



OPENING STATEMENT
by
H.E. Ambassador Ivan Šimonovič,
President of the Economic and Social Council
New York, 1 July 2002

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to welcome you to the 2002 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

The Council is meeting at an important time. It has been almost three months since the Monterrey consensus and we are less than two months away from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Our meeting is a chance to send a powerful message: that we are ready to build upon the achievements of Monterrey, and that - in spite of all challenges - we will make Johannesburg a success.

The priorities of our session are to:

- rededicate ourselves to eradicate poverty, achieve the Millennium development goals and especially, increase investments in human resources development;
- prepare the Council to successfully meet new challenges of globalisation and its increased involvement in conflict prevention and post-conflict peace building;
- strengthen its coordinating role regarding the work of its functional commissions, UN agencies, funds and programmes, and improve ECOSOC's cooperation with the General Assembly, the Security Council, as well as, the Breton Woods institutions and WTO.

We cannot be satisfied with the global economic and social situation as it stands today. Over a billion people live on less than \$1 a day, and their lives remain short and scarred by disease. Some 113 million children are still without access to primary education, and 40 million people live with HIV/AIDS. Achieving the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration requires additional national and international efforts, partnership with civil society and UN leadership.

We have undertaken commitments at the highest level and established precise time-frames, but we are late and unreliable in their delivery. That is why we must regularly monitor their implementation, especially as remaining uncertainties in the world economy may undermine our determination. We must leverage ECOSOC's strength as a forum which brings together all development partners to set norms and guidelines, link policy and operations, and give political impetus to vital development efforts.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening human resources is essential for countries to meet the challenges of globalisation, to build democratic societies based on the rule of law and the protection of human rights, to develop knowledge-based economies, and in brief – to be on track for sustainable development. Human resources development ultimately empowers individuals and puts their future into their own hands. It is also a key towards eliminating disparities in development and the roots of conflict and terrorism.

With 5 out of 8 Millennium Development Goals directly concerning health and education, it is clear that the Council's discussion during this high-level segment on the contribution of human resources development to the process of development carries great importance for achieving the Millennium Declaration goals.

The Council has been engaged in preparations for the high-level segment since early this year, holding three roundtables co-organized by UN organizations, and inviting key-note speakers on relevant topics. Building on this preparatory work, we will discuss what Governments, the UN system and civil society can do to improve health and education, so as to accelerate poverty eradication, social development and long-term economic growth. The outcome of the high-level segment should mobilize and promote coordinated action by the UN system for implementing the human resources development goals set in UN summits and conferences and maintain the international community's focus on financing these goals.

Mobilization, action and focus are absolutely needed. The current levels of international support for health and education are grossly inadequate, with less than 5 per cent of OECD/DAC member countries' total ODA going to basic education and health. According to the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, 0.1 percent of GNP of donor assistance would be needed to enable poor countries to ensure broad access of their population to basic life-saving health interventions needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

We must break the vicious circle between poverty – poor health and education – and poor economic performance. During the high-level segment, we hope to highlight the urgent need for increased domestic resource mobilization and international development assistance to provide adequate and sustained resources for effective programmes in human resources development.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT AND MAJOR UN CONFERENCES

Our agenda for the other segments of this year's substantive session is also very demanding. It is ECOSOC's responsibility to ensure the integration and coherence between follow-up to the Millennium Summit and to other conferences and summits. The newest ECOSOC's tasks in this regard are related to the outcomes of the Second World Assembly on Aging and to the General Assembly's Special session on Children. The Council has been also assigned an important role in helping the international community to stay engaged in the implementation of the commitments made in the Monterrey. I hope that our debate with the heads of financial and trade institutions this morning will be a testimony to the continued strong engagement of all partners for implementing the Monterrey Consensus. Consultations between the Breton Woods institutions, WTO and ECOSOC members should give shape to a new phase of cooperation based on strategic partnership.

STRENGTHENING ECOSOC

After a number of years of reform and restructuring efforts, the Council has finally started to demonstrate its ability to bring crucial development issues to the forefront of the international agenda, launch new initiatives such as UNAIDS and ICT Task Force, and carry out its role as the central forum for addressing economic and social issues and maintaining the focus on conference goals. The first meeting of the Bureau with all chairpersons of the functional commissions, scheduled for the 23rd of this month, reflects ECOSOC's commitment to make our work better coordinated and more efficient. ECOSOC is also changing its philosophy, measuring its success not by the number of resolutions passed, but by the difference it makes in real life.

But we need to build on these achievements. The coordination segment is an opportunity to closely examine how to further strengthen the Council, to enable it to fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the UN and imposed by the trends of economic and social development. ECOSOC is constantly being assigned new important tasks, this year, for example, monitoring of the UN system's achievements in gender mainstreaming. Of

course, strengthening of ECOSOC is a process that requires time, effort and a spirit of compromise - but it is the only rational answer to increasing global interdependence.

LINK BETWEEN PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

In future, increased activity of ECOSOC can also be expected in the areas of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building. Owing to the breadth of its mandate and the inclusiveness of its work methods, ECOSOC is well placed to mobilize international support for conflict prevention and post-conflict peace building in a given country, and to spur action by the UN, international financial institutions, donors, regional organizations and other partners to help mobilize the needed attention and resources. The Council with its functional commissions can make a tangible contribution and be more proactive in promoting system-wide effort in addressing the economic, social and humanitarian dimensions of conflict prevention and peace building activities under its purview. The gap desperately needs to be bridged between the ending of humanitarian relief and the beginning of systematic development assistance in countries emerging from conflict. In this respect, ECOSOC can promote a well-coordinated effort by UN agencies, funds and programmes.

The forthcoming creation of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries emerging from Conflict will enable ECOSOC to demonstrate in a practical manner how it could ensure adequate and coordinated assistance by reviewing existing arrangements to meet a country's humanitarian, reconstruction and development needs upon the request of the country concerned. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group will need to closely cooperate with the Security Council's Working Group on Africa.

It is encouraging that ECOSOC and the Security Council are improving their cooperation. Last year, the President of the Security Council was invited to speak at ECOSOC on the question of HIV/AIDS. This year, in my capacity of the President of ECOSOC, I was invited to address the Security Council on the situation in Africa on 29 January and 22 May. I have invited the President of the Security Council to address this high-level segment, and I believe he will do it on Wednesday. We should give further consideration to the issue of enhancing collaboration with the General Assembly and the Security Council during our coordination segment. A meeting between the presidents of the General Assembly, Security Council and ECOSOC, scheduled to take place next week, should serve the same purpose.

Your excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

Despite occasional setbacks, the UN and ECOSOC's role will gain importance in our increasingly interdependent world. We have defined our targets and set the time-frames. Implementation and results should be the watchwords as we move forward.

Let us use this session for further progress in this direction. Thank you.