

**Opening remarks**  
**H.E. Ambassador Andrei Dapkiunas, Vice-President of ECOSOC**  
**ECOSOC substantive session, 2008**  
**Operational activities segment**  
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**ECOSOC Chamber, New York**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to open the 2008 operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council.

The agenda of the operational activities segment is particularly timely and important this year. This session takes place in the same year in which the United Nations is involved in a wide range of processes to promote the international development agenda and development cooperation. These include the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals on 25 September, and the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in December. In addition, the High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in early September will bring renewed attention to aid effectiveness, aid delivery and management, and alignment with national priorities. This operational activities segment is critical to reflect on how the United Nations can further improve its development cooperation ahead of these global processes and inform them of the direction and vision of the United Nations operational activities.

Much of this direction is contained in the General Assembly triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system conducted last December by the General Assembly, which we call the 2007 TCPR. Through the outcome of the review, resolution 62/208, Member States agreed on the broad parameters for the United Nations operational activities in the coming three years. The TCPR confirmed that the universal, voluntary and grant nature of UN system operations, its neutrality and multilateralism were part of the unique added value of the UN system's support to developing countries. The TCPR underscores the need for development systems of the United Nations to be able to respond quickly to the varying development needs of programme countries. It called for action by the UN system to improve the way it works at all levels, such as coordination and coherence at the country level, harmonization of business practices at the headquarters level as well as mainstreaming of certain themes such as South-South cooperation and gender mainstreaming.

Our task during this segment is to ensure that the United Nations launches the required actions and initiatives to implement the array of recommendations contained in the TCPR. We owe it to Member States, and to the people that the United Nations serve, to ensure that the directions given by the General Assembly are translated into effective action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me turn to the agenda and workprogramme of this segment. The theme of the first panel this morning "the UN system in a changing aid environment: implications and comparative advantages" is a timely one. Indeed, international development cooperation has experienced drastic changes in recent years, with the emergence of new actors and new modalities of aid and

the decline in ODA. At the 2005 World Summit and the 2007 TCPR, efforts to enhance the quality of aid and to increase its impact have been encouraged. The principle of national ownership and leadership is now well-established. It is at the core of UN system efforts and of the TCPR. The UN system has to find its place and comparative advantage in this changing environment.

This afternoon's panel on "strengthening United Nations system's responsiveness to different needs of programme countries" is also focusing on a critical topic. The 2007 TCPR underscores that there is no "one size fits all" approach to development and that the development assistance by the UN system should respond to the needs of programme countries in full alignment with their national development goals. The panel will discuss how the UN system adapts its support to the varied and changing needs of developing countries, including the Delivering as One pilot countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The combined crises that we are going through at the moment, together with the impact of climate change, threaten progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the run up to the 25 September High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, the discussion of the Council with Executive Heads of the UN Funds and Programmes on MDGs, to be held tomorrow morning, will invite us to debate how best the United Nations system can help preserve and promote advances towards the MDGs.

Finally, the general debate is scheduled to start tomorrow afternoon. You will have the opportunity to give your views notably about how the United Nations system is gearing itself to implement the TCPR. The TCPR is one of the few resolutions of the General Assembly that has such systematic follow-up mechanisms, with a management plan on actions to implement the resolution and subsequent reports on progress in implementation. Let us make the most of these tools to ensure that the TCPR is effectively implemented.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Council has a critical role in coordinating the work of the entire United Nations System and in providing clear directions to the United Nations funds and programmes on how to implement the policies defined by the General Assembly at all levels --- national, regional and global. This year, I would encourage the Council to reflect on how it can deliver this function in an even more efficient, effective and timely way following up on the recent TCPR and in the advent of the forthcoming international processes on the development agenda.

The draft resolution that was presented for the consideration of this segment of the Council is crisp and focused. It should serve as a good basis to give clear and action oriented guidance to the UN system. We have ahead of us a fairly light programme, which should give enough time for informal consultations. I hope that we can adopt the outcome of the segment by Monday evening. Throughout the panel discussions, I also hope that we can bring to this segment the same frank and direct tone that has characterized the high-level segment of the Council. I am confident that we can hold this segment in the spirit of the "new ECOSOC".

Thank you.