



The President
of the
Economic and Social Council

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Statement by

**HIS EXCELLENCY HAMIDON ALI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UN
PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**OPENING ADDRESS TO THE 2010
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

New York, 28 June 2010

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Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 2010 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. It is a particular honour to have so many distinguished guests here with us today.

2. This High-level Segment is an occasion to focus on some of the most pressing issues in development, now made more challenging by the subdued pace of economic recovery. Recent experience proves that this is particularly true for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

3. At the same time, the High-Level Segment, in particular, and the substantive session, in general, are the most important and high-profile events in ECOSOC's calendar. They therefore play an important role in our continuous efforts to revitalise ECOSOC and, in so doing, ensure the continued relevance of the United Nations in the area of development, social and cultural affairs. In a results-based era, the United Nations – and the Economic and Social Council – must not only bring to the global governance debate the legitimacy it possesses given its representative nature, but also a capacity to galvanise and implement effectively international action to overcome collective challenges.

4. The High-level Segment must therefore not only be a forum for the exchange of views and experiences, but also must produce tangible results, be they in terms of policy guidance or the promotion of coherence. Results which are understood by not only those of us in this room, but also the public at large. In the end, all of us are judged in the court of public opinion.

5. It is for this reason that I have challenged all delegations, including my own as facilitator, to formulate and agree on a Ministerial Declaration that is not only short and action-oriented, but also one which is understood by the man-in-the-street as a collective expression of the international community on this ECOSOC theme. This means that we have to move away from long and ambiguous statements of yesteryears.

6. I am happy to inform you that delegations have agreed on this approach and extremely good progress has been made. I would have liked to have had the Ministerial Declaration agreed to by now. However, owing to scheduling difficulties, this has not been possible. I would like to thus urge all delegations to continue to exhibit the same flexibility so that we can conclude the negotiations on the Declaration.

7. The change in the format and content of the Declaration is a key point of the overall change in ECOSOC that I had called for when Malaysia assumed the ECOSOC Presidency in January. I had mentioned that my views of the changes that needed to be made are encapsulated in what I call the five 'musts':

7.1 Firstly: We must adopt a proactive and constructive agenda. Our actions must be purposeful;

7.2 Secondly: We must adopt shorter, more focused agreements and resolutions. Instead of an avalanche of words which bury us all, we must have a flood of results;

7.3 Thirdly: We must do more to improve the atmospherics surrounding the ECOSOC. We need to promote greater transparency and honest dialogue, so concerns are clearly understood;

7.4 Fourthly: We must move beyond stale arguments;

7.5 Fifthly: We must do justice to the ECOSOC's role in the operational aspects of the UN's work.

8. I am also pleased to note that this message has resonated not only within the UN, but elsewhere too. For example, as a result of the meeting between the ECOSOC, the Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO and UNCTAD there is now a renewed spirit of cooperation, rather than competition, between these institutions. This can only be good for our collective constituencies, namely, the world's poorest and most marginalised, to whom we are all accountable as members of a common human family.

Distinguished Delegates,

9. The theme of this year's Annual Ministerial Review, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women", is particularly opportune and timely, as women all too often are the poorest and most marginalised. It allows us to strengthen the linkages between gender equality, women's human rights and non-discrimination

as a basis for progress in development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

10. Yet, despite this increasing awareness everywhere, women and girls today face gender-based discrimination. While MDG-3 relates directly to the empowerment of women, all MDGs are dependant upon women having a greater say in their own development. Malaysia's own experience is testament to this. Nowhere else is the mutual interdependence between development, human rights and development stronger than in the issue of gender.

11. Since the last substantive session, we have engaged in a broad preparatory process for the Annual Ministerial Review to explore key challenges in achieving gender equality, and to consider recommendations and proposals for action across critical areas.

12. ECOSOC had also addressed innovative partnerships and sources of funding through a Special Event on Philanthropy. Representatives of various stakeholders discussed modalities of cooperation to end violence against women and girls and promote women's economic empowerment.

13. The Global Preparatory Meeting, on the other hand, sent a clear message: rural women are a critical force in reducing poverty and hunger and therefore in sustainable development. If countries are to achieve their development goals, concerted and targeted action is needed to empower rural women.

14. We are fortunate this year to have had thirteen countries volunteering to make national voluntary presentations. These reports offer an inside look into national efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

15. All these activities prove the importance of addressing this year's theme, but also of ECOSOC's role in these efforts.

Distinguished Delegates,

16. The second Development Cooperation Forum taking place this year is an opportunity for us to accelerate progress in strengthening the global partnership for development.

17. The state of development cooperation is reviewed, this year, against the backdrop of competing demands on development policies and aid flows as the world is still recovering from the devastating economic and financial crisis. Despite steady levels of aid, we are below the commitments made at the UN and G8 Summits.

18. The Forum has all the potential to become the principal venue for global dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation. The strong legislation of the Forum allowing for the inclusion of all relevant development actors provides a unique opportunity to garner a wide range of inputs for a deepened dialogue and understanding of the international development cooperation agenda. These issues are vital to the achievement of the MDGs. However, the potential that the DCF has is constrained by the following:

18.1 Firstly: It is held only once every two years;

18.2 Secondly: It only produces a Chair's summary; and

18.3 Thirdly: It is not institutionally linked to any other processes related to development cooperation either within the UN or outside.

19. This is an issue that will need to be addressed during the 65th session of the General Assembly when, as you know, we will review Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

Distinguished delegates,

20. I trust that with its strong legislative basis, the enthusiastic involvement of the UN system and the other development partners will enable the Council to move forward with firm commitment and strong political resolve to accelerate progress in the economic, social and cultural spheres worldwide. In that spirit, I look forward to a successful session.

I thank you.