

News from the Commission

AIDS Commission meets ahead of final report

One of Africa's leading initiatives against HIV/AIDS, the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA), met in Washington DC at the end of its two-year mandate. Its brief was to advise African governments on how to strengthen their effectiveness against the pandemic, which is having a profound, structural impact on the continent's capacity to meet its development challenges. At the final meeting on 20 October, CHGA's Commissioners - all individuals prominent in the fight against AIDS - reviewed the draft of their final report. The report will offer policy advice and action points on issues such as reinforcing prevention efforts, strengthening health systems and treatment, protecting vulnerable groups more effectively, and achieving more sustainable and coordinated funding. [More information about CHGA and a full list of Commissioners can be found at <http://www.uneca.org/chga/>]



Committee on Sustainable Development opens in Addis

The Committee on Sustainable Development held a week-long meeting in Addis Ababa from 24-28 October to discuss its work plan for the next two years. A new Bureau, chaired by Nigeria, was elected which will guide debates on managing land-based resources for sustainable development. Speaking at the meeting, Ethiopia's state minister for agriculture and rural development highlighted the importance of sustainable land-use in the country. He stated that Ethiopia's highlands lose an estimated 1.9 billion tons of soil every year; and that 20,000 to 30,000 hectares of agricultural land are abandoned each year due to soil depletion. The director of ECA's Sustainable Development Division, Josue Dione, noted that sustainable land use was a priority issue for Africa and crucial for attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

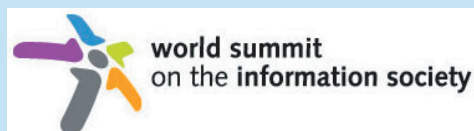
US proposal could hinder African trade, ECA warns

ECA has urged caution over a recent US proposal on liberalising international agricultural trade put forward at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in October. In a briefing note, ECA's Trade and Integration Division noted that while the US proposal had the potential of moving the Doha Round negotiations towards an ambitious and successful conclusion, the benefits for Africa could be outweighed by the possible exclusion of "sensitive products" such as rice and sugar. The proposal suggests linear reductions on four tariff bands which, at face value could be beneficial to African countries by greatly reducing tariffs on agricultural exports to rich nations. But ECA recommended that African trade negotiators pay close attention to the list of sensitive products that would emerge in later stages of the negotiations. "The persisting result and conclusion is that any level of ambition is going to be eroded by high levels of sensitive products," the note warned. "Having deep tariff cuts and retaining the sensitive products for Africa is like giving with the right hand and taking it away with the left." [Click here for full briefing note: http://www.uneca.org/trid/documents/Unrestricted_Market_Access_for_LDCs.pdf]

ECA, AU hold joint gender meeting in Senegal

Over 30 African Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs gathered in Dakar, Senegal, for a meeting of one of Africa's key groupings on women's affairs. The joint meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa's Committee on Women and

Looking Ahead



The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) takes place in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005. It will have three main components: ICT for All, an exhibition and the official summit. ECA will be participating in at least eight key parallel events in a bid to raise awareness and understanding of Africa's position vis a vis the WSIS Plan of Action. These will include workshops, roundtable discussions on issues such as internet governance and expert meetings organized in collaboration with partners.

Development (CWD) and the African Union (AU) was aimed at discussing advocacy for gender sensitive policies and institutional change at all levels. It was opened by Senegalese President Aboulaye Wade.

ARIA II peer review calls for unambiguous language

The second edition of ECA's publication 'Assessing Regional Integration in Africa' (ARIA) moved a step closer to completion in October when an external peer review of the draft took place. The review recommended that the report should adopt strong and unambiguous language in advising African heads of state on the best way to rationalize regional economic communities. Chapters in the report include the imperative of regional integration to Africa's development and action required at regional and national level for rationalization.

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Development Briefs

New ADB president announces sweeping reforms

The African Development Bank is to undergo sweeping changes in a bid to make it more effective and responsive, according to its new presi-

dent Donald Kaberuka. In his first full meeting with staff members in Tunis, he said there would be reforms aimed at strengthening internal governance and operational effectiveness. The aim was to galvanise a new international agenda for Africa on issues such as trade, debt and ODA, he said. According to news reports, he spoke of the need for a new and forward-looking institution. In another address to EU development ministers in the UK, he stated that the ADB had very high potential and should be assisted and supported so that this potential could be realized.

Africa aid pledges to be checked

The Africa Partnership Forum, bringing together international and African organisations, has agreed to track promises of aid to the continent. A new annual review will examine what aid has been handed over, as well as giving updates on development goals and pledges by African governments to bring about change. The first review report is due to be published in October 2006. A support unit, based at the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, will be created to help with the task. The Africa Partnership Forum includes representatives of the G8, OECD, African Union, NEPAD and international institutions like the UN, World Bank and IMF.

Concern over bird flu in Africa

A UN expert has warned that lack of preparedness in Africa to counter deadly bird flu is cause for great concern. Speaking to Reuters television, Joseph Domenech of the FAO said East African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia were particularly vulnerable. "If the disease comes into this region it will be very difficult to have an appropriate early response and early detection such as you saw in Turkey," he said. He noted it was unlikely that poor countries could afford to stockpile the expensive anti-viral drugs that European nations were buying to help limit a human pandemic. "The globalisation of trade, the globalisation of movements of people also bring a higher risk of spreading the disease over long distances," Domenech stated. "Wildlife is only part of the problem and the extent of the risk is not totally known." [Click here for full article: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L17260870.htm>]

Upcoming Events

10 Nov - Launch of Information Economy Report 2005 (UNCTAD-Geneva)

16-18 Nov - World Summit on the Information Society (DPI -Tunis)

20 Nov - Universal Children's Day (UNICEF)

21 Nov - Launch of AIDS epidemic update 2005 (UNAIDS - New Delhi)

25 Nov - International day to end violence against women (UNIFEM)