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**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Léo Mérorès, Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations
and President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Special Event on Climate Change and Development
2 May 2008**

Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the ECOSOC Special Event on “*Achieving the MDGs and coping with the challenges of climate change*”. It is now widely recognized that achieving the MDGs and addressing climate change are inextricably linked and that as twin challenges they must hence be pursued together.

Today, several countries are off track in achieving the MDGs. That was the sobering message from last year’s Annual Ministerial Review, which also marked the mid-point towards the 2015 target date for the achievement of many of these objectives.

Climate change could further hamper countries’ efforts to make headway towards the MDGs. And, if left unchecked, there is a real risk that climate change may roll back hard-won progress in achieving the United Nations development agenda.

While the worst effects will occur in the future, climate change is no longer a far-off prospect. It is already happening, and it is already clear that the world’s poor and most vulnerable, who generally contributed least to climate change, are those that are suffering most from its negative effects.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are among those that are highly exposed to the impacts of climate change, particularly sea-level rise and extreme weather events. More frequent and stronger hurricanes and storms are already extracting a heavy toll in damaged infrastructure, destroyed crops and loss of human lives on SIDS. Rising sea-level rises pose a risk to the very survival of SIDS.

Sea-level rises and more frequent extreme weather events, such as drought, could force million to abandon their homes. To prevent an uprooting of people, adaptation and mitigation measures need to be urgently adopted. It is therefore very timely that the Council hold panel discussions on “*How to learn to cope with climate change*” and “*How to reduce the world’s carbon footprint*”.

Today’s event, which benefits from the presence of leading environment and development experts, provides an important opportunity to explore the nexus between climate change and development and to identify win-win solutions to address the two challenges together. I hope that an open and candid discussion on this important topic will help to prepare the ground for this year Annual Ministerial Review which will focus on “*Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development*”.

Please allow me to acknowledge the generous contribution of Italy for the annual AMR. I hope that the 2008 Ministerial Declaration will send a strong message that, in order to achieve the MDGs by the 2015 target date, we need not only to step up our efforts particularly targeted at specific MDGs, but also to step up our efforts to address the challenge of climate change. Otherwise, we risk seeing hard-earned fragile economic and social progress reversed by the negative effects of climate change.