



The President of the Economic and Social Council

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ivan Šimonovic
President of ECOSOC
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia
to the organizational session for 2003 of the Economic and Social
Council**

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Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, this is the last session that I am chairing as President of ECOSOC. I would like to welcome the newly elected members of the Council for 2003 and to express, on behalf of the Council, our gratitude to those States whose membership in the Council ended in 2002, for their contribution to the work of the Council. I further wish to thank all members of the Council in 2002, who greatly facilitated my task as President.

It has been a great honour both to me and to my country, Croatia, to preside over the Economic and Social Council in 2002. During the year, ECOSOC faced many challenges, but was also proud to witness a number of achievements. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the distinguished members of the Council's Bureau: H.E. Ambassador Jassim Mohammed Buallay of Bahrain, H.E. Ambassador Marjatta Rasi of Finland, H.E. Ambassador Gert Rosenthal of Guatemala and H.E. Ambassador Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo of South Africa for their outstanding work. I cannot thank them enough for their commitment and support and also their remarkable cooperation throughout the past year.

I also would like to sincerely thank the Secretariat, and in particular Ms. Kelley and Mr. Khan, for their relentless support and assistance during the past year. This support helped ensure that our work was carried out in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Last but not least, I would like to thank members of the Croatian Mission to the UN, and in particular Irena and Ida for their devotion and efforts.

With the help of the Bureau and the Secretariat, the Council was able to conduct a successful substantive session in July and to make progress in a number of important areas, such as peace building and conflict prevention, cooperation with international finance and trade institutions, and follow up to international conferences and summits.

Outcomes of the 2002 ECOSOC session

Let me start with the 2002 substantive session held last July in New York.

During ECOSOC's **high-level segment**, major advances were achieved in the area of human resources development. The segment adopted a Ministerial Declaration, which gave new impetus to Governments, the UN system, and civil society for working towards better health and education for all. During the high-level segment and its preparations, NGO's were given a higher profile than ever before, and I hope this trend will continue in the future.

The main focus of the **operational activities** segment was on funding for the development work of the funds and programmes, and harmonizing and simplifying their procedures. We also extensively discussed the evaluation of the effectiveness of the UN system's development work. The Council should continue to follow-up on the interest, expressed by many delegations, in further building the segment as a global forum to provide overall policy guidance to the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

ECOSOC's **coordination segment** focused on how to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and the impact and effectiveness of its work. The segment adopted agreed conclusions that create a solid foundation for strengthening the Council's contribution to the objective of an integrated and coordinated follow-up to major UN conferences and summits. But, there is still a long way to go in this area.

During the **humanitarian affairs** segment, the Council gave guidance for reinforcing the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the UN system. It also stressed the importance of ensuring a smooth transition from relief to development, while focusing on vulnerable groups. This transition is particularly relevant taking into account ECOSOC's increasing engagement in post conflict peace-building.

In the **general segment**, the Council made progress in advancing and coordinating the work of its subsidiary bodies and strengthening their functioning. In 2002, for the first time, a meeting of the Bureau of ECOSOC with all the chairpersons of the functional commissions was organized, followed by a panel discussion with members of the Council. This meeting provided an important forum for coordination and cooperation among the functional commissions as well as with ECOSOC and contributed to strengthen the relationship between the Council and its commissions. It served as an important step forward in efforts to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. It was also used to emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming in all council's activities and those of its subsidiary bodies.

The Council also established a support secretariat for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This will be important in helping this unique hybrid body consisting of governmental representatives

and representatives of indigenous peoples and their organizations, to perform its important task. Mixing governmental and non-governmental representatives in the same body might prove to be a far reaching precedent for the future of the UN.

Let me now turn to other areas of particular concern during 2002, and which, I believe, will continue to represent priorities in years to come.

Peace-building and conflict prevention

An area where we progressed substantially in 2002 is the area of peace-building and conflict prevention. Of course, a lot remains to be done and it is crucial that we increase our efforts and mobilize resources to achieve further progress. Still, I think 2002 has been a turning point for the Council's work in this area.

During its 2002 substantive session, ECOSOC agreed to establish an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict. This framework will help us to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of individual countries; to review relevant programmes of support; to prepare recommendations for a long-term programme of support that integrates relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in a comprehensive approach; and to provide advice on ensuring the adequacy and coherence of international assistance.

Guinea-Bissau was the first country to request that such an Advisory Group for the individual country be formed, and in October 2002, ECOSOC established the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau. The Group visited Guinea-Bissau in November 2002 and prepared a report that will be introduced to the Council today. I personally participated in the work of the group and have witnessed the efforts of the members, as well as, of the secretariat and hereby wish to congratulate all those involved for the fine work accomplished. It is still a beginning, but a beginning of something very important.

Among the preliminary conclusions reached by the Advisory Group, particularly far-reaching is that ECOSOC should consider engaging the donor countries and the rest of the UN system, including the BWIs, in an attempt to find creative and innovative ways to respond to the situation in Guinea-Bissau in order to prevent it from relapsing into conflict. Beyond the situation in Guinea-Bissau, it seems obvious there is a need for the international community to develop a systematic and coherent manner of responding to specific problems of countries emerging from conflict. The challenge is to find instruments of assistance for countries that no longer need peacekeeping support, but are not yet ready to receive regular donor assistance and meet all the requirements associated with such help.

It is also important to note that the area of peace-building and conflict prevention was marked in 2002 by increased interaction between ECOSOC and the Security Council. Last year, the precedent of addressing the Security Council in the capacity of President of ECOSOC was established, and I addressed the Security Council on four occasions. The Presidents of the Security Council spoke at ECOSOC's high-level segment and also addressed ECOSOC on the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Mozambique. In particular, the Ad Hoc

Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau worked closely with the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. This allowed for the simultaneous evaluation of social, economic and security issues and proved to be the most effective way of dealing comprehensively and coherently with a country emerging from conflict.

We also need to find ways to ensure that ECOSOC best supports and complements the work of the General Assembly, especially its Second and Third Committees, and to avoid overlap in their work and meetings. I addressed this issue with the President of the GA and the chairmen of the Second Committee, but more systematic efforts in this area are needed in order to make substantial progress.

Regarding cooperation between main UN organs I launched another initiative that was partially successful. A couple of informal, coordination meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC were held during the past year. It is on future presidents of main UN bodies to further improve their cooperation and coordination. Continued support of the Secretary General will also be important in this respect.

ECOSOC-BWI-WTO spring meeting

Another area, in which the Council has been very active in the past year, is its relationship with the BWIs, which can be the basis for broader-based and more inclusive global economic decision making. In 2002, for the first time, WTO participated in the spring meeting of ECOSOC with the BWIs. The 2003 spring meeting between ECOSOC, the BWIs and the WTO will take place almost exactly one year after the International Conference on Financing for Development and will, therefore, present the first opportunity to hold a dialogue between ECOSOC, the World Bank, IMF and WTO on the progress.

I am looking forward to a meaningful and fruitful discussion in the spring to assess coherence, coordination and cooperation in the application of the leading actions adopted in Monterrey. The spring meeting will facilitate an exchange of views on what has been accomplished, as well as on shortfalls. At the same time, it will allow for the examination of further actions and policies required. In 2002, for the first time, representatives of NGOs and the business community participated in the spring meeting. This multi-stakeholder approach and exchange of views with civil society and the private sector will continue in 2003. Indeed, a new element this year will be the organization of two fora before the meeting: one for representatives of the NGO community, and one for representatives of the business sector. Reports from these fora will represent a valuable contribution to our spring meeting and add life into our discussions.

Follow-up to UN conferences and summits

The mention of the Monterrey Conference leads me to the broader area of conference follow-up. We are currently moving into a phase of implementation of the

complex and interrelated commitments and goals established at the major conferences of the 90s as well as the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. It is therefore crucial for ECOSOC to show that it can advance the practical follow-up to these commitments and goals. I am pleased to note that the Council and the General Assembly are working closely together in promoting coherence in the implementation of conference outcomes.

Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my opening statement as President of ECOSOC a year ago, I said that for ECOSOC's work to have a real impact on the lives of the people most in need, we need to gradually but surely, increase its 'circle of influence' to reach out to the world public at large. We must find a way to strengthen ties between the Council and governments, to increase interaction among senior-level policy makers, and to take into account the contributions by NGOs, the private sector, national and local authorities, academia and other non-State actors in the work of the Council. We need to continue to explore how to fully utilize the Council as a catalyst in bringing together all actors in the common goal of poverty eradication and the implementation of the international development targets of the Millennium Declaration.

Of course, there is still a long way to go, but I firmly believe that ECOSOC has an important role to play in the interdependent world of the 21st Century. The success of the ECOSOC should not be measured by the number of resolutions that we adopt, but by the difference that we make on the ground.

I wish my successor, whom you are about to elect, every success for the tasks ahead. I am confident that – with your help and support – he will successfully lead the Council to new achievements and accomplishments.

Thank you.