Briefing and Progress Outline

Background
The Social Development Division (SDD) at ESCWA works with member governments to mainstream social equity concerns across public policies. Its approach to social policy is based on the conviction that social policy goes beyond the delivery of conventional sectoral services to permeate the design and implementation of all public policies. Integrated social policy implies that concerns related to equality, justice and human rights must be factored into every public policy and programme.

The Integrated Social Policy project focuses on institutionalizing social policy making in national development frameworks. It documents and disseminates good practices and lessons learned to the governments and concerned parties in the region so that they can benefit from global experience in formulating and implementing social policy.

The Sudan Initiative
ESCWA has recently initiated a project in Sudan, working closely with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Child Affairs, in coordination with UN-Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Responding to an official request from the Sudanese Government, ESCWA designed a project to advance an integrated social policy vision and approach.

The project envisages a process of consultation and dialogue between the major stakeholders in the country to identify challenges to social equity and arrive at some consensus regarding the way forward. Through the elaboration of the Sudan Social Policy Country Profile, it is hoped that different constituents throughout the country will be engaged and brought into the debate. The Country Profile is primarily intended as an analytical think-piece to trigger discussions and deliberations around key strategic policy choices and to provide an overview and quick analysis of the social policy situation in Sudan. The Country Profile will highlight the state of social development in the country and will seek to assess the social equity dimensions in public policy making, including the processes, tools and instruments available for social policy design, implementation and monitoring. The report will conclude with a set of recommendations for consideration by policy makers and stakeholders.

To date, a draft outline of the Country Profile has been the subject of two Peer Review Meetings (PRMs), the first in Khartoum on 26 June 2007 and the second in Juba, on 25 September 2007. These two PRMs brought together government
officials, NGO representatives and experts from Sudan. The Khartoum meeting was also attended by two senior ESCWA representatives. The meetings have provided an opportunity for partners in Sudan to brainstorm freely about the challenges and opportunities of Sudanese economic and social development, particularly in light of the recent peace accords between the North and South. A first draft of the Country Profile is expected to be ready by December 2007.

**Looking Ahead**

This first full draft of the Country Profile will be the subject of an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on 13 December 2007, where it will be discussed and critiqued. The EGM is a technical meeting of approximately 20 – 25 experts who are expected to deliberate the report’s technical soundness, overall coherence and approach. Their input will be incorporated into the final report which is expected to be ready by January 2008. The EGM will also be an opportunity to review with the group options for follow-up activities to the Country Profile, including the holding of a National Conference on Social Policy during the first half of 2008.

It is at this National Conference, tentatively scheduled for March 2008, that a broad range of representatives from across the political, economic and social spectrum in Sudan will be invited to review the issues surrounding social policy. The National Conference is seen as a culmination of a process of dialogue and consensus building and it is hoped the Conference will provide public policy makers with clear recommendations, as well as concrete mechanisms to promote social policy. Throughout the process, ESCWA will work with national authorities, UN-ECA, UNDP and other stakeholders in Sudan to promote an integrated approach to social policy. Through its technical advisory services and its normative work, ESCWA will assist in the analysis, design and implementation of social policies and programmes that aim to promote social equity and equal opportunity.