energy technologies; with transforming agricultural technologies so as to guarantee food security without further degrading land and water resources; and with applying the technology required to adapt to climate change and reduce risks to human populations from natural hazards.

The Survey noted that the enormous progress in improving welfare over the previous two centuries had come at the last cost of degradation of the environment. It stressed the need for new development pathways that would ensure environmental sustainability and reverse ecological destruction, while providing a decent livelihood for present and future generations. Due to the exponential growth in world population, human activity was threatening to surpass the limits of the Earth’s capacity as a source of natural resources and a sink for waste, hence requiring a fundamental technological overhaul.

The main challenges lay in the improvement of techniques needed for a green economy, the accessibility and affordability of those technologies for developing countries, and the limited time period given due to pressures on the ecosystem. Governments had to assume a more central role, and intense international cooperation had to be facilitated. The Survey proposed the creation of “green national innovation systems” that would reorient sector-specific innovation systems towards a focus on green technologies, and ensure consistency among green technology, industrial and demand-side policies. Targets aimed at a global energy transformation would have to take into account differences in levels of development of countries, and green energy policies would have to be coherent along production and consumption chains. With regard to food security, the report affirmed that the main policy focus on the supply side should be promotion and development of sustainable agriculture as practiced by small farm holders in developing countries. A comprehensive approach to food security was essential and had to be supported by an enabling institutional environment.

The report found that the frequency of climate-related disasters—from which developing countries tended to suffer more—had increased, and pointed out that disaster risk management should be an integral part of national development strategies. Finally, multilateral trading rules and international finance needed to be “greened”; an effective global technology development and diffusion regime needed to be established; the intellectual property rights regime needed to be changed; multilateral trading rules should grant greater flexibility to developing countries in conducting industrial policy; financing of green technology transfer required financial reforms; and global governance capabilities needed to be strengthened.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2011 [Sales No. E.11.II.C.2; update E/2011/113], jointly produced by DESA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations regional commissions, found that the recovery of the global economy continued, with strong output growth in developing countries and a weaker economic performance in developed countries. Higher energy and food prices had created upward pressure on inflation rates, underpinning the tightening of monetary policy, especially in many developing countries. Employment trends had improved, but major challenges such as rising long-term unemployment and high youth unemployment in a number of economies remained. World trade of goods and services had expanded more than expected, marking a strong rebound from the severe contraction in 2009. Developing countries—particularly Asian economies with large shares in trade of manufactured goods—led the recovery.

Net private capital inflows to emerging economies continued to recover from their pronounced decline during the global financial crisis. The outlook pointed to a number of risks, however, including problems regarding the sustainability of public finances in developed economies, the remaining vulnerability of the private financial sector, continued high and volatile commodity prices and the possible collapse of the United States dollar. In the area of policymaking, numerous challenges remained, such as how to time the unwinding of fiscal support, the redesign of fiscal policy to promote employment and sustainable development, greater synergy between monetary and fiscal policy, the provision of sufficient funding to developing countries and more effective international policy coordination.


The Human Development Report 2011 [Sales No. 11.III.B.1] (see p. 844), prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had as its theme sustainability and equity.

Development and international economic cooperation

International economic cooperation issues were considered by various UN bodies, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

On 10 and 11 March, the Council held in New York its special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund), the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, addressing the theme