

13 JANUARY 2006

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF ECOSOC,
AMBASSADOR ALI HACHANI,
AT THE ORGANISATIONAL SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
17 JANUARY 2006**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me to serve as the President of the Economic and Social Council in 2006 and I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the members of this Council for reposing their confidence in me.

Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Munir Akram for his leadership and extraordinary contribution to the work of the Council this past year. I would also like to thank my colleagues, Ambassador Diego Cordovez from Ecuador, Ambassador Agim Nesho from Albania and Ambassador Johan C. Verbeke from Belgium, for their excellent work as members of the Bureau. I would also like to congratulate the new members of the Bureau on their election.

Last year we commemorated the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which provided the background for efforts to renew the UN. The 2005 World Summit successfully set the stage for renewal and that is evident in the implementation phase. The UN is getting ready for the challenges of our time.

Development remains one of the defining challenges of this interconnected world. The UN has to deliver on its promise to “promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.” The UN Charter established the Economic and Social Council as the principal organ to coordinate economic, social, and related work within the UN system. But it is yet to fully perform its due role. We have achieved a significant breakthrough in the outcome document of the World Summit that assigned the ECOSOC with new mandates and functions in order to advance the UN development agenda.

The significance of these functions and mandates lies in their potential to advance the implementation of the broader United Nations development agenda this year and in the years ahead. We should see these as ways to lift millions of people from the life of deprivation and destitution.

At the pinnacle of our efforts stands the task of setting the course for a regular, politically prominent and unified review of the implementation of the UN development agenda. The Annual Ministerial Review should be seen as the culmination of the various monitoring efforts taken by various parts of the UN system, the Bretton Woods institutions and by governments. We must aim to institutionalise a continuous review process that will ensure the timely and integrated implementation of the UN development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The Annual Ministerial Review should not be viewed as a one-day event, but as an ongoing process with medium to long-term goals.

In this context, I would like to refer to the importance of the recently concluded World Summit on Information Society. Its outcomes, adopted in Tunis in November of last year, give ECOSOC an important mandate to provide oversight to implementation of and follow up to the Summit's decisions, in particular through a strengthened Commission on science and technology for development, and to assure that our work on harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies for advancing development contributes to advancing the broad United Nations development agenda. The Council must, in the coming months, adopt the necessary decisions in this regard.

The Summit also mandates ECOSOC to promote global policy dialogue. This has opened an opportunity for re-defining the way the Council has been undertaking this role. The Council may see it fit to make this an important focus of its work this year. I suggest that we aim at making this dialogue a platform for open discussion with broad participation from all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, private sector representatives and academia.

May I recall that the high-level debate will have this year as a theme the generation of employment and decent work for all. While this issue of central importance to the overall development agenda, it is particularly relevant to the forthcoming General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development. Mobility of labour or awareness of work opportunities and the rights of migrant workers in a globalized world have added a new dimension to the issues of employment generation, migration of skilled workers and the often cited issue of brain-drain. For this reason, outcome of the high-level segment would have direct link with the GA dialogue.

I also intend to organize preparatory meetings to crystallize inputs for discussions at the Council's substantive session.

The mandate for convening a biennial Development Cooperation Forum provides ECOSOC with the unique opportunity to create space for a comprehensive high-level review of international development cooperation. As of now there is no such forum that brings together all relevant development actors to address multilateral, bilateral and South-South cooperation and to promote aid effectiveness. While it may not be possible to start the actual work of the Forum this year, I suggest that the preparations for the 2007 Forum should be set in motion as soon as possible in the coming months. To ensure the success of the Forum, we have to guarantee the highest quality of preparation, participation, interaction and outcome.

I see this Forum as a major leap in enhancing the impact of multifarious efforts in the pursuit of development goals.

The events of the past year have provided sad evidence that progress towards long term development goals can be reversed or hampered by natural calamities. In addition, these disasters also lead to humanitarian crisis. Clearly, there is a need to strengthen our capacities to be better prepared to respond to such situations. ECOSOC is uniquely positioned to promote improved, coordinated responses from the United Nations and other partners in relation to humanitarian crises. Last year's meetings on Food Security in Africa and on Avian Flu have demonstrated ECOSOC's potential to mobilise action and to respond to situations that pose an imminent threat to long-term development goals. I trust that during this year we will continue to enhance our ability to respond as and when crises occur. This, however, will entail that, without encroaching on the duties of other bodies of the UN system, we build a system-wide capacity to keep the Council informed and to ensure that the Council is enabled to react in a timely manner.

The 2005 World Summit also achieved a breakthrough by advancing a global consensus on the interrelationship between development, peace and security. With this in mind, member States recognised the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council and endorsed a coherent and integrated approach to development. With the creation of the Peace-Building Commission, ECOSOC will continue to make further inroads in the areas of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace building. We are, I think, expected to develop procedures to work closely with the Peace-Building Commission to ensure an integrated approach to peace and development in accordance with the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20th December last year. This cooperation will be particularly challenging for those seven ECOSOC countries which will also be members of the Commission.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The year ahead will be crucial for setting the course for important reforms. Not only will these reforms improve the work of our organisation but – most importantly – they will be decisive to enhance our efforts in international development cooperation.

Never have we been closer to a unified framework of international development cooperation. Not only have we arrived at a global consensus on a set of development goals and objectives. We have also come to agree that the pursuit of these goals requires coherent, consistent and coordinated action.

Our main challenge will be to implement these new mandates to further strengthen ECOSOC's ability to act with responsibility and efficiency. We must live up to our promises and commitments on development. To this end, we need to reinforce our efforts and improve the performance and coordination of our subsidiary bodies to enhance the way the United Nations work on economic and social issues. We need to seize the opportunities that the 2005 World Summit has provided for the Council.

Not all issues, I know, can be addressed within one year, but we can lay the foundations. While the General Assembly will provide us shortly, I hope, with overall guidance in pursuing this task, the Council will have to carry out its own duties. We have to show the same level of ambition in translating these mandates into action, which was shown by our leaders in assigning these new functions. We must all strive to ensure that ECOSOC becomes *the* vehicle for building political momentum towards and monitoring implementation of our development goals.

Let me close with expressing my sincere belief in the broader context of our endeavours to strengthen the United Nations. I believe that the present reforms of this Council are of crucial importance to deliver our promises on development as contained in the outcomes of the major summits and conferences. Reforming the United Nations system and implementing the new functions of the Council are not just idle exercises of institutional reform. The utmost purpose and benchmark of our efforts is to save and improve the lives of millions people.

I consider it a privilege to have been elected to be President of ECOSOC, at this juncture, and I look forward to work in complete harmony with all members of the Council and its Bureau on these tasks in this important year ahead.

Thank you.