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As aid levels lag, development cooperation more vital than ever – UN officials



ECOSOC President Lazarous Kapambwe

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Senior United Nations officials today stressed the importance of development cooperation and making assistance more effective, especially at a time when governments worldwide are tightening their belts and aid budgets are being slashed.

Lazarous Kapambwe, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), told a high-level symposium in Luxembourg that the temptation may be to go for the “easy” solution, including scaling back on development assistance.

“I hope such temptation will be resisted because it will have devastating consequences on developing countries,” he said in his remarks to the opening of the two-day event, the second of several high-level meetings planned in the run up to the 2012 Development Cooperation Forum that will be convened by ECOSOC at the end of June.

For aid provided by one actor to work, others, big or small, must at the minimum not work at cross purpose. They can do more together than they can apart. DCF brings them together.

ECOSOC was mandated in 2005 by the World Summit to convene the Development Cooperation Forum to help make development activities within and outside the UN more coherent and streamlined, particularly as more and more groups and entities become involved in the delivery of aid.

The symposium in Luxembourg is discussing, among other issues, how to effectively mobilize financial flows such as investment, trade and domestic revenues to maximize the impact of development aid.

“It is urgent that developing countries mobilize financial flows such as investment, trade and domestic revenues to bolster their own development. Aid can help them to do this,” Mr. Kapambwe later told a news conference.

“But this has to be done carefully. The kind of financial flows they want to mobilize are those that will have maximum impact on poverty,” he noted, adding that maximizing the impact of aid is a powerful argument for giving more aid.

Also [addressing](#) the symposium was Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, who noted that the event was taking place at a time of “economic crisis and profound uncertainty,” when the poorest are being hit hardest.

“As countries around the globe develop fiscal austerity measures, aid budgets are often the first targets,” she stated. “We must resist this trend. There should be no going back on the MDGs. Development commitments made should be development commitments kept.”

The Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), agreed by world leaders at a summit in 2000, seek to slash hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, a host of diseases and lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015.

Ms. Migiro also emphasized the importance of working together to maximize the development impact of aid, adding that developing countries must find ways to raise additional domestic resources and create the conditions for investment to flourish.

“Any policy should find its ultimate test in the improvements it brings into the lives of people, and on the poorest and most vulnerable in particular,” she said. “This should be the yardstick against which we identify good practices and policies that work.”

She called for using the potential of the forum – which has evolved over the past five years into a “vibrant multi-stakeholder platform” – to build agreement and understanding on major trends and the responses to pursue.

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