

**Introductory remarks by Ann Orr, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Financing for Development Office, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations**

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of Mr. Oscar de Rojas, Director of the Financing for Development Office, I would like to welcome you to the Panel Discussion on International Cooperation in Tax Matters. The Financing for Development Office is very pleased to cosponsor this event with the Tax Justice Network and we are grateful to the experts who will be sharing their views with us today.

As you know, the current mandate in International Cooperation in Tax Matters originated with the Monterrey Consensus. When developing and developed country adopted the Monterrey Consensus at the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002 they formed a global partnership for development to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Monterrey Consensus calls for improving the effectiveness of the global economic system's support for developing, by, among others, strengthening of international tax cooperation, through enhanced dialogue among national tax authorities and greater coordination of the work of multilateral bodies and regional organization, and paying special attention to the needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The 2005 World Summit Outcome reaffirmed the place of the Monterrey Consensus as the reference point of the global partnership for development.

In the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, one of the decisions of the Economic and Social Council in November 2004 (RES 2004/69) was to establish the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters by renaming the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters. In its decision,

ECOSOC recognized the need for an inclusive, participatory and broad-based dialogue on international cooperation in tax matters as well as a forum that can put international debate on tax policies in a development context. It mandates the Committee of Experts to, among others, make recommendations on capacity-building and technical assistance to developing countries, and to give special attention to developing countries and transition economies in considering important issues in international tax cooperation.

The Committee of Experts held its First Annual Session from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2005 in Geneva, with the participation of observers from government, intergovernmental bodies, academic and non-governmental organizations. On the basis of the discussions, the Committee produced a Report (E/2005/45) containing conclusions and recommendations on priority issues of ongoing work, organization and funding and technical cooperation, for consideration by ECOSOC. The Chairman of the Committee of Experts will make a presentation of the report to the Council in this afternoon's session.

Events such as this Panel Discussion are important complements in the United Nations' work on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, as they extend the dialogue on the salient issues, particularly as they pertain to developing and transition economies, to a wide cross-section of stakeholders. The Financing for Development Office has a mandate to sponsor or organize multistakeholder consultations, panel discussions and other forums which can better enable Member states to fulfill their commitments in the Monterrey Consensus.

I look forward to a very interesting discussion.