



**IFAD**  
**INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**  
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**THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS**  
**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT 2003**

**Information for the Executive Board Directors**

**Introduction**

1. The High-Level Segment of the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will occur from 30 June to 2 July in Geneva, Switzerland, under the theme “Promoting an Integrated Approach to Rural Development in Developing Countries for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development.” This information note provides an overview of preparations leading up to the High-Level Segment, the format of the High-Level Segment, and IFAD’s involvement in this process.

**Background**

2. ECOSOC is the inter-governmental body of the UN tasked with coordinating the UN’s activities in international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters. ECOSOC also oversees the work of the UN functional commissions, initiates studies, reports on socio-economic issues, and makes recommendations to the UN General Assembly.

3. ECOSOC meets in annual session alternately at UN Headquarters in New York and in Geneva. The annual session is customarily held in July and includes a three-day High-Level Segment on a specific theme selected by ECOSOC members in advance of the annual session. Ministers, other dignitaries, and experts on the selected topic are invited to participate in the High-Level Segment.

4. The selected theme for the 2003 ECOSOC High-Level Segment is “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development.” The UN secretariat has requested IFAD to provide substantive input in the preparation for the High-Level Segment.



## **Preparations for the High-Level Segment**

5. In preparation for the High-Level Segment, two meetings have been planned to lay the groundwork for debate. The first preparatory meeting took place on 24 March at UN Headquarters, in New York. It was conceptualized as a brainstorming dialogue session among UN delegations, UN organizations, researchers, academics, and representatives from NGOs and the private sector. The meeting focused on policies, goals and commitments for an integrated approach to rural development and also discussed implementation and best practices.

6. The meeting was well attended by ECOSOC members, including a considerable number of UN Ambassadors, UN agencies, and civil society representatives. Among the main outcomes of the meeting were a convergence of views on the importance of rural development for poverty eradication and economic growth along with a number of constructive recommendations how to strengthen rural development policies and practices. At the request of the UN Secretariat, IFAD was deeply involved in the organization of the meeting and contributed substantively to the discussion.

7. A second preparatory meeting for the High-level segment will be held on 30 April at United Nations Headquarters, in New York. The meeting will concentrate on the topic of “The Role of Rural Development in the Achievement and Implementation of Internationally Agreed Development Goals, Including Those Contained in the UN Millennium Declaration.” A total of eight Ministerial round tables will be organized by UN agencies and each will highlight one particular Millennium Development Goal in its rural dimension. A number of Ministers as well as Executive Heads of UN Agencies have already indicated their intention to participate in the meeting. IFAD has been invited by the Secretariat to coordinate and chair a panel discussion of Executive Heads and senior officers of UN system organizations. In addition, IFAD is also organizing, jointly with the World Bank, a Ministerial round table discussion on the topic of “Poverty Eradication: The Critical Role of Agriculture and Rural Development.”

## **The High-Level Segment**

8. The High-Level Segment itself is an integral part of the 2003 substantive session of ECOSOC that occurs from 30 June to 25 July in Geneva. The theme of the segment will be discussed in detail within three Ministerial round tables, a number of Ministerial breakfast discussions as well as in the two-day general debate. IFAD will be substantially engaged in the segment and will participate actively in the Ministerial discussions.

9. The High-Level Segment offers a unique opportunity to advance policy objectives in support of rural development as well as share experiences and lessons learned from rural development activities and projects on the field level. Ministerial participation in the High-level segment would be highly beneficial for ensuring that the political momentum in support of rural development in developing countries could be maintained or even accelerated.

10. The outcome of the High-level segment will be a Ministerial Communiqué outlining policy options for furthering rural development, emerging issues to be considered with regard to the theme of the segment as well as recommendations for implementation initiatives and follow-up options. The Ministerial Communiqué will be finalized in negotiations among ECOSOC members.