"Modelling Tools for Sustainable Development Policies: A platform to address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development"

Thursday, 14 July 2016
6:15 – 7:30 pm
Conference Room 7 in the UN Conference Building

On Thursday 14 July, the Development and Policy Analysis Division (DESA/DPAD) organised a side event in the framework of the HLPF 2016 to present UNDESA's "Modelling tools for sustainable development policies", a web-based platform that makes the modelling tools developed by DESA and partners available to countries and the development community.

Opening remarks were provided by ASG for Economic Development Mr. Lenni Montiel, where he introduced the platform in the context of the support provided by DESA to strengthen countries' capacity to unveil the interconnections between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development through modelling scenario and policy analysis.

One of the main characteristics of the platform, as pointed out by Mr. Montiel, is the open source nature of the modelling tools and visualizations, which ensures that the models' sources and codes are accessible to all and can be adapted, updated and improved by interested parties. As such, the web-based platform also aims at promoting the development of a collaborative community of modellers, data scientists, programmers, and ICT developers as well as research centres, universities, and other organisations to build on each other's strengths to better support countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this context, Mr. Montiel recognized the contribution of Ms. Monica Chelliah, a New York City-based software developer who won the #Electricity4All Python challenge. The challenge, launched by DESA in collaboration with UN-OICT, made an open call to the public interested in modelling and programing to improve the code of the Universal Access to Electricity Tool hosted in the platform. The technical solution developed by Ms. Chelliah reduced the computational time of the model from 50 hrs to less than 3.5 minutes.

After opening remarks, Eduardo Zepeda, Inter-regional Adviser of DPAD and Richard A. Roehrl from DSD presented the main scope of the models, and the interlinkages and SDG's that are addressed by each of the tools; followed by an overlook of the platform.

Moderator to the event was Ms. Diana Alarcon, Chief of the Development Strategy and Policy Analysis Unit (DPAD), with the participation of Mr. Pingfan Hong, Director of DPAD. The event was well attended by representatives from Member States, members of NGOs and UN colleagues. At the end, participants engaged in a general discussion, where points were drawn on the challenges of communicating modelling based scenarios to policy decision makers, a key effort in DESA's capacity development activities.