

**Statement by Mr. José Antonio Ocampo,  
Under-Secretary-General for Economic & Social Affairs,  
To the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council  
New York, 30 June 2005**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

I have the honour to present to you today the Report of the Secretary-General to this High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council.

Five years ago, the world's leaders unanimously pledged to better the lives of those living in abject poverty. The Millennium Declaration originated from a sense of common purpose and hope. World leaders realized that, despite providing immense opportunities, globalization had favoured a few and left many behind.

The Declaration set a number of concrete and time-bound goals, in the form of the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs have helped to generate momentum in the international policy dialogue. Major progress has been made in several areas, such as: the unprecedented reduction of poverty in East and South Asia; the significant advance in gender equality in the educational system in all developing country regions; and the sharp reduction of child mortality in Northern Africa.

Nonetheless, the overall progress has been uneven. Absolute poverty has continued to grow in Sub-Saharan Africa and in many individual countries in other regions. A lack of adequate clean drinking water and sanitation has left more and more people vulnerable to disease. The persistence of HIV/AIDS has continued to reverse strides made in development, particularly in Africa. And climate change has made the ecosystem of our planet increasingly vulnerable.

All of this points to need to pursue a more ambitious strategy.

This means, first of all, that efforts to achieve the MDGs should be closely linked to implementing the comprehensive development agenda produced by the major UN global conferences since the 1990s. And it means, secondly, that the agenda itself must be pursued in a comprehensive way.

The UN Development Agenda addresses broad questions not fully covered by the specific MDGs, but essential to their achievement: a fair and equitable globalization; confronting growing inequalities; improving global economic governance; enhancing employment and human resource development; and technological advancement. The agenda takes into account the inherent connections among the social, economic, and environmental objectives of development. Along the road from Rio, Copenhagen, Cairo and Beijing to Monterrey and Johannesburg, a truly global policy consensus has emerged on major aspects of all of our lives. We must

recognize and celebrate this. The UN Development Agenda serves the development of societies in both developed and developing countries. In a very significant sense, this agenda is the greatest contribution of the United Nations to a better globalization. And it shows the effectiveness of our institution as a global forum for economic and social development.

The internationally agreed development goals cannot be achieved in isolation of each other. Will not efforts to achieve universal primary education prove worthless if we fail to reverse the spread of AIDS, which continues to take the lives of so many educators? What will work on any goals in health bring if we cannot provide clean drinking water and adequate sanitation, essential for a disease-free existence? Without good governance and respect for human rights, what would high rates of economic growth really mean for millions of poor people? And to what would work in reducing poverty amount if it does not tackle poverty's root causes and their relationship to employment and social integration, as agreed in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action?

Clearly, a comprehensive and coherent approach is required, from the local to the global level. This would enable policies and actions that are fully integrated and consistent with each other—and thus capable of producing desired and enduring results.

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This year provides an irresistible opportunity to advance—and act—on this dual strategy. In this ECOSOC session, and with the approaching World Summit, we can take a comprehensive, critical look at the progress made on development objectives. And we can affirm, at the highest levels, that we have to accomplish the objectives of the Millennium Declaration, and those of *all* the major UN conferences and summits, which together form the UN Development Agenda.

The year already has brought clear recognition of the urgent need for collective action against the threats of disease, famine, and hunger. Yet we still lack one crucial component, fundamental to substantial progress on the UN Development Agenda: effective mechanisms for review, assessment, and accountability. I want to turn now to this particular aspect of the Secretary-General's report.

The primary responsibility for implementation lies with governments. But the United Nations can make a significant contribution, by addressing the need for regular and well coordinated reviews.

In this effort, ECOSOC undoubtedly has an important role to play. The Council serves as the UN's principal body for promoting economic and social development. The UN Charter gives it a range of critical functions—from coordination and consensus-building to policy dialogue and review. It is the only UN organ explicitly mandated to coordinate the activities of the specialized agencies and to consult with non-governmental organizations. Moreover, under its purview, it has a network of functional and regional commissions.

The Council has made some progress in cultivating a focused, system-wide dialogue, which fosters greater coherence and collaboration among the UN system organizations. Notably, the Council has built bridges with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization; it has established novel mechanisms, such as the UN-ICT Task Force; and has linked peace and security with development, through its establishment of country-specific *ad hoc* advisory groups.

Yet ECOSOC has not been able to meet fully the high expectations set for it. The monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the Development Agenda still appears rather fragmented. One key reason for this is the UN system's highly decentralized structure, which has posed obvious limitations to strategic and operational coherence. But we must not treat this as an insurmountable obstacle.

As your negotiations on a ministerial declaration continue, I want to stress four ways for ECOSOC significantly to strengthen its capacity to deliver what the world expects—and needs—from it in this area. These ways have been proposed by the Secretary-General in his report *In Larger Freedom* but largely coincide with ideas put on the table by several member states, including by the President of the Economic and Social Council.

First, ECOSOC should create a comprehensive process for acquiring a complete picture of the implementation of the UN Development Agenda.

At present, the General Assembly undertakes annual reviews of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, including the MDGs. ECOSOC's functional commissions perform substantive reviews of the implementation of conference outcomes. And ECOSOC itself handles the reviews of particular conferences, such as the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries.

ECOSOC can launch a comprehensive process by holding annual ministerial-level assessments of progress on development objectives. The Council could use peer reviews of progress reports prepared by member States, with assistance from UN agencies and the regional commissions. As you know, a number of organizations—the OECD and now the African Union—actively use peer reviews as a major mechanism for progress evaluation. And others—such as the IMF and the WTO—rely on evaluations prepared by their Secretariats of progress made by countries in implementing their international commitments. The need to move from the commitments made in the conferences and summits of the past fifteen years to more assertive, effective follow-up of implementation is a deeply felt requirement in the United Nations.

Second, ECOSOC should seek to serve as a high-level forum for development cooperation. Convened biennially, the forum could help meet several pressing needs: to review trends in international development cooperation; to promote greater coherence among the development activities of all actors; and to strengthen the links between the UN system's operational work and its normative and analytical work. Engaging more actively the specialized agencies in this process would greatly contribute to the UN system's coherence. Key methods to achieve this could include: the active and regular participation of the executive heads of the

specialized agencies in ECOSOC's high-level dialogue; and the regular meeting of the heads of agencies' intergovernmental bodies under the leadership of the President of ECOSOC.

Third, as repeatedly proposed, ECOSOC should hold timely meetings, as required, to assess—and promote coordinate action against—threats to development.

One of the greatest threats to development is conflict. This suggests a fourth way for the Council to strengthen its role in implementing the UN Development Agenda: ECOSOC should monitor the economic and social dimensions of conflict.

ECOSOC has achieved some important progress on this front, with its creation of the country-specific *ad hoc* advisory groups on countries emerging from conflict. Yet much more needs to be done. The immense challenge of long-term recovery, reconstruction, and reconciliation warrants a more institutionalized focus. The proposed Peacebuilding Commission should provide an effective forum for this. ECOSOC should work closely with this Commission and also reinforce its own links with the Security Council.

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I hope that this year we wage a sincere, concerted effort to make ECOSOC the forum that it is meant to be. We must seize the momentum now within our reach to transform ECOSOC into *the* entity that pushes the global UN Development Agenda, in cooperation with—and to the benefit of—all major stakeholders in development. In this process, Mr. President, we count on your leadership, as well as that of ECOSOC's Bureau.