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ECOSOC 2005 High-Level Segment

Opening Statement

by H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram,

President of the UN Economic and Social Council

*29 June 2005, New
York*

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Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ministers,
Dear Colleagues, Ladies
and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the opening of the High-Level Segment of the annual substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

2. Our session this year takes place in special circumstances. The General Assembly has just concluded its high-level dialogue on Financing for Development. The preparations for the September High-Level Event on the 60th Anniversary of our Organization are well underway. In our deliberations, as in the Secretary-General's report, there is a sense of urgency to respond to the challenge of development- poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, marginalization, joblessness,

3. Our goals are clear: set out in the Millennium Development Goals and by the Conferences held in Doha, Monterrey, Johannesburg and elsewhere. The reviews held so far confirm that there is a serious deficit in the implementation of these goals and commitments. At the present pace, the MDGs may not be realized for another hundred years or more.

4. The recent slow down in the world economy, the significant trade and financial imbalances between the major economies, and the accompanying rise in protectionist voices, are disheartening signals in the struggle for development.

5. Yet, we must take hope that finally, the political will is being generated to succeed in meeting the challenge of redressing extreme poverty, hunger and disease. There is visible support of common people - including in the richer countries - for the global development goals. The world has the financial human, technological and institutional capabilities to achieve these goals. And, indeed, many developing countries are succeeding in meeting the challenge of growth and development.

6. Our meeting must confront the enormity of the development challenge. But, we must also celebrate the successes in the struggle. We must encourage the growth and dynamism of a growing number of developing countries. We must congratulate the European Union's collective commitment to the 0.7% ODA target and timetable for its implementation. We must simultaneously welcome the agreement of the G-8 Finance Ministers to cancel the debt of 18 poorest countries, even as we urge them to do more.

7. Today, developing countries - including the poorest in Africa - accept their responsibility for their own development. Good national policies and governance are an obvious pre-requisite for development. But the enormity of the challenge they face, and the external vulnerabilities that impact on their endeavours, must not be minimized. Solutions for global underdevelopment will have to be comprehensive and coherent encompassing adequate external financing for development, larger and growing trade opportunities and good global governance.

8. Such comprehensiveness and coherent solutions can be evolved only within the framework of the United Nations, and its economic and social arm - The Economic and Social Council.

Excellencies,

9. Over the past months, the Council has held a series of meetings devoted to promoting implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, especially the MDGs. Our interaction with the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO and UNCTAD, this spring was substantive and led to the identification of the policies and actions required to advance the implementation of the agreed development goals.

10. Today, at this ECOSOC session, we have with us key policy-makers from Governments, international organizations and regional institutions, as well as from civil society and the business sector. I am certain that the comprehensive nature of this participation, the clear focus of our goals and the growing global commitment to making "poverty history", will enable our meeting to come forward with ideas, initiatives, conclusions and recommendations to promote the vital development goals to which we are all committed.