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**Remarks by  
MR. SHA ZUKANG  
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TO THE ECOSOC DIALOGUE WITH EXECUTIVE HEADS OF UNITED NATIONS  
FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES  
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*“Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in  
the context of the current challenges”*

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Panellists,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This morning’s session is a good tradition of the operational activities segment of ECOSOC. It brings delegates together with the Executive Heads of the four major funds and programmes which account for the presence of the United Nations development system in nearly all of the programme countries where the system is represented. Their organizations are the front-liners of the UN development system in the countries we serve.

Mr. Chairman,

Today’s dialogue deals with the subject at the core of the Council’s agenda – the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

When the Secretariat reported last year to the General Assembly on the progress in achieving the MDGs, we stressed the mixed record of success, as well as the slow progress in some countries and areas. We realized how much work was still ahead of us. But we were optimistic about what was possible.

We were inspired by countries that had made significant gains, demonstrating rapid and large-scale progress, even where the challenges were greatest. We pointed to a combination of factors that could make such achievements possible – strong government leadership and commitment; sound policies and practical strategies; and a significant increase towards adequate, predictable and sustained financial and technical support from the international community.

Yet, we had barely passed the new year when we were hit by series of economic shocks.

As the World Economic and Social Survey recently published by DESA highlights, unstable financial markets and volatile capital flows are currently threatening economic livelihoods across the world economy. A growing mismatch between the supply and demand of agricultural products has brought the issue of food security to the forefront of the international

agenda and triggered serious political unrest in a number of countries. Several increasingly destructive natural disasters have made manifest the threat that such disasters pose for economic livelihoods in rich and poor countries. Some calamities have been striking quietly, such as the droughts and flooding caused by deforestation in several parts of the world, which also affect food supplies.

The outlook for the next two years is not encouraging. Major changes in global policy will be required, especially in the developed countries, to reduce global imbalances and address key issues. The developments unfolding before us – and the quality of our response to them – will surely have a significant impact on the global effort to achieve the MDGs.

The challenge to the Council is how, in this context, to advance the dialogue on policies aimed at eradicating global poverty, ensuring sustainable growth and achieving sustainable development.

From the perspective of operational activities for development at the country level, we have to deal with very practical questions:

- How can the UN system support programme countries in their efforts to manage the economic, social and political stresses in the short- and medium-term?
- What implications should this have for UN system support to national capacity building?
- How are the UN funds and programmes, and UN country teams, positioning themselves to respond to these multiple challenges? How do they support the development of a coherent response?

In considering these questions, we can build on the guidance that the General Assembly recently provided in the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development – the TCPR.

Mr. Chairman, our panellists this morning will be speaking on the implementation of specific MDGs, and it is our hope that we can hear their views on some of these questions. I am pleased to introduce:

- Mr. Kemal Dervis, Administrator of UNDP, who will speak on “Environmental Sustainability”;
- Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, who will speak on “Child Mortality”;
- Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, who will speak on “Maternal Mortality”; and
- Mr. John Powell, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, who will speak on “Food Security”.

It is my pleasure to give the floor now to our first speaker, Mr. Kemal Dervis.

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