

**Statement by Dr. Bamanga Tukur
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2006 ECOSOC High-Level Segment**

“Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development”

Roundtable 2 on Meeting the challenges of employment creation in Africa and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Excellencies and distinguished participants,

Let me start by thanking the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) for consistently putting issues of sustainable development on the front burners through platforms such as this. I am indeed grateful to Mr. Ali Hachani, President of ECOSOC, for inviting me to be part of this process and it is my utmost desire that our workshops will come up with answers and workable solutions to the challenges of development in Africa and the Least Developed Countries.

Our Roundtable will be focused on the theme: *Meeting the Challenges of employment Creation in Africa and the Least Developed Countries*. This topic is quite significant to attaining the Millennium Development Goals because, studies have shown that decent employment is one of the fastest and most sustainable way to lift people out of the poverty trap. It is therefore necessary to put in place strategies that will ensure economic growth that has to job creation as its basic focus. Situations whereby economic growth occasioned by high commodity prices, especially of extractive minerals without giving cognisance to creation of decent job, have tended to impoverish a larger number of the population, while making few super rich. In most cases in such countries, the Middle class is wiped off, leaving the peasants who live in rural environment, engaged in subsistence agriculture, barely eking out a living as the base class, while a class of super rich is created at the top.

To create decent employment, and lift majority out of the poverty trap, we must quickly rebuild the ‘Middle Class’. These are the entrepreneurs that can take advantage of business opportunities in the economic sphere and put in place Small, Medium and even Multinational Companies that will generate employment. The middle class must be empowered to take on this role of wealth creation and employment generation, through a conscious effort by the development partners and public sector to create the environment conducive for business to grow and thrive.

In the course of the panel discussion, I will expatiate more on how to rebuild the middle class, under the following broad subheadings:

1. Strengthening and empowering Intermediary Institutions for private sector development.
2. Provision of infrastructure, especially energy, transportation and communication.
3. Access to finance for long term development
4. Enhancing the productive capacity of Firms in Africa and the LDCs

5. Development of relevant skills appropriate to transforming the resources of each locality through education and training.
6. Engaging in Fair trade, with emphasis on putting in place pro-poor policies that enable the rural producers in the LDCs to engage in commercialization of agriculture which employs over 70% of the population.

While it is good and necessary to dialogue and brainstorm on how to achieve sustainable development globally, it is my desire that solutions arrived at in Forum of this nature will be quickly translated into programmes that positively impact on the poor, which we gather to talk about so often. Once we have the will, we can put together projects that start to address the challenges identified. It is in this regard that I want to implore the United Nations ECOSOC to lend its voice to the call by the African Private Sector to development institutions and donors to intervene more in private sector sponsored projects. Their focus has been mainly public sector biased. Economic development can be leapfrogged if they partner with the private sector in project conception, planning and execution. This is where the case for an intermediary private sector organization is imperative to serve as a link in this development chain.

Thank you.