



United Nations

# UNECE Weekly

Economic Commission for Europe

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## Regional commissions organize side event during ECOSOC session

The five United Nations regional commissions held an interactive panel discussion on 4 July on “Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at regional levels and roadmaps” to highlight the current progress and future strategies for achieving the MDGs in each region. The year 2007 marks the mid-point for meeting the targets set out for 2015, and all regional commissions stressed their commitment to promoting and supporting their Member States in reaching these goals. They also stressed the need to

They presented region-specific challenges and outlined strategies for moving forward to ensure that “off track” countries are provided with necessary assistance. The Executive Secretaries noted that although economic growth remains a key ingredient for meeting the MDGs, it is not sufficient. The empowerment of women, rural-urban inequities, the need for pro-poor policies, financing for development, interregional variations, and the scope for regional and interregional cooperation, were all topics discussed.



make the realization of MDGs not an end in itself, but more importantly to lay the foundation for long-term sustainability in development in those countries.



The Executive Secretaries' presentations offered a regional and comparative analysis on the trends of different countries and subregions for each of the eight goals.

During the panel discussion, the regional commissions noted that they have repositioned themselves in order to address the specific regional needs and challenges for meeting the MDGs by 2015. ECA, in assessing some positive developments, noted that although income poverty has fallen slightly, inequality is still rising. Moreover, growth rates remain too low for the majority of African countries and, at this pace, most countries will be unable to achieve all the MDGs by 2015. ECA also highlighted its initiative on knowledge management. ESCAP presented its regional roadmap as a platform for countries that are lagging behind other Asian countries in terms of progress in meeting the MDGs. ESCWA stressed that four key challenges are hampering progress in the region including political instability, water scarcity, the demographic transition and gender inequities. ECE noted that the MDGs are particularly relevant to countries of Eastern Europe, the



## A brainstorming seminar on the New Situation in South-Eastern Europe organized by UNECE on 2 July, explored the needs and priorities for economic integration in the immediate future.

Participants in the seminar, moderated by the UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary, Paolo Garonna, looked into the possibilities of using the UNECE norms, standards and recommendations for the better integration of South-Eastern Europe in the pan-European and world economy. The new developments in the region include the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU — which, apart from enhancing European integration, has created other new divisions, notably between the Eastern and Western Balkans — and the transformation of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe into a country-driven Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).



Christophe Solioz of the Centre for European Integration Strategies stressed that despite progress in the Association and Stabilization Process (ASP) or even accession to the EU, many challenges still persisted in this region. Notably, “conservative” elites here opposed reforms much more than in Central Europe. He called for a renewed process of ministerial interaction, with more involvement of such pan-European organizations as UNECE, and for unified position and activities of all UN agencies in the region.

Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria noted that the region was





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Caucasus and Central Asia, and South-East Europe but noted that

Official Development Assistance is not always targeted to the countries most in need. ECLAC graphically displayed that although the region as a whole is progressing well towards meeting the MDGs, interregional variation is striking and attention should be paid to those countries which are falling behind.

These presentations were complemented by regional panelists including H.E. Mr. Iftekhar Chowdhury, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Minister of State for Finance & Economic Development of Ethiopia, H.E. Mrs. Jadranka Kalmeta, Ambassador and Permanent Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations Office at Geneva, and H.E. Mr. Patrick I. Gomes, Ambassador of Guyana to the European Union, Brussels. The regional panelists offered a nuanced commentary on how the MDGs are understood regionally and thanked the regional commissions for supporting national and regional efforts in terms of analysis, programmatic activities, and monitoring. ✱



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moving with difficulty but consistently towards European integration. The countries showed "growing responsibility" with the advancement of the ASP and EU accession. Mechanisms of integration (such as the new Central European Free Trade Agreement - CEFTA) had started setting in.

Deputy Coordinator of the Stability Pact Michael Mozur stressed its experience in coordinating various activities as a mechanism to deal with the "redundancy" of initiatives in the region. He listed the major directions of work of the new RCC and the South-East European Cooperation Process and the need to preserve and build human capital.

Ambassador Georgi Avramchev of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia emphasized the new momentum of local ownership of the cooperation process, but also the negative effect of the Schengen visa regime on some of the countries.

The need to maintain the effort towards solving problems related to energy, justice and the environment were noted by Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria. He gave concrete examples of unsolved problems in the integration between the Eastern and Western Balkans (for example, to travel the 200 km from Sofia to Skopje one cannot go by train, but have either to fly via Vienna or take a difficult road through the mountains).

Finally, Jan Truszinski of the European Commission noted that Europe was moving to "a new consensus on enlargement", which would benefit South-East Europe. Some approaches had borne fruit, such as the accession of Bulgaria and Romania and the ASP, while others still had to prove themselves, notably the free trade agreements in the region. The new CEFTA still had to be ratified by Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In conclusion Marek Belka, UNECE Executive Secretary, stressed the necessity to adopt an approach to South-East Europe which would not be patronizing, but would assist the processes of cooperation and integration that were driven from within. He committed UNECE to working with the new RCC and the Governments in the region to meet those objectives. ✱

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## Facts and figures

**Economic growth was robust in the first quarter of 2007, but in the longer term risks persist**

By the end of 2006, most analysts expected a sharp downturn in the housing market of the United States, along with its large and persistent current account deficit, to be among the major downward risks to world economic growth in 2007.

In fact, growth did slow down in the United States in the first months of 2007, but the housing recession seemed to remain confined to the

housing sector and the spillover impact on world markets was rather limited, according to recent economic data.

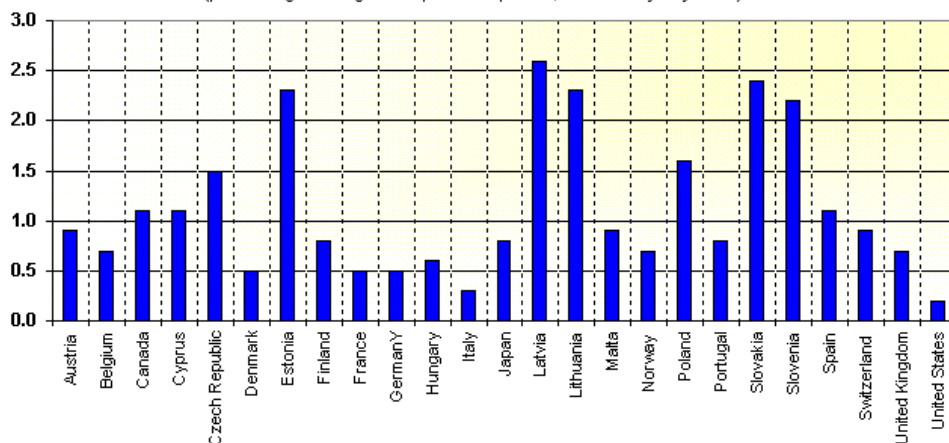
As our chart demonstrates, many countries in Europe as well as Canada and Japan enjoyed a relatively comfortable economic expansion in the first quarter of 2007.

In the Baltic economies Slovakia and Slovenia the quarterly growth of GDP was above 2% (seasonally adjusted), while in the rest of Europe it ranged between 0.3% in Italy and 1.6% in Poland.

Nevertheless, in the medium to longer run, the balance of risks remains on the downside owing mainly to fears of a rise in protectionist pressures, further increase in oil prices and persistent global imbalances.

**GDP growth rate, 2007 Q1**

(percentage change over previous period, seasonally adjusted)



Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data.htm>).