

**STATEMENT OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GUATEMALA AT THE  
MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL HELD ON JANUARY 15, 2003**

Esteemed colleagues,

My first words are to pay homage to Ivan Simonovic, whose Presidency of the ECOSOC was, in my view, exemplary. I would also like to underline the important role played by Marjatta Rasi, Jassim Mohammed Buallay and Dumisani Kumalo, as well as their collaborators from the Missions of Finland, Bahrain and South Africa, respectively, in seeing through the work programme of ECOSOC during 2002. Ambassador Simonovic will now assume new and important functions in his own Government. I know that I speak for everyone in this room in saying that we will miss him in New York, and that we wish him much success as Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations of Croatia.

In a few days, we will hold our organizational session for 2003. One could therefore argue that our gathering of today is purely of a formal nature, and that it is still not the time to discuss substantive matters. However, I cannot pass up this opportunity to refer, albeit briefly, to a theme that surely is on all of our minds. I am referring to the role of ECOSOC, especially in the broader context of our debates, based on what is set out in the Millennium Declaration, to strengthen the United Nations and its organs, and to deepen the process of reform and revitalization.<sup>1</sup>

Those that have followed ECOSOC closely affirm that in recent times it is progressively gaining in relevance, and that in order to maintain this trend we must build on the results achieved. In fact, during the coordination segment of the 2002 substantive session, this was precisely the theme examined, all *of* which gave rise to a document of Agreed Conclusions.<sup>2</sup> But we must also recognize the fact that, in spite of the above, many *of* our colleagues - members and especially non-members of the Council - continue to harbour doubts regarding the functions of this Organ, as well as about distinguishing between its assigned tasks from those that the Charter assigns to the General Assembly, and particularly to its Second Committee.

The Charter, in fact, defines the functions of the Council in a very general way. If one examines article 62, one will find in its four paragraphs a generic description of analytical, normative and advocacy roles (related to human rights and to economic and social affairs). Article 63 also assigns to ECOSOC a coordinating role within the system, while article 64 does so in the realm of oversight and monitoring, especially of its subsidiary machinery. As stated, all these functions are characterized in a very general manner. It fell on the General Assembly to more clearly define the role of the Council, through several resolutions adopted during the first half of the nineties, which include 46/235, 48/162 and especially 50/227. During the last year, this legislation has been further enriched through the role assigned to ECOSOC in the follow-up *of* the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the Monterrey Consensus.

In summary, it is true that, with time, both the existing legislation as well as the actual *praxis* have given content to an organ that fulfills several unique functions within

<sup>1</sup> Chapter VIII. "Strengthening the United Nations, paragraph 30, third bullet: "to strengthen further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter".

<sup>2</sup> That document of Agreed Conclusions is inspired, at least in part, by the Report of the Secretary General entitled Strengthening further the ECOSOC, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfill the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the UN as contained in the UN Millennium Declaration , (E/2002/62).

the system. There are different ways of classifying and characterizing those functions. I would highlight the following five.

- **First**, the Council as a forum of joint reflection on development issues. In the framework of this function, it is up to us to filter member countries' main concerns regarding development and human rights, making a contribution to the enlightening debate on relevant topics. As part of this work, we contribute to public awareness on general and specific issues, and we offer guidelines on policy actions to address those issues, both at the level of each of our countries and in the framework of international cooperation. We utilize different means to fulfill this function, including the high-level segment of the yearly substantive session, as well as the organization of round tables and diverse gatherings.
- **Second**, and what may well give the Council its distinguishing profile when contrasted with the General Assembly, its convening capacity, as a gathering place not only for the substantive debate which I already mentioned, but as a part of the effort to introduce greater coherence and coordination to the activities of the elements that make up the United Nations system and the non-governmental world that surrounds it. The annual meetings celebrated since 1998 with the Bretton Woods institutions have a special expression within this category. These meetings will undoubtedly acquire a special relevance resulting from the mandates that spring from the Monterrey Consensus, which convert the Council in the privileged interlocutor of the United Nations with its peers of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. In the same vein, the Council also offers the portal of entry to the United Nations for civil society: the non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector.
- **Third**, our oversight, supervising and monitoring roles, as well as that of offering substantive guidance to all subsidiary bodies that fall under our aegis. These include the ten functional commissions, the five regional commissions, as well as various standing committees, expert and ad hoc bodies. We are in a position to offer strategic guidelines for their activities and to have a holistic vision of their work through the analysis of their reports. The Council can and should introduce more coherence into the tasks that these intergovernmental bodies carry out - some, such as the Regional Commissions, dispose of their own Secretariats - and promote that each body's work, within its respective sphere of action, mutually support the work of the others.
- **Fourth**, we have at least one operational expression, or of direct action. I am referring to the role that the Charter bestows on us regarding the Executive Boards of the programmes and Funds of the United Nations, to offer guidelines and oversight in order to assure the coherence of their activities with those carried out by the rest of the system. That role is carried out, among others, during the operational activities for development segment of our substantive meeting. This is a parallel activity, at the inter-governmental level, of that carried out by the Senior Officials of the Secretariat, the agencies and programmes in the framework of the UN system Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
- **Fifth**, we have a permanent role of monitoring and follow-up of the activities of the United Nations system in the economic and social spheres, in order to make sure that the mandates and guidelines received from inter-governmental fora are complied with. This activity also has diverse expressions in our daily work; one of those that I would like to underline is the coordinated and integrated follow-up of the main United Nations Conferences, including the Millennium Summit.

Further, the Council does not operate in a vacuum. Although the Charter created it as one of the six organs of the Organization, as an authority in its own right (article 7), it also established linkages, both with the Security Council (article 65) and with the General Assembly (article 15). Regarding the latter, the Charter places the Council under the authority of the General Assembly in the domain of international economic and social cooperation (article 60). As to the relation with the Security Council, the Council has begun to make inroads in the areas of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace building; limited, to be sure, to their economic and social dimensions, under the express indication on the part of the Security Council, and also of the General Assembly. That, for example, is the way to interpret the creation of the ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflict.

In summary, ECOSOC must be perceived as part of a complex organizational arrangement, that forms part of the United Nations' system of governance. Tracing all the links mentioned before on an organizational chart, one immediately can see the potential for disorder, overlapping, duplication and disparate and even contradictory measures. At the same time, the very same situation offers ECOSOC the unique possibility of promoting coherence, coordination and cooperation between the different parts of the system, and those that, without belonging to the system, interact with it.

Above all, it is up to ECOSOC to maintain valid one of the two great *raison d'être* of the United Nations. Just as the Security Council specializes in matters related to peace, security and disarmament, the Economic and Social Council specializes in development and the observance of human rights. To carry out this work, we dispose not only of our own excellent Secretariat, here in New York, but also of the considerable technical resources available in the five regional commissions, in UNCTAD and in the support services to the subsidiary machinery that functions in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna.

I trust during the year, 2003, we will continue to focus on the profile of the council, in the broader context of our endeavours to strengthen the United Nations and their work in response to the noble objectives endowed to them by the charter. I believe that this is a relevant forum to meet such a challenge, and can become even more relevant. I consider it a privilege to have been elected to head the Bureau, whose role is to facilitate your work, and I appreciate this distinction, which I hope that neither I nor my colleagues of the Bureau will defraud.

Thank you.