

Streamlining the GA Second Committee and ECOSOC

One possibility would be to streamline the work of the UNGA Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to generate substantive resolutions and decisions focusing on sustainable development -- where the UN arguably has some policy influence. Delegations could ensure that resolutions dealing with programme issues and operational activities on science and technology for development, and women in development, for example, contain language addressing ways in which the UN system will follow-up the outcomes of the 1992 Conference.

In addition, should countries decide not to phase out some of the UN's/ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies, they could agree to ensuring that their programmes focus on sustainable development objectives. For example, the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy could consider the sustainable management of energy resources.

Rationalizing the work programme of the Second Committee and ECOSOC (and their subsidiary bodies) is a difficult task, subject to interpretation and negotiations about competing national priorities. However, given the ongoing efforts to promote reform of the UN's economic and social sectors, it may be possible within the next two years to negotiate a more rational work plan, respecting at the same time legitimate concerns by all countries about fundamental development problems.

Adjusting and Strengthening the Mandate of the Director General

Another possible means for improving coordination is to adjust the mandate of the Office of the UN Director General for Development and International Economic Cooperation to become a Director General for Sustainable Development. New tasks could include system-wide coordination and integration of environmental programmes into the UN'S development activities, drawing on the decisions by governing bodies of UNDP, UNEP, FAO, WHO, UNIDO, etc. The decision to amend the Director General's mandate to meet new demands would have to come from the UNGA Second Committee.

Such an initiative would require a commitment by the Secretary-General to implement UNCED's outcomes; and by the Director General to work with the various UN agencies to produce cogent results. An effective Director General may be more successful than any single agency head in ensuring broad sustainable development objectives are integrated into UN programmes.