

**Introduction of the Secretary-General's Report on
"Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2017/15)"**

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ECOSOC (25 July 2017, 3:00 – 6:00 PM)

Mme Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of introducing the Secretary-General's report on regional cooperation contained in document E/2017/15 and its addenda 1 and 2.

Allow me to deliver a shorter version of my statement while the full version and presentation will be made available to the Secretariat and online.

As per recent years, the Secretary General's report on regional cooperation seeks to provide member States with regional perspectives on current and important issues on the global agenda and the work conducted by the regional commissions in the economic, social and related fields.

This year's report provides **regional perspectives on efforts to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality**. As you are aware, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC debated at length the theme of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" last week. At the outset of the HLPF two weeks ago, through their presentations and dialogue with Member States and other Stakeholders, the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions shared their

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insights on this theme, as well as their overview and in-depth assessment of the progress towards achieving the SDGs in the regions. Key messages emanating from the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development addressing this theme were also conveyed, among others, by the ministerial chairs of the Forums at the beginning of the HLPF ministerial segment.

We are Grateful for the President and Bureau members of ECOSOC for these opportunities at HLPF which recognize the importance and critical contributions of the regional dimensions and cooperation in supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its follow up and review. We are also pleased that the ministerial declarations adopted by HLPF and ECOSOC welcomed these inputs and called upon the Regional Commissions to continue contributing to the work of HLPF. We look forward to continuing this year's practice in future HLPFs, including under your upcoming presidency of the Council, Mme Ambassador.

For the sake of brevity on this important theme, allow me to stress only one element in the context of the SG report, which I believe is crucial in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its effective follow up and review at the national and regional levels, and that is the issue of **measuring poverty and monitoring levels of inequality** to assist policy makers with reliable data and evidence-based analysis.

- Latin America and the Caribbean remains the region with the highest overall level of socioeconomic inequality. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has been making efforts for more than 30 years to promote the measurement of income poverty. Its methodological recommendations for poverty measurement form the basis of national official poverty in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Commission also continues to provide countries with strategic advice on poverty reduction.
- Africa continues to perform well in terms of economic growth yet it comes second as the most unequal region. As part of its efforts to support African countries in tracking progress toward

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reducing human exclusion, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has developed the African Social Development Index.

- In the Arab region, income inequalities have been on the rise over the past 30 years owing to an uneven distribution of income gains. Moreover, there are striking subregional disparities in per capita gross domestic product in the region. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has developed a new multidimensional poverty measurement tool that is applied to all Countries in the Arab region to monitor progress on multidimensional poverty. The commission is also rolling out toolkits on social protection and social justice.
- In Asia and the Pacific, economic growth has significantly reduced the total number of people living in poverty. However, economic gains were not shared equally and income inequality remained above the world average and in some cases income inequalities have even increased. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP, in cooperation with ECA, ECLAC and ESCWA, launched an online interactive platform, the Social Protection Toolbox, which highlights good practices in establishing the foundations of a social protection floor. The Toolbox presents policymakers and stakeholders with the argument for strengthening and broadening social protection in a user-friendly and interactive fashion.
- In the UN Economic Commission for Europe region, the financial and economic crisis of 2008 resulted in increased poverty and inequality across the region, especially in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The UN Economic Commission for Europe developed a guide on poverty measurement to raise awareness of the importance of poverty statistics and data.

The regional commissions are also supporting their countries in conceptualizing, designing and implementing multidisciplinary public policies oriented towards greater socioeconomic equality, including through a **joint Development Account project** that run through the period 2014-2017 (*"Promoting equality: Strengthening the capacity of select developing countries to design and implement equality-oriented public policies and programmes"*). The project puts into effect the 2030 Agenda integrated vision in addressing poverty across the three dimensions of

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sustainable development. It also highlights the important role played by the international and regional environment and of multi-stakeholders partnerships.

In that vein, **policy recommendations advocated by the commissions** to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality include: promoting structural change and diversifying economies; establishing effective tax systems; improving labour markets; strengthening social protection systems; raising data collection capacities, and closing gaps in gender and other types of inequality.

In addition to regional work and efforts to address inequality, the SG report also provides **regional perspectives on global migration** as part of the contributions towards the creation of a global compact on safe, orderly, and regular migration. As you are aware, an intensive preparatory process has been ongoing over the last months, in anticipation of intergovernmental negotiations early next year. The report examines migration trends ahead of the intergovernmental conference to be held in 2018 regarding safe, orderly, and regular migration. It recalls that most migration is intraregional, mostly due to labour policies and practices.

As per resolution 71/280 (2017), the Regional Commissions are convening, with their partners and stakeholders, regional consultations that will take place over the coming months in order to channel regional and sub-regional perspectives, evidence and data into the stocktaking meeting in Mexico in December 2017. The regional consultations will be guided by the six themes of the global compact on migration process while stressing regional and subregional contexts, priorities and challenges.

The first regional consultation will take place next month in Santiago, Chile from 30-31 August, where ECLAC will convene its members to consider the findings of three sub-regional

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studies commissioned to understand migration trends in South America, Central America and Mexico and the Caribbean.

From 26-27 September in Beirut, ESCWA will hold its regional consultation. The consultation coincides with the publication of the 2017 Situation Report on International Migration, which will examine migration trends and data for the Arab region. Several preparatory meetings are being held in advance in the ESCWA region, including a multi-stakeholder consultation and a consultation focused on labour mobility and practices convened by ILO.

In the Africa region, ECA has held several sub-regional preparatory meetings and will convene an expert group meeting of sub-regional experts in Addis Ababa from 14-15 September. This will be followed by a regional conference convened together with the African Union from 18-20 October and then a final meeting held in tandem with the African Development Forum. In parallel, the African Union has launched its High-Level Panel on International Migration in Africa.

From 6-8 November in Bangkok, Thailand, ESCAP will convene a regional consultation focused on the themes of labour migration, climate change and migration and protection in the context of large movements of vulnerable irregular migrants. Background papers on these topics are being prepared to inform deliberations during the meeting. National consultations, organized by IOM, will be leveraged to feed into the regional preparatory meeting. In addition, subregional consultations will be held in North and Central Asia, as well as the Pacific.

Finally, the Executive Committee of UNECE determined that it would discuss migration statistics as a dedicated agenda item in an upcoming meeting in early November.

Detailed and updated information on the regional preparations for the global compact on migration can be found online at the RCNYO website www.regionalcommissions.org.

Mme Chair,

As demonstrated in the second part of the SG report, the Regional Commissions continued to **promote collaboration, coordination and policy coherence at the regional level** by convening the ECOSOC-mandated Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM). The RCMs continue to provide a critical bridge between the United Nations system organizations and the non-UN regional and sub-regional organizations, thus forging policy coherence and alignment of efforts in the regions.

Specifically, the first joint meeting between the RCM for Africa and the regional UNDG was held and deliberated on Africa's challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and the support that the UN system can provide for the alignment and implementation of both Agendas. The Asia-Pacific RCM held twelve meetings to discuss realignment of its structure to better address the implementation of the Agenda and the formulation of the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action for 2016-2020. The Latin America and Caribbean RCM convened in 2016 to coordinate with the regional UNDG its contribution to the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. RCM in the Arab region met to agree on a set of initiatives surrounding research, regional consultations, capacity-building, and advocacy, as well as to establish a working group focused on data collection for the 2030 Agenda. The Europe and Central Asia RCM and the regional UNDG have merged their meetings into biannual regional UN system meetings, with established issue-based coalitions on sustainable development issues.

The five regional commissions also continued to strengthen their **coordination efforts**, which allowed enhanced interregional cooperation. Through meetings of the Executive Secretaries, they forged coordinated positions and strategic responses on the reform proposals to reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), and climate change

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challenges. They also coordinated their representation at global conferences and organized joint activities at the margins of such conferences.

Finally Mme Chair, during the reporting period, the Regional Commissions held their ministerial sessions and high-level meetings that resulted in regionally agreed policy declarations, decisions and resolutions brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council in Addenda 1 and 2 of the Secretary-General report. I particularly draw the attention of the Council to two draft resolutions requiring action in Add.1 of the SG report.

Thank you.