**Economic and Social Council**

**Commission for Social Development**
**Fifty-first session**
6-15 February 2013
**Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters**

### Review of methods of work of the Commission for Social Development

**Report of the Secretary-General**

*Summary*

The present report is prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2012/7, in which the Council decided that the Commission for Social Development would keep its methods of work under review, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Commission at its fifty-first session on ways and means of strengthening its work, taking into account the views of Member States. The report provides a summary of responses received from Member States and civil society and puts forward, for consideration by the Council through the Commission, a number of issues for deliberation on improving the methods of work of the Commission further.

## I. Introduction

1.   The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2012/7, decided that the Commission for Social Development would keep its methods of work under review, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Commission at its fifty-first session on ways and means to strengthen its work, taking into account the views of Member States. In response, the secretariat of the Commission circulated a note verbale requesting inputs from Member States.

## II. Background

### A. Mandate

2.   The Commission — originally named the Social Commission — was established by the Council in 1946. Following comprehensive reappraisals of the role of the Commission in 1961 and 1966, the Commission was renamed in order to clarify its role as a preparatory and advisory body of the Council in the sphere of social development policy. In 1996, in the wake of the World Summit for Social Development, the terms of reference were revised to enable the Commission to assume its role as the primary intergovernmental body responsible for follow-up to the Summit.

### B. Terms of reference

3.   The functions of the Commission, as set out in its original mandate, contained in Council resolution 10 (II), were to advise the Council on social questions of a general character, on practical measures needed in the social field, on international agreements and conventions on any of these matters and on their execution, and to report to the Council on the extent to which the recommendations of the United Nations in the field of social policy were being carried out.

4.   In Council resolution 830 J (XXXII), the terms of reference of the Commission were expanded to cover advice to the Council in the fields of social policy development, research in areas affecting social and economic development, and policies and programmes designed to promote social progress. In addition, it was clarified that the advice provided by the Commission on practical measures should encompass questions of social welfare, community development, urbanization, housing and social defence. By its resolution 1139 (XLI), the Council mandated the Commission to provide advice on social problems that require action or recommendations either by the Council itself or by the General Assembly.

5.   In its resolution 50/161, on follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the General Assembly decided that a revitalized Commission, together with the Council and the Assembly itself, should constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental follow-up process. The Commission would have the primary responsibility for the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the Summit, while the Council would provide overall guidance and coordination. The Assembly also endorsed Council resolution 1995/60, by which the Council called upon the Commission, when developing its multi-year programme of work on the follow-up to the Summit, to, inter alia, adapt its mandate in order to ensure an integrated

approach to social development, and to review and update its methods of work and to make recommendations to ensure an effective follow-up to the Summit.

6.    In resolution 1996/7, the Council adopted additional terms of reference for the Commission, based on recommendations agreed at the special session of the Commission in 1996. At that session, the Commission, after reviewing its terms of reference, proposed that its existing mandate be reaffirmed. In fulfilling its mandate, it should assist the Council in monitoring, reviewing and appraising the progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and advise the Council accordingly. To that end, the Commission should:

(a)    Improve international understanding on social development through, inter alia, the exchange of information and experience;

(b)    Integrate, within the framework of the follow-up to the Summit, consideration of issues relating to the situation of social groups, including review of relevant United Nations programmes of action related to such groups, and consideration of other sectoral issues;

(c)    Identify emerging issues affecting social development that require urgent consideration, and make substantive recommendations thereon;

(d)    Make recommendations regarding social development to the Council;

(e)    Elaborate practical measures aimed at furthering Summit recommendations;

(f)    Identify issues requiring improved system-wide coordination, taking into account substantive inputs from different organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the contributions of other functional commissions concerned, in order to assist the Council in its coordination functions;

(g)    Maintain and enhance public awareness and support for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

## C.    Methods of work of the Commission

7.    At different times in its existence, the Commission has shown awareness of the need to improve its methods of work in order to adapt to changing demands and mandates.

8.    In its early years, the Commission stressed the importance of establishing close coordination with other functional commissions of the Council. The Commission considered the desirability of setting up joint, ad hoc technical committees of two or more commissions, such as, for example, a committee to consider the question of migration, composed of members of the Social Commission and the Population Commission.

9.    In 1966, the Commission undertook a reappraisal of its role and function and set out a long-term programme of work for the remainder of that decade. The reappraisal formed the basis for the decision of the Council to revise the terms of reference of the Commission, to change its name to the Commission for Social Development and to increase its membership to 32.

10.    In its resolution 1986/14, the Council noted that the Commission, owing principally to lack of time, was experiencing difficulties in giving proper consideration to all the items on its agenda and, on that basis, requested the Commission, inter alia, to consider specific proposals concerning ways and means of improving its work. At its thirtieth session, in 1987, the Commission established an informal open-ended working group to consider this question. The working group discussed extensively and in detail the methods of work of the Commission, the problems, difficulties and deficiencies, and possible ways of improving its work so that objectives could be achieved with greater efficiency. There was general agreement on the need to rationalize the work of the Commission and to give greater attention to the elaboration of clear and pragmatic conclusions.

11.    At its thirtieth and thirty-first sessions, in 1989, the Commission adopted resolutions on the improvement of the work of the Commission for Social Development with respect to its agenda, its substantive output and the frequency and duration of its meetings. The question of working methods was also addressed by the Commission at its special session in 1996, which subsequently led to the adoption by the Council of resolution 1996/7.

12.    In 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. In the resolution, the Assembly requested each functional commission to examine its methods of work in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits.

13.    In its resolution 2005/11 on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission for Social Development, the Council decided that, in order for the Commission to fulfil its mandate, the work of the Commission beginning with its forty-fifth session (in 2007), would be organized in a series of two-year action-oriented implementation cycles, which would include a review and a policy segment.

14.    Following the World Summit for Social Development, held in 1995, the Commission established the practice of agreed conclusions as the format of its substantive outcome on the priority themes (see table 1), while maintaining the use of resolutions on other substantive agenda items.

Table 1
**Priority themes of the Commission for Social Development since 1996**

| Period | Priority theme |
| --- | --- |
| 2013-2014 | Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all |
| 2011-2012 | Poverty eradication, taking into account its interrelationship with social integration and full employment and decent work for all |
| 2009-2010 | Social integration, taking into account the relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all |
| 2007-2008 | Promoting full productive employment and decent work for all |

| Period | Priority theme |
|--------|----------------|
| 2006 | Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty |
| 2005 | 10-year review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly |
| 2004 | Improving public sector effectiveness |
| 2003 | National and international cooperation for social development |
| 2002 | Integration of social and economic policy |
| 2001 | Enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalizing world |
| 2000 | Review of the Social Summit 1995 |
| 1999 | Social services for all |
| 1998 | Social integration |
| 1997 | Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods |
| 1996 | Strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty |

15.    However, in the wake of the adoption of the two-year cycle framework, the Council decided in its resolution 2006/18 of 26 July 2006, that the outcome of the Commission's review should be in the form of a chairperson's summary, done in close coordination with other members of the Bureau, and that the policy segment should have a negotiated outcome with action-oriented strategies. The use of resolutions on other substantive agenda items remained. During the period 2007-2012, 27 resolutions were adopted by the Commission (see table 2).

Table 2
**Resolutions adopted by the Commission for Social Development, 2007-2012**

| Subject | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2007-2012 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Priority theme | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| Methods of work | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| New Partnership for Africa's Development | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Disability | 2 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 5 |
| Ageing | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 5 |
| Youth | 2 | | 1 | | | | 3 |
| Family | | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Total** | **6** | **4** | **4** | **5** | **4** | **4** | **27** |

16.    Since the adoption of the two-year cycle, the Commission has submitted, for adoption by the Council, a resolution on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission for Social Development every other year, coinciding with the policy session of the two-year cycle.

17.    In its latest three resolutions on the matter (2008/19, 2010/10, 2012/7), the Council endorsed the two-year cycle and identified the priority theme for the ensuing cycle. In its resolution 2010/10, the Council recommended that the elected officers of the Bureau serve a two-year term of office, in parallel with the review and policy cycle, to enhance the effectiveness of the Commission's work.

18.    In its 2005 review, the Commission expressed support for maintaining the emerging issues item on its future agenda. Since 2007, the Commission has included an emerging issue on its agenda (see table 3 for the list of emerging issues).

Table 3
**Emerging issues (2007-2012)**

| Year | Emerging issue |
| --- | --- |
| 2012 | Youth: poverty and unemployment |
| 2011 | Social protection |
| 2010 | Policy responses on employment and the social consequences of the financial and economic crisis, including its gender dimension |
| 2009 | Current global crises and their impact on social development |
| 2008 | Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda |
| 2007 | Youth employment: impact, challenges and opportunities for social development |

19.    The resolutions, along with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, have constituted the basic framework of the current methods of work of the Commission for Social Development.

20.    Between 1947 and 1979, the Commission met, in general, for 13-15 days per session. Longer sessions were held in 1950 (sixth session), 1951 (seventh session) and 1968 (nineteenth session), during which the Commission met for 20-25 days. Shorter sessions were held in 1949 (eighth session, 6 days) and 1962 (fourteenth session, 10 days). Between 1981 and 1996, the Commission met for eight to nine days each year. Following the World Summit for Social Development, the Council established that the meeting period of the Commission should be eight working days (resolution 1996/7). The eight-day sessions were to consist of two meetings per day (morning and afternoon) for a total of 16 meetings per eight-day session. In the three Commission sessions between 2010 and 2012, only 12 of the 16 potential meeting periods were used for formal meetings. In 2009, 13 of the 16 potential meetings were used. In 2008 and 2007, 15 and 14 meetings were used for formal meetings, respectively. Compared with the other functional commissions of the Council, the Commission for Social Development has met for more days than five other commissions of the Council, and for fewer days than three other commissions (see table 4).

Table 4
**Duration of sessions of the functional commissions of the Economic and
Social Council**

| Functional commission | Duration of sessions (days) | Membership |
|---|---:|---:|
| Statistical Commission | 4 | 24 |
| Commission on Population and Development | 5 | 47 |
| Commission for Social Development | 8 | 46 |
| Commission on the Status of Women | 10 | 45 |
| Commission on Narcotic Drugs | 6 | 53 |
| Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice | 6 | 40 |
| Commission on Science and Technology for Development | 5 | 43 |
| Commission on Sustainable Development | 10 | 53 |
| United Nations Forum on Forests | 10 | 196 |

## III. Review of the work of the Commission for Social Development

21.    The present section provides a summary of responses to the survey contained in a note verbale circulated to all Member States. The survey was developed in response to Council resolution 2012/7 on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission for Social Development, in which the Commission requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its fifty-first session on ways and means of strengthening its work, taking into account the views of Member States.

22.    The topics covered in the survey included (a) Commission procedure; (b) the use of information and communications technologies; (c) documentation and deliberations pertaining to the past three policy cycles; (d) fulfilment of the mandate of the Commission; (e) the selection of delegates to the Commission; and (f) the means by which to enhance collaboration with the other functional commissions and between the Commission and the Economic and Social Council.

23.    The note verbale was circulated in July 2012 and responses were accepted up to mid-November. The eight Member States that responded were Argentina, Burkina Faso, Finland, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, the Russian Federation and Switzerland. In order to encourage candid responses, Member States were assured that they would not be associated with their specific responses. The responses are aggregate and summarized without specific reference to any Member State.

### A.    Commission procedure

24.    The Member States that responded to the survey indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the periodicity of the meetings of the Commission (annual). All but one reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the timing of the meetings (early February). Two Member States indicated that they were not satisfied with the duration of meetings. One Member State suggested that

the Commission meetings could be completed within one week, if planned accordingly (see table 5).

25. All but one of the respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the current practice of discussing one core issue over a two-year period and with the two-year policy review cycle.

26. One response indicated dissatisfaction with the identification of relevant sub-themes within the priority theme in order to focus interventions and discussions, and two were dissatisfied with the selection of the theme one year in advance (as opposed to adopting a multi-year programme of work). One respondent suggested that duplication of themes discussed in the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Assembly itself should be considered, taking into account the discussion on the revitalization of the work of the Assembly. The Commission should now be more ambitious and relate its programme of work more directly towards influencing the current and future global development agenda from a social point of view. New themes should be adopted, such as:

(a) Human rights-based approaches to development;

(b) Inequality reduction (alongside rather than instead of the reduction of overall poverty);

(c) Inclusion, participation, accountability and empowerment;

(d) Diversity, tolerance and cohesion;

(e) Social protection floor and essential social services;

(f) Social dimensions of economic and environmental policies.

27. A key problem identified was the overlap and lack of coordination and coherence between the different commissions of the Economic and Social Council. The Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission for Social Development deal with similar issues, based on people-centred development, yet lack coordination and synergies. Efforts could be made to understand the linkages and build coherence and synergies in favour of a comprehensive, social and people-centred agenda for development.

28. Additional suggested means of improving the procedure of the Commission included organizing more interactive round tables, linking the work of the Commission more closely to the work of the regional commissions, and organizing forums for the exchange of experiences and activities related to South-South cooperation.

29. Seven Member States indicated that they were satisfied with the current role of the Bureau, with one Member State expressing neither dissatisfaction nor satisfaction. One response suggested that the Bureau of the Commission, which holds responsibility for two consecutive sessions, should consider ways and means of strengthening the work of the Commission, as agreed upon in Council resolution 2012/7. If necessary, Member States could have intersessional discussions about the issue, based upon the suggestions of the Bureau.

## B. Use of information and communications technologies

30. All responses favoured posting statements submitted electronically by Member States on the Internet. Five Member States favoured live webcasts of the meetings of the Commission; two were not in favour and one was undecided. Views were split with regard to in-session use of social media tools such as Twitter. Four respondents indicated that they favoured using social media, while two did not and two were undecided. Similarly, with regard to live webcasts of the meetings of the Commission, five respondents were in favour, two were not, and one was undecided.

31. Establishing an exchange network between social development institutions of the members of the Commission in order to better understand policies and programmes would foster dialogue and cooperation activities between sessions that would strengthen the annual discussions and achieve more productive results. A web page on the Commission's website could also be created on the use of new technologies, giving access to all delegations and institutions involved and allowing for periodic videoconferences at the regional level in order to share good practices regarding social development and poverty reduction programmes.

32. The quality of interaction between delegations and United Nations system representatives, including regional commissions, was viewed favourably by three respondents, while three expressed neither dissatisfaction nor satisfaction. One Member State indicated that it was dissatisfied with the quality of interaction. The quality of interaction between delegations and civil society was viewed favourably by five respondents, while two indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Responses were split with regard to media coverage of the Commission; three respondents indicated they were dissatisfied, while four indicated satisfaction and one indicated being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

33. Suggestions for improving the level of interaction included activities that would link the various actors so that each was aware of the others' needs and could interact more flexibly. For example, regional sessions could be arranged on acute issues such as ageing, where challenges and solutions have various distinct regional features. A technology platform for the intersessional exchange of experiences between Member States, to follow up on the commitments made at the sessions of the Commission, could also improve interaction.

## C. Documentation and deliberation

34. With reference to the forty-fifth to fiftieth sessions of the Commission for Social Development, from 2007 to 2012, the majority of Member States indicated satisfaction with the documentation and deliberation on the various agenda items, with the exception of three areas in 2011-2012 and one area in 2007-2008. For the 2011-2012 policy cycle, one respondent indicated dissatisfaction with deliberations on the priority themes of poverty eradication, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and family issues, policies and programmes. One Member State indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with the deliberations on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing during the forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions (2007-2008).

35. Regarding documentation, Member States indicated that the documents were of good quality and provided complete and concise overviews of relevant

developments in the fields covered. However, Member States indicated that it might be useful to focus on best practices and provide more examples of policies and measures at the national, regional and international levels that have contributed to the promotion of the social goals of the Commission. In addition, documentation should provide an overview of what was being done elsewhere in the United Nations system or the international community, so that the Commission was aware of and could interact with the relevant actors. Another response suggested reducing the number of thematic reports and expanding the factual/statistical basis of the remaining reports.

36. Taking a broader view of the agenda of the Commission, another response suggested framing the agenda and the dialogue towards a more comprehensive approach, indicating that poverty reduction, employment and social integration should not be handled as separate issues, since the understanding of the interconnections between the issues had advanced significantly since 1995, which should be reflected in the work of the Commission. The response went on to note that many Member States, from both the South and the North, feel confused by the outdated three-pillar agenda of poverty reduction, employment and social integration. It was difficult to prepare statements on that basis as Governments could not and should not base their policies and positions on those sorts of distinctions. Furthermore, the response indicated that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action should be reviewed in the light of socially, ecologically and economically sustainable development, as well as the emergence of the human rights-based approach to development. In that context, the key new agenda items should be the human rights-based approach to development and the reduction of inequalities.

37. Member States expressed the view that deliberations did not encourage interaction and that a more interactive discussion was desirable. It was noted that the dynamic of the meetings of the Commission did not present many instances of interchange or debate at a high level. Interaction could be increased by high-level debates and exchanges on agenda items among senior public policy officials; the inclusion of more experts in the Commission; and providing more time to exchange views on the various themes. Increasing exchange and dialogue would improve the quality and utility of the inputs that the Commission delivered to the Council.

## D. Fulfilment of the mandate of the Commission

38. The eight Member States responding to the survey expressed a broad range of views on the extent to which the Commission fulfilled its mandate (see table 5). In all areas, the majority of respondents indicated that the Commission fulfilled its mandate to at least a moderate extent. In three areas at least, one respondent indicated that the Commission did not fulfil its mandate at all. The three areas were (a) development of practical measures aimed at furthering Summit recommendations; (b) contributing to the integration of the social dimensions in sustainable development; and (c) anticipating new and emerging issues that are relevant to the post-2015 development agenda.

Table 5
**Survey on the fulfilment of the mandate of the Commission**

| To what extent does the Commission: | Not at all | Slightly | Moderately | To a good extent | To a great extent | No opinion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Improve international understanding on social development through, inter alia, the exchange of information and experience | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| b. Integrate, within the framework of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: | | | | | | |
| (1) Consideration of issues relating to the situation of social groups, including review of relevant United Nations programmes of action related to such groups | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | |
| (2) Consideration of other sectoral issues | | 1 | 1 | 5 | | 1 |
| c. Identify emerging issues affecting social development that require urgent consideration | | 2 | | 4 | 2 | |
| d. Make substantive recommendations on emerging issues affecting social development that require urgent consideration | | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| e. Advise the Economic and Social Council on social policies of a general character and give particular attention to: | | | | | | |
| (1) Policies designed to promote social progress to the establishment of social objectives | | 1 | 5 | 2 | | |
| (2) Programme priorities in areas affecting social and economic development | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| (3) Social research in areas affecting social and economic development | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | 1 |
| f. Advise the Council on measures needed for: | | | | | | |
| (1) The coordination of activities in the social field | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | |
| (2) The recording and exchange of experience among Governments in the formulation of social development policies | | 2 | 3 | 3 | | |
| (3) The recording and exchange of experience among Governments in the execution of social development policies | | 2 | 3 | 2 | | |
| g. Advise the Council on international agreements and conventions in the social field | | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| h. Make recommendations regarding social development to the Council | | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | |
| i. Elaborate practical measures aimed at furthering Summit recommendations | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| j. Contribute to the integration of the social dimensions in sustainable development | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | | |
| k. Anticipate new and emerging issues that are relevant to the post-2015 development agenda | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| l. Select substantive agenda items that reflect the needs and priorities of my country | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| m. Select substantive agenda items that reflect the needs and priorities of my region | | | 3 | 3 | 1 | |

39. Respondents indicated several means by which the Commission could improve its contribution to the Economic and Social Council.

40. One response indicated that the Copenhagen Declaration, formulated in 1995, did not reflect recent issues in development. The response indicated that the Declaration did not adopt the comprehensive approach to development required by the current, legitimate concern with socially, ecologically and economically sustainable development and equity within and between generations. Since the Economic and Social Council does adopt the comprehensive approach to development, the Commission cannot produce the best possible insight for the Council. It indicated that there was need to broaden, or at least complement, the Commission agenda with emerging issues and approaches that reflect current issues of high global policy relevance and visibility properly. Additionally, the response indicated that the Commission could be the main partner in New York of the Human Rights Council and thereby integrate the human rights-based agenda, including issues such as inequality reduction and combating discrimination, into the future global United Nations development agenda and Council discussions.

41. The response further indicated that the Commission could improve its contribution to the Council by preparing full reports that took into account all of the topics and concerns raised by Member States in their presentations. Reports should reflect the concerns expressed by the country and the national and regional actions being taken by the country with regard to the themes of the Commission. Coordinating with other commissions of the Council could help to provide it with a strong, comprehensive, coherent social perspective on all key development challenges and opportunities worldwide, whether in the field of economic, political or environmental development.

42. In addition to the mandate given to the Commission by the Council, the Commission could, at least every five years, examine and evaluate the progress made and problems encountered in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. This would improve international understanding of social development through, inter alia, the exchange of information and experiences. The Commission would also integrate, in follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, the consideration of issues relating to the situation of social groups, such as the review of relevant United Nations actions and programmes related to those groups, and consideration of other sectoral issues. It would further help to identify the emerging issues affecting social development that require urgent consideration, and enable substantive recommendations to be made.

43. The Commission could strengthen its role as the main actor responsible for substantive support to the Council on the social dimension of development by providing integrated inputs from all summits, conferences and commissions of the United Nations related to social issues.

44. The Commission should establish practical mechanisms to bring about better interaction with the functional commissions and with the Council. Regarding collaboration among the commissions of the Council, one respondent suggested that it would be useful for the Commission for Social Development to hold a session in which the other commissions would introduce their current affairs to it. The opposite could also take place, whereby the Commission for Social Development would attend sessions of the other commissions. It was also suggested that the

Commission might wish to consider establishing a closer relationship with other commissions, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, considering that the concept of sustainable development lay in the articulation of the three pillars of economic, social and environmental development, and the fact that the issue of climate change increasingly impinged on social issues.

45. While there is a need for each commission to work in depth on its mandated area, there needs to be ways to explore intersectoral issues and a more coherent, comprehensive global agenda. This need is particularly relevant given the ongoing consultations on the post-2015 development agenda.

46. One respondent indicated that the Commission's current degree of cooperation with the Council and the other functional commissions was very effective.

47. Member States that responded to the survey also offered several suggestions for improving the method of selecting themes and emerging issues. Although there was support for the introduction of emerging issues among the responses, it was suggested that greater dialogue was needed in the selection of the emerging issue, for example, through an open dialogue session at the Commission. Additional means of improving the selection of themes were suggested, including by considering the needs indicated by Member States, carrying out surveys of States and civil society, and organizing seminars and workshops with the participation of Member States and civil society, to identify themes of global interest and emerging themes.

48. Including a new issue on the agenda could help to deepen one aspect of the priority theme that was particularly topical and deserved more attention, as was the case for the theme of social security in 2011, which thereafter strongly influenced the discussions on the priority theme of poverty eradication. Another criterion may be related to the annual ministerial review of the Council. If the selected topic lay within the mandate of the Commission, a discussion on that topic, or on a particular aspect of that topic, would not only enrich the discussions of the Council, but also strengthen the influence of the Commission and its importance for the Council. However, the Commission should avoid creating an automatic mechanism in that regard. It must be possible to decide freely each year how the Commission could contribute to the annual ministerial review through discussion of a new issue. Currently, the choice of the new issue was made on an ad hoc basis. In the future, it might be useful for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to provide a list of proposals, possibly on the basis of criteria defined by the Commission.

49. The themes and emerging issues had to have a clear link with the mandate of the Commission and the Copenhagen Declaration. Other criteria included the relevance of the topic and the added value that its discussion by the Commission could deliver vis-à-vis the discussions already under way in other forums. The formulation of a multi-year programme, as adopted for the period 2007-2012, had the advantage of providing a measure of security. Planning and discussions sometimes avoided controversy in the choice of a theme for all sessions. It would help to ensure that the priority areas of the Copenhagen Programme of Action of social integration, poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work, received the same degree of attention. Such an approach, however, carried the risk of inflexibility. By creating an agenda item entitled "new issues", and by identifying sub-themes for each priority theme, there would already be mechanisms that allowed the Commission to avoid that risk. On that basis, the formulation of a multi-year programme would be appropriate.

## E. Selection of delegations at the Commission

50. Seven of the eight responding Member States indicated that their delegations at the Commission consisted of a combination of delegates from their capitals and representatives in New York. One respondent indicated that attendance was mainly from the capital. According to the Member States, delegations include ministers (one respondent), senior officials (five respondents), Government experts (all eight respondents) and civil society representatives (three respondents). Delegates were selected based on Government coordination processes as well as on their expertise and the issues being covered at the Commission. One respondent noted that costs for an expert from each delegation were covered by the United Nations budget. They further noted that several experts based in New York actually interacted with the informal meetings. In that regard, it would be valuable to reconsider how the United Nations should support the costs based on the cost-effectiveness of the United Nations budget.

## IV. Issues for consideration

51. The review of the methods of work of the Commission for Social Development, has led to the identification of the following issues for consideration by the Commission:

(a) The way in which themes and emerging issues are selected, and whether the themes and emerging issues selected can help the Commission to best fulfil its mandate, contribute to the Council and the global development agenda, and advance the post-2015 development agenda. The Commission may wish to consider adopting a multi-year work programme linked to the programme of work of the Council;

(b) The way that ongoing Council reform efforts and proposals might affect the work of the Commission (see Council resolution 2012/30), and ways of strengthening the role of the Commission as the main actor supporting the Council on issues related to the social dimension of sustainable development;

(c) Means of enhancing collaboration with the other functional commissions and between the Commission and the Council, including, inter alia:

(i) Identifying overlaps in the areas, such as ageing, covered by the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Population and Development and strengthening synergies among the commissions;

(ii) Holding joint meetings among chairs to review programmes of work;

(iii) Presenting background documents to share information between commissions;

(iv) Holding joint round-table discussions;

(d) Means of increasing the use of information and communications technology to share information through, inter alia, posting statements submitted electronically by Member States on the Internet, live webcasts of the meetings of the Commission and in-session use of social media tools, such as Twitter;

(e)    Ways of improving the quality of interaction between delegations and United Nations system representatives, including the regional commissions, and between delegations and civil society;

(f)    Ways of improving media coverage of the Commission;

(g)    Ways of improving the quality of deliberations during sessions of the Commission;

(h)    The extent to which the Commission fulfils its mandate and the ways in which it could be improved;

(i)    The periodicity, timing and duration of the annual meeting.

————————