

**Informal Summary  
Opening of the High-Level Segment  
of the Economic and Social Council in 2007**

**Monday, 2 July 2007, 9 – 11 a.m.  
Palais de Nations, Geneva**

The high-level segment was opened by **H.E. Mr. Dalius Čekuolis**, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). He stated that there are encouraging signs of a global decline in poverty in most parts of the world, although many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, remain off track on the midway to 2015 to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He emphasized that it is therefore necessary to work in a true global partnership, with all parties firmly determined to implement fully their development commitments and to focus on helping to identify the key factors for success and to make them common knowledge, transferable and adaptable locally to meet the challenges at hand. He emphasized that ECOSOC has a central role to play in facilitating and supporting the countries' efforts. He underscored the potential of the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) that ECOSOC is launching this year.

**Mr. Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, highlighted that the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum are the Council's most striking innovations and welcomed the focus of the first AMR on the first and last MDGs. He also launched the 2007 MDG Report, noting that progress has been slow in some of the world's poorest countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. He stressed, however, that its main message is that the MDGs remain achievable in most countries if leaders take urgent and concerted action. Furthermore, he urged developed countries to meet the agreed 0.7 per-cent ODA target and to establish timelines in this regard. He stressed the need for real action in the global partnership for development. He also emphasized the need for urgent action on climate change, which posed a serious threat to the efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger..

**H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa**, President of the General Assembly, underlined the critical role of the DCF and the AMR in the global fight against poverty and the promotion of human development for all. She noted that progress was made in meeting the high expectations of hundreds of millions of poor and malnourished people around the world, but that poverty has not yet been made history. She also stressed the importance of the DCF and the AMR to ensure follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits on development as well as to provide a strategic policy framework for development cooperation. Furthermore, she expressed the significance of the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as a key to development. In this regard, she highlighted the need to empower women politically as well as economically, stating that the MDGs will not be achieved without gender equality and respect for women's human rights.

Following these opening addresses, 2006 Special Citation of the Habitat Scroll of Honour was presented to **H.H. Mr. Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa**, Prime Minister of Bahrain on behalf of the people of Baharain. **Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director UN-HABITAT, introduced **H.H. Mr. Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa**, recognizing the consistent effort and innovative approaches in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. She praised that the people of Bahrain have made an impressive progress in uplifting their living standards through an active focus on poverty alleviation and modernization of their city with due regard to environmental sustainability, social inclusiveness including gender equality, while at the same time preserving the cultural heritage of their country.

In accepting the Special Citation, **H.H. Mr. Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa** stated that this award honours the people of Bahrain as they have all strived together to continuously improve the conditions of those living in poverty. He highlighted the Government's home-building programme and its policy of modernization and urban renewal, which took due note of maintaining the balance and heritage of the distinctive Arab culture. He also praised the enormous efforts made by UN-HABITAT and affirmed the commitment of the Government of Bahrain to continue its close cooperation with UN-HABITAT. Finally he announced the establishment of an award for the best researchers in the field of human settlements that most effectively serve the goals of the programme.

Key note addresses on the theme of "the eradication of poverty and hunger" were delivered by **H.E. Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey**, President of the Swiss Confederation and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and **H.E. Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas**, Prime Minister of Lithuania. **H.E. Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey** reaffirmed that development, in all its dimensions, represents the most crucial challenge and foremost common objective in creating a freer and more secure world. In this respect the MDGs must be understood as a driving force to push the global development agenda forward. However, she also pointed out that it is much more compelling to focus case-by-case on each individual developing country, since national statistics sometimes hide the large disparities existing between different regions within the same country. She named three factors for economic growth that benefits the poor, as they act together in creating the framework conditions necessary for the entrepreneurial spirit to unfold: (i) prudent macroeconomic policies; (ii) effective social protection; and (iii) a combination of investments in the infrastructure, professional training, and basic public services. Furthermore, she stressed that the developing countries should formulate and implement efficient and effective strategies to combat poverty, geared towards the MDGs.

**H.E. Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas** recalled that economic growth over the past years has been quite promising across the globe and that an estimated 135 million people managed to get out of extreme poverty. Yet, he underscored that the overall progress in achieving the MDGs is not sufficient and remains uneven. He stressed the significance of national poverty reduction strategies with a strong sense of ownership and that local efforts need sustained and coordinated support at regional and global levels in order to fight poverty and hunger. He also stated that sustained economic growth is a major factor,

but it does not translate automatically into reduced poverty levels and less hunger. Hence, he recommends that growth must be accompanied by: (i) strengthened institutional capacity; (ii) equitable delivery of public services; (iii) active social inclusion; (iv) bridging the gap between urban and rural development; and (v) investment in human capital. Furthermore, he identified the link between poverty and conflict, since fragile states pose the greatest difficulty in fighting poverty. He also named the climate change as an increasing factor to be reckoned with and which required a long-term global response, because it is usually the poor who are affected the most and take the longest to recover.