BRIEF VI. ECOSOC and Countries in Special Situations

Updated January 2024

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.

In its resolution 68/1, the General Assembly specifies that "the Economic and Social Council should devote time to the specific needs of countries in special situations, namely the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing States and Africa and integrate their concerns into all segments as cross-cutting priorities. It will continue to address the particular development challenges of middle-income countries".

ECOSOC addresses the needs of countries in special situations as an integral part of the Council's agenda, as well as through the Forum on Financing for Development, the Development Cooperation Forum, and consideration of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

In addition, the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC annually reviews progress through dedicated thematic sessions in implementing the 2030 Agenda in countries in special situations, especially with regard to the SDGs under review and their interlinkages. The specific challenges facing middle-income countries are also considered.

Established by the General Assembly in its resolution 75/290A the meeting on transition from relief to development (Transition Meeting) is convened prior to the Humanitarian Affairs Segment. It replaces the informal Transition Event of the Council, and it covers matters related to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, integrated, coherent and coordinated support to South Sudan, as well as the Sahel region.

« Least Developed Countries»

The Council has a standing item on the follow-up to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the Management Segment. The Council reviews the addition to and graduation from the list of LDCs, based on the recommendations of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) during its triennial review. The CDP is an expert subsidiary body that advises the Council on a range of issues, including LDC graduation.

At the most recent review in February 2021, the Committee recommended the graduation of three countries from the list, namely Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Nepal. The decision on the graduation of Myanmar and Timor-Leste was deferred by the CDP to its triennial review in 2024. The Committee has been working on an enhanced monitoring mechanism aimed at a smooth transition – through annual monitoring, crises response processes and strengthened support – and has also been reviewing the LDC graduation criteria in advance of the 2024 triennial review.

In its resolution 76/258 endorsing the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022-2031 (DPoA), the General Assembly invited ECOSOC to continue to include periodically an agenda item during its annual substantive session on the review and coordination of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action. The Assembly also stated that periodic reviews of progress made, and constraints confronted by least developed countries should be conducted by the Council to allow for focused interaction, and that the DCF should continue to review trends in international development cooperation, as well as policy coherence for development, including for least developed countries and graduated countries. These will be supported by reviews by the Council's functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums.

« ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti »

The Council has played an important role in developing mechanisms to respond to the problems faced by countries emerging from conflict to assist them on their path to development. The Council considers the report of its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti under item "Long-term programme of support for Haiti". This Group, composed of 23 countries and chaired by Canada, monitors the development prospects for the country. It undertakes two missions per year. The first is a visit to Washington, D.C., for meetings with representatives of the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Inter-American Dialogue, and the Organization of American States (OAS). The second is a field visit to Haiti, the outcome of which forms the basis of the Group's annual report and recommendations. The Council also considers an update on the situation in the country during the new Transition Meeting, and then takes action on a draft resolution that renews the mandate of the Group during its Management Segment in July.

During the 2023 session of the Council, the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti followed closely the complex and multi-faceted crisis in Haiti, including through its two working groups (WG1-supporting Haiti to strengthen the capacity and accountability of its public institutions, WG2-supporting Haiti to meet the needs of crisis-affected populations and to build a more productive and resilient food system). Building on the work of the Group, the Council convened a Special Meeting on 16 June 2023 on the issue of food security in Haiti, with the objective of helping to help create more productive and resilient food system in the country. The ECOSOC President subsequently issued a Presidential Statement, also in June 2023, outlining urgent actions to support Haitians and to increase food security in the country.

« ECOSOC and South Sudan»

Following the independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, ECOSOC, through its resolution 2011/43, expressed interest in working with partners in addressing the extensive humanitarian, peacebuilding and development challenges facing the country. Since then, the Council has considered South Sudan under its agenda item "African Countries Emerging from Conflict" to promote a coherent and coordinated support to the country by the UN system. During recent years, some of the UN organizations working in South Sudan contributed to the discussion on how the political and security crisis in the country has been affecting the development prospects and reversing the gains made in the first two years of independence. An oral update was generally provided by the UN Resident Coordinator, focused more on the humanitarian aspects of the UN's work. The consideration of South Sudan during the new Transition Meeting provides an opportunity for in-depth discussion to provide guidance for coordinated support at country-level.

« ECOSOC and the Sahel Region »

Building on its joint meetings with the Peacebuilding Commission on the situation of countries in the Sahel region, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on "Support to the Sahel region" in December 2019 (E/RES/2020/2). The Council stressed the need for strengthening collective and integrated engagement across the Sahel region, in line with existing frameworks, including the African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region. Following the adoption of resolution 75/290 A, support to the Sahel region is also being considered during the new Transition Meeting. The Transition Meetings have underscored the increasing demand by Member States to strengthen collaboration and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors to address multi-dimensional challenges and drivers of humanitarian need, such as displacement, acute food insecurity and risk of famine.

« ECOSOC guiding operational activities for development in countries in special situations»

ECOSOC, through the operational activities for development segment (OAS), is the accountability platform that provides oversight for acceleration of system-wide performance and results, guidance and overall coordination of the United Nations development system in the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of UN operational activities for development (QCPR).

In the 2020 QCPR (A/RES/75/233), the General Assembly recognized the specific challenges facing the most vulnerable countries and called for the United Nations development system to support developing countries, including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, in their efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals and their development objectives. The General Assembly also urged the United Nations development system to continue to enhance its support for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, towards a transition to the new decade, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

Using data from surveys conducted by UNDESA, the Secretary-General prepares an annual report on the system-wide implementation of the QCPR, providing an overview of the work of the United Nations development system in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in countries in special situation. The annual ECOSOC OAS regularly discusses United Nations development system support to countries in special situations. The General Assembly is expected to negotiate at its 79thsessions a new QCPR for the next 4-year cycle (2024-2028).

« ECOSOC Meetings and Countries in Special Situations »

The following table provides an overview of specific meetings, sessions and panels in the various segments of ECOSOC devoted to addressing the needs of countries in special situations since the adoption of GA resolution 72/305 on 23 July 2018. In addition to these, speakers and panelists from countries in special situations participated in meetings of the Council to mainstream the needs of these countries in the work of the Council.

Date	Meeting	Focus
February 2018	ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – session on "Perspectives from the field and stakeholders"	LLDCs, LDCs, SIDS
November 2018	Joint Meeting of ECOSOC and the PBC on "Linkages between Climate Change and Challenges to Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in the Sahel"	The Sahel region
November 2018	ECOSOC Special Meeting on "Pathways to resilience in climate-affected Small Island Developing States (SIDS)— A Forward-Looking Resilience Building Agenda: Promises, results and next steps"	SIDS
April 2019	ECOSOC Youth Forum on "Youth: Empowerment, Included and Equal" Regional Breakout Session on key regional concerns and priorities for youth regarding the SDGs implementation in Africa	Africa
April 2019	ECOSOC Special meeting on "Response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe"	Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe
May 2019	ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – session on "Multi-country office review"	SIDS
June 2019	ECOSOC event on the transition from relief to development: "Recent advancements, challenges and best practices of the collaboration between the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors in Africa"	Africa
July 2019	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item "Long-term programme of support for Haiti"	Haiti
July 2019	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item on "African countries emerging from conflict"	South Sudan
November 2019	Joint ECOSOC-PBC Meeting on "The Impact of Cross-border Transhumance on Sustainable Peace and Development in West Africa and the Sahel"	West Africa and the Sahel
May 2020	ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – session on "Multi-country offices"	SIDS
June 2020	"The multidimensional and interconnected challenges in the central Sahel region: reducing needs, risks and vulnerabilities for people through closer humanitarian, development and peacebuilding collaboration" [Transition Event]	Central Sahel region
July 2020	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda items on "African countries emerging from conflict" and "Sustainable development of the Sahel"	South Sudan, Sahel
July 2020	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item "Long-term programme of support for Haiti"	Haiti

Date	Meeting	Focus
November 2020	Joint ECOSOC-PBC Meeting on "Fostering global solidarity and conflict- sensitive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts"	Conflict-affected countries
April 2021	ECOSOC Special Event on SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs	SIDS, LDCs, LLDCs
April 2021	"Supporting the Culture of Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship of African Youth to Build Forward Better for Sustainable Development" [during ECOSOC Youth Forum]	Africa
May 2021	ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – session on "Responding to the needs and priorities of countries serviced by multi-country offices" and informal session on "Tailoring UN development system's support to countries' specific circumstances"	SIDS, LDCs, LLDCs
June 2021	Transition Event: "Preventing the looming risk of multiple famines and addressing rising acute food insecurity: taking action to save lives and reduce people's needs, risks and vulnerabilities through closer humanitarian, development and peacebuilding collaboration"	Countries affected by acute food insecurity and risk of famine
July 2021	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item on "African countries emerging from conflict" and the "Sustainable development of the Sahel"	South Sudan and the Sahel region
July 2021	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item "Long-term programme of support for Haiti"	Haiti
October 2021	Joint Meeting of the ECOSOC and Second Committee of the General Assembly on "Building productive capacities in LDCs, SIDS as well as MICs for more resilient recovery and sustainable development in the post-COVID-19 era"	SIDS, LDCs, and MICs
December 2021	Joint ECOSOC-PBC Meeting on "Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic"	Conflict affected countries
May 2022	ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – session on "Just transitions: support to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS" and informal session on "Addressing root causes of conflict and humanitarian crises to achieve sustainable development"	LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, and Conflict-affected countries
June 2022	Transition Meeting: "Recurrent crises and sustainable solutions: building resilience and addressing rising food insecurity and displacement"	Haiti, South Sudan and the Sahel region
July 2022	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item on "African countries emerging from conflict" and the "Sustainable development of the Sahel"	South Sudan and the Sahel region
July 2022	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item "Long-term programme of support for Haiti"	Haiti
July 2022	Special High-Level Dialogue convened by the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council: "The Africa We Want: Reconfirming the Development of Africa as a Priority for the United Nations System".	Africa
December 2022	Joint ECOSOC-PBC Meeting on "Peacebuilding, sustaining peace and sustainable development: Towards coherence and impact on the ground"	Conflict-affected countries
March 2023	2023 Development Cooperation Forum – "Prioritizing the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable through risk-informed development cooperation"	Vulnerable countries/people

Date	Meeting	Focus
May 2023	ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – session on "Boosting tailored United Nations development system response to diverse country contexts"	LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS
June 2023	Special Meeting on "Saving Lives: Addressing the urgent food security needs of Haiti"	Haiti
June 2022	Transition Meeting: "Transition from relief to development: taking action to promote resilience, sustainable solutions and recovery in climate-related disasters and crisis contexts"	Haiti, South Sudan, and the Sahel region
June 2023	Joint ECOSOC-PBC Meeting on "The importance of SDGs in linking peace and development on the ground"	Conflict-affected countries
July 2023	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item on "African countries emerging from conflict" and the "Sustainable development of the Sahel"	South Sudan and the Sahel region
July 2023	ECOSOC Management Meeting, consideration of agenda item "Long-term programme of support for Haiti"	Haiti
December 2023	Joint UNGA – ECOSOC Thematic Event on Landlocked Developing Countries	LLDCs