

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

UN: Human Development Report

– Tax on Internet Access

The UN Human Development Report sees the lack of internet access as exacerbating inequalities. It gives as an example that it costs \$75 and takes five days to send a 40-page document from Madagascar to the Cote d'Ivoire; and it costs \$45 and takes half an hour to fax it. However, it costs around 20 cents and takes two minutes to send it by e-mail, which can go to thousands of people at no extra cost.

It calls for a tax on information sent through the internet, with the proceeds used to help provide expensive equipment in poor countries. With rapid growth of the internet, a very small tax could still raise sums far in excess of the world's rich countries' official aid budgets. □

– Gender Inequality

According to statistics gathered for the Report, gender inequality remains a fact of life in every society in the world. The index of human development is lower for women than for men in all UN countries without exception. □

– International Codes of Conduct

Multinationals are too dominant in the world economy for voluntary codes of conduct to be enough, the Report says. International codes of conduct should also be developed for banks and other financial institutions, covering secrecy and risk assessment.

(The Human Development Report. Published by Oxford University Press for UNDP, \$19.95. Tel: +44 1865-556767) □

Montreal Protocol

– 19th Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group

Representatives discussed strengthening rules that govern the use of ozone-depleting substances and considered national efforts to eliminate those chemicals.

The Working Group also reviewed the assessment reports of the Protocol's three panels on science, environmental effects, and technology and economics; and considered adjustments and amendments of the phase-out schedules proposed by the European Community.

Very little of a concrete nature was achieved, and decisions have been postponed to the next meeting of the Group in September. □

ECOSOC: Emphasis on Core Duties

Francesco Paolo Fulci (Italy), President of the Economic and Social Council, said at the end of April that efforts were being made to instill new life into the Council with the effective implementation of the provisions of Article 65 of the Charter. That Article states that the Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council and also assist it upon request.

Mr. Fulci said efforts were being made to transform ECOSOC from being a "mini-General Assembly" into what it was originally meant to do – to cope with the social and economic problems of States and with human rights.

He also said it had been decided that a 10-point manifesto should be prepared which outlined what the Economic and Social Council believed should be a strategy to eradicate poverty from the world. It would be based on all the documents adopted by the various UN conferences. "Our hope is that its message, which should be written in clear words, would be adopted at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council July session in Geneva," he said.

(EPL will report on the July session in the next issue) □

Meeting between ECOSOC and Bretton Woods Institutions

The theme of the meeting was the functioning of international financial markets and stability in financing for development.

Solid cooperation with the international financial institutions was essential for making ECOSOC truly action and results-oriented, the President of the Council said.

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ECOSOC regarded the meeting as an example of the Council's success in building bridges between the United Nations and the international financial institutions, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

On the architecture of the international financial system, participants had noted the positive initial steps taken to address the financial crisis. Measures should continue to be taken to strengthen the international financial architecture, keeping in view the need for a holistic approach and, above all, never forgetting the needs of the developing countries. Particular attention had been paid to the need to enhance transparency in institutions, markets, governments and international organisations.

Participants had stressed that debt relief required additional resources, and that it should not be at the expense of development assistance. □

UNCTAD: Agenda for UNCTAD X

The substantive agenda for the tenth quadrennial conference of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to be held in Bangkok from 12–20 February 2000, has been adopted. The theme of the conference will be "Developmental strategies in an increasingly interdependent world: applying the lessons of the past to make globalisation an effective instrument for the development of all countries and all people."

The text of the resolution (TB/B/EX(20)/L.1) stresses the mixed impact of globalisation on development, including the persistence of economic disparities among nations and the risk of further marginalisation for a number of developing countries, particularly those least developed.

For more information contact UNCTAD, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Fax: +41-22-907 0043. □

G-15 Summit

At their summit held in Montego Bay, the heads of State and Government of the Group of 15 developing nations discussed global economic and social issues and produced a joint communiqué to inform debates on reforming the international financial architecture and preparations for future talks at the World Trade Organisation.

More details from: Lim Aik Hoe, Economic Affairs Officer, Technical Support Facility of the Group of 15, 54-56 rue de Montbrillant, case postale 2403, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Fax: +41-22 703 0806. □

UNESCO/WMO: Hydrology Conference

The aim of the Conference was to identify how the two UN agencies can contribute jointly to a solution of the world's looming crisis over the lack of freshwater.

The outcome of the Meeting (for details see below) were submitted to the 13th WMO Congress and will be sent to the General Conference of UNESCO, which will meet in Paris from 16 October–8 November 1999.

More information from Chief, Information and Public Affairs, WMO, 41 avenue Giuseppe-Motta, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Fax: +41-22 733 2829. □

World Bank Cultural Site Management Workshop

The Cultural Site Management (CSM) Workshop, co-sponsored by the World Bank Institute and the World Bank's Culture and Development Anchor, took place from 26-30 April 1999 in Washington, DC.

WWW site for details is: <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/culturalheritage/> □