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Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Dalius Čekuolis, President of the Economic and Social Council

High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council

Geneva, 2 July 2007

Mr. Secretary-General,
Madam President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellency Madame President of the Confederation,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the opening of the first High Level Segment of a strengthened ECOSOC. I would like to extend my warm welcome to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, President of the General Assembly Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, Madame President Micheline Calmy-Rey, the Prime Ministers, Ministers and senior representatives from Member States and the United Nations system.

At the beginning of the Millennium, our leaders adopted a shared agenda for development, based on a set of common goals and targets to be achieved by 2015. Midway to this date, we are witnessing the encouraging signs of a global decline in poverty in most parts of the world. And yet, many countries remain off track to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

We can only succeed in fulfilling the promise of the Millennium Declaration to the people there - and across the globe- if we work in a true global partnership, with all parties firmly determined to implement fully their development commitments.

Meeting the Goals requires multi – sectoral approaches and combined efforts across the board. While there is no single blueprint which could be adopted by all countries, success stories, such as the ones presented in the recently released 2007 Millennium Development Goals report, indicate the existence of certain key factors for success.

This should give us renewed hope that if we take up and apply the lessons learned and successful practices on a broader scale, attaining the Goals could still be within our reach. In the run-up to 2015, the

international community should therefore focus on helping to identify those key factors for success and make them common knowledge, transferable and adaptable locally to meet the challenges at hand.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The primary responsibility for achieving the development goals lies with the member states. Due to its mandate, however, ECOSOC has a central role in facilitating and supporting the efforts undertaken by national governments. The new design of the Council's High Level Segment, in my view, has an excellent potential of responding to the call to speed-up the implementation of the MDG-based national development strategies.

By enabling us to make a comprehensive assessment of progress to date towards the internationally agreed development goals and identifying implementation gaps, the AMR is an important step towards the full realization of the global partnership for development. Notably, it offers a unique platform for sharing the experience of national implementation efforts through the instrument of voluntary country presentations. Allow me in this respect to congratulate the countries who have volunteered this year to make their presentations.

The AMR also allows us to review and define the challenges that persist and, on the basis of the shared experience, to discuss best ways of tackling those challenges. Importantly, it enables to bring the individual conference follow-up processes together in a meaningful way in order to avoid duplications and to ensure the coherence and coordination of both, policy and action.

Such a result-oriented approach of the AMR, I believe, will allow us to go an extra step towards finding viable solutions to the plight of millions of people suffering from dehumanizing poverty and deprivation.

An additional forum for finding practical solutions to the eradication of poverty and hunger is offered by the ECOSOC Innovation Fair, which is held for the first time this year. I hope that by bringing together innovators, practitioners, and policy makers, the Fair will evolve into an important catalyst for progress. I also hope this will allow ECOSOC to take its engagement with all stakeholders to a new level.

With regard to the engagement of all actors dealing with development cooperation, the Development Cooperation Forum offers a unique global platform and has the promise of becoming one of a kind in the multilateral cooperation world. Developing a vision for the DCF will therefore be a major objective of its launch, this week.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a further sign of the renewal of the Council into a catalyst for action, and as suggested in the excellent report by the Secretary-General for the AMR, I would be delighted by any announcement of concrete new initiatives to fight poverty and hunger that Ministers would like to make at this session.

By way of conclusion, I strongly encourage to make the most of the renewed High Level Segment as an opportune setting for identifying ways that can help us to advance the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. I count on your full engagement, in order to send a clear message to the world that, in the spirit of true global partnership, we do not waver in our commitments; that we are determined to do all that it takes to help millions of people to improve their lives.

As you, Mr. Secretary General, noted at your first statement to ECOSOC membership early this year, “development for all is central to the UN’s mission.... Together with security and respect for human rights, it represents our core aspirations for a peaceful and better world.” In line with its Charter mandate, ECOSOC is particularly well placed to contribute to the strength of to the development pillar, and thus to greater peace and prosperity in the world.

As participants of the first post-reform high level segment, it falls on us to set the tone and shape of the renewed ECOSOC. Let us make it clear: the future appeal of ECOSOC will also be judged by the results of this session. For the sake of those whose lives hinge on progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals, we must therefore make the very best of this reformed Council.

With these introductory remarks, I would now like to hand the floor to Mr. Ban Ki- moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Secretary-General, the floor is yours.