual work and guidance to the main theme. Doing so harnesses the power of the Council's full range of resources, including those of its functional commissions and expert bodies, through improved harmonization, coordination and a clear division of labour vis-à-vis the over-arching theme. In its resolution 72/305, the General Assembly decided to adopt one annual main theme for the HLPF and ECOSOC. This has allowed greater focus in the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies on enhancing their impact and contribution to both ECOSOC and the HLPF.

The 2030 Agenda is a universal agenda that treats sustainable development holistically across the economic, social and environmental dimensions. In its implementation, integration across these three dimensions is essential. ECOSOC as a whole supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through policy dialogue and by providing integrated policy guidance and recommendations to Member States and to the ECOSOC and UN development systems. The integrated guidance and recommendations disseminated by ECOSOC is built on the technical outputs and inter-governmentally agreed conclusions and resolutions emanating from the subsidiary bodies of the Council.

### « ECOSOC High-Level Segment »

The President of ECOSOC jointly convenes the High-level Segment of the Council and the three ministerial days of the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 72/305, the High-level Segment of ECOSOC focuses on future trends and scenarios related to the Council theme and the long-term impact of current trends in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the SDGs. The High-level Segment also enhances knowledge-sharing and regional and international cooperation. The outcome of the ECOSOC High-level Segment and the HLPF is a negotiated ministerial declaration providing policy guidance and recommendations in relation to the annual main theme and the implementation of the SDGs.

### « ECOSOC Forums »

ECOSOC engages global constituencies in its policy dialogue processes. In addition to the High-level Political Forum convened yearly under its auspices, ECOSOC is also home to other forums, including those that address financing for development, development cooperation, and science, technology and innovation.

- *The ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up (FfD Forum)* reviews the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other financing development outcomes, as well as the means of implementation of the SDGs. The Forum is the only intergovernmental forum on Financing for Development with universal participation that leads to an annual negotiated outcome. Over the years, the Forum has acted as a platform for consensus-building and meaningful exchanges among all key stakeholders to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development.
- *The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)* reviews the latest trends and progress in international development cooperation and encourages coordination across diverse actors and activities. The DCF brings together ministers and senior experts from developing and developed countries, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, international organizations and development banks, local governments, philanthropic foundations and the private sector. Its outcome is a President's summary.
- *The Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for the SDGs* brings a variety of actors together to discuss cooperation on science, technology and innovation for implementing the SDGs. It leads to a summary feeding into the HLPF.

In addition, the annual Youth Forum, the largest gathering of young people at the UN, is serves as a platform for young leaders from around the world to engage in a dialogue with UN Member States, and to share ideas and concrete actions to advance the 2030 Agenda. ECOSOC's Partnerships Forum is also a significant platform for gather stakeholder partners in sustainable development, including the private sector, at the United Nations.

### « Key Dates »

- 1991 ECOSOC begins convening a single five-week annual substantive session consisting of a high-level segment, a coordination segment, an operational activities and development segment and a committee segment as per resolution 45/264.
- 1996 ECOSOC introduced panel discussions and interactive debates with experts and stakeholders as per resolution 50/227.
- 1999 Ministerial Declaration was created as outcome of ECOSOC's High-level Segment.
- 2005 The 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1) mandated ECOSOC to convene an Annual Ministerial Review, with National Voluntary Presentations, and a biennial Development Cooperation Forum; ECOSOC becomes the main platform for follow-up and review of major UN conferences and summits

- 2006 GA Resolution on strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/61/16)
- 2007 First ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) was held during the High-Level Segment  
First National Voluntary Presentations were held as part of the AMR
- 2008 First Development Cooperation Forum
- 2009 First ECOSOC Partnership Forum
- 2012 First ECOSOC Youth Forum
- 2013 Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (A/RES/67/290)  
Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/68/1)
- 2014 First High-level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC
- 2014 First ECOSOC Integration Segment
- 2015 Adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313)  
Adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)
- 2016 Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level (A/RES/70/299)  
First multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the SDGs  
First ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up (FfD Forum)
- 2018 Review of the implementation of GA resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the ECOSOC (A/RES/72/305)
- 2019 Political Declaration of the HLPF convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (2019 SDG Summit) (A/RES/74/4)
- 2020 Review of the implementation of GA resolution 67/290 on the HLPF, resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level and resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of ECOSOC (A/RES/74/298)
- 2021 Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council  
Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level (A/RES/75/290 A and B)
- 2022 First ECOSOC Coordination Segment (replaced ECOSOC Integration Segment)
- 2023 Political Declaration of the HLPF convened under the auspices of the General Assembly (2023 SDG Summit) (A/RES/78/1)