



Check against delivery

Statement by H.E. Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe,
67th President, ECOSOC
Ambassador, Zambia

Handover Ceremony
10 January 2012, New York

Your Excellencies,
Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, **Secretary-General,**
Dr. Shabaan Muhammad Shabaan, Under Secretary-General
Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant **Secretary-General,**
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I hand over the reigns of the leadership of ECOSOC to my distinguished colleague from Slovakia, Ambassador Miloš Koterec. But before I do, let us take a retrospective glimpse — at the world, briefly, in 2011 and at ECOSOC in particular. I will start with the world.

At the start of the year, mass uprisings swept across North Africa and the Middle East. In March the most powerful earthquake in Japan's history unleashed a giant tsunami, killing 19,000, people sweeping away entire towns and villages, and exposing the country to a nuclear-meltdown at the Fukushima power plant.

Europe's unfolding debt crisis has destabilised financial markets more than at any point since the worst of the 2008 financial crisis. A major drought ravaged the Horn of Africa, causing numerous deaths and threatening 10 million people. Frustration became a pandemic, with protests everywhere – including right here in this city.

I**N THIS** year of turbulence, ECOSOC, more than ever, needed to deliver on its mandate as the pre-eminent forum for addressing social, economic and humanitarian issues. It is fitting that we chose education – the key to self-employment as the theme for the year. Drawing Ministers and other prominent statesmen together, including former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, along with a record 1,400 representatives from business and civil society — to the Council's High-level Segment of the substantive session in Geneva last July. We heard stories of education progress, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, where enrolment ratios surged by one-third over the past decade despite a large increase in the region's primary school age population.

We also heard about education in crisis: the 67 million children who remain out of school; the 800 million adults worldwide who remain illiterate; the stubborn gender gap in enrolment; and the scandalously poor quality of education provided to many youth who do attend school. At ECOSOC's prodding, delegations adopted an ambitious Ministerial Declaration — one which seeks to tackle both education access and quality, thereby moving a step closer to correcting a situation, in the words of PM Brown, of "broken promises, broken dreams, broken trust."

E DUCATION may have been front and centre throughout the Council's Annual Ministerial Review and National Voluntary Presentations, but the Substantive Session took on far more still...

- A Coordination Segment which articulated further ways to boost the UN's role in global economic governance, as a complement to other prevailing mechanisms.
- An Operational Activities Segment paving the way for this year's General Assembly Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.
- A Humanitarian Affairs Segment which showed ECOSOC at its best, sounding the alarm on the spiralling food crisis in the Horn of Africa and on the many challenges facing the young South Sudan.
- A General Segment which saw progress in the Council's and Peacebuilding Commission's persistent efforts to improve ties. Another type of nation-building was on the agenda, too, as ECOSOC kept the spotlight shining on earthquake ravaged Haiti, via its Ad Hoc Advisory Group.
- And finally, Geneva offered a splendid opportunity for me to meet with numerous UN agency heads, outside the formal confines of our Council meetings — where we explored ways to strengthen ECOSOC's relationship with UN partners.

Beyond the Substantive Session, we saw ECOSOC use its weight and prestige to support last February's "Philanthropy in Education" event. In June ECOSOC and PBC held a critical joint meeting on South Sudan (attended by South Sudan's Vice-President). Other high lights of our work in 2011 included: two, first-ever joint ECOSOC and Second Committee meetings on job creation and the ongoing world economic and financial crises. We held extensive dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions throughout the year. Among these: a meeting in Washington DC between the ECOSOC Bureau and Executive Boards of the IMF and World Bank; the meeting in New York between Member States and the Executive Directors of the World Bank and IMF, UNCTAD and WTO; my address on behalf of ECOSOC to the Annual Spring Meetings of the IMF and World Bank and my participation in Washington, D.C., in the Autumn meeting of their Development Committee. We ended the year with a forward looking "Cybersecurity and Development" event in December.

To highlight what ECOSOC got right in 2011 is not, in any way, to minimize what it could do better. Far from it, for if the Council is to assume its role on the world stage —

a goal we all share — change is essential. ECOSOC must be relevant and must be seen to be so by all stakeholders.

We tried our best in 2011 to publicise ECOSOC's work with a wealth of initiatives including: a month-long, web-based forum on education challenges, a revamped Facebook page, effective Twitter and YouTube campaigns, a well-received "Innovation Fair" in Geneva, and our new ECOSOC e-book, freely available anywhere with a click of the mouse. Here's a short video preview, prepared jointly by the Departments of Public Information and General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management. Please have a look:

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As you can see, the Secretariat is moving to a paper smart direction as instructed by the Secretary General. I am pleased, Mr. Secretary General that ECOSOC is the pioneer of this new approach.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Just allow me, before I conclude, a few moments of personal reflection about the work we have done and the ECOSOC I would like to see.

In my view ECOSOC should become a strong, respectable and recognisable brand. This is the spirit behind the "Conversations with Nobel Laureates" series which ECOSOC has started, inspired by the discussion we had with Professor Joseph Stiglitz last November. On 7th February, the "ECOSOC Conversations with Nobel Laureates" will feature prominent figures in a special briefing session entitled "Interactive dialogue on the current Economic and financial situation". The "ECOSOC Conversations" should not be restricted to Nobel Laureates in Economics. It should cover the entire spectrum of the matters that are under ECOSOC's mandate. Personally, I would hope to have "Conversations" with the three eminent Women Nobel Peace Prize winners, a session that can be co-organised with UN Women, another with Nobel Prize winners in Medicine who can perhaps talk to us about the viruses and diseases of the future. Conversations like these are bound to make ECOSOC interesting to both Member States and the other stake holders.

From the success of our joint events with the Peace-building commission and the Second Committee in the past year, ECOSOC should hold more such joint events not only with the two bodies, but also with the Security Council and others.

You will recall that we had planned a Ministerial meeting in the margins of the General Assembly but we called it off due to a scheduling conflict. The meeting was, among other things, intended to raise the level of participation and visibility of ECOSOC. I hope that it will be possible to hold a Ministerial ECOSOC meeting this year.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a saying in my language which states: "Ubukwebo bushimonwa, tabushitwa!" meaning, merchandise that is not seen or advertised is not bought. ECOSOC must be seen, must make itself seen. To achieve this let us start with the small, practical things.

I am free to say this in front of the Secretary General because I am no longer an interested party: The President of ECOSOC must be given one of the Special UN lapel pins worn by the President of the General Assembly and senior UN officials. This will make the President recognisable and avail him or her easy access to UN Premises. This pin will become part of the instruments of office that an outgoing ECOSOC President hands over to the incoming President.

Secondly, around the premises of the ECOSOC Chamber – especially after the renovation of the main building – there should be established a wall on which pictures of the former Presidents should be displayed, in the same way as a Wall of Honour exists for the Secretaries General and Presidents of the General Assembly. Apart from reminding all and sundry about ECOSOC, the Wall of Honour will proclaim that ECOSOC is proud of itself, proud of its history. In my language we say, "Ubufumu buchindika umwine!," meaning, the amount of respect you give to yourself will be the same amount of respect the others will give you.

Thirdly and more importantly, it is my humble opinion that it would greatly help ECOSOC measure up to its mandate if the President is elected on a one-year full time basis with a budget and an appropriate staff structure.

Given the number of Commissions, Funds, programmes and other bodies that currently fall under it ECOSOC is not able to provide effective policy coordination and guidance or monitor implementation of decisions and policies with a part time President and a small support Secretariat. As a result all the reports we receive from subsidiary bodies are merely given perfunctory rather than full, meaningful consideration.

A full time President with undivided focus on ECOSOC would raise ECOSOC's visibility by responding to issues more quickly and representing Council where its presence is needed, thereby keeping the world's attention on issues that need to be addressed – such as the humanitarian catastrophe still ongoing in the Horn of Africa. This recommendation is, in fact, one of those that came out from the Retreat of Former ECOSOC Presidents whose summary report I have already circulated to Member States.

In making this suggestion I am aware of a saying from the Igbo people of Nigeria which says, "Eze agadi nwayo! translated as, "An old person is uncomfortable when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb!" In these difficult economic times when resources

are tight all of us become “Eze agadi nwayos” – any proposal with financial implications becomes a dry bone to us. But, the stakes are high that ECOSOC must deliver. Otherwise, we risk being irrelevant. An effective ECOSOC will be a worthwhile investment.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is said that “Success has many parents and failure is an orphan!” I believe that ECOSOC has had some success in 2011 and many have been the parents of this success. The former Presidents and bureaux of ECOSOC: We stood on their shoulders. The Secretary-General and the Presidents of the General Assembly: For their support and inspiration. The ECOSOC Secretariat and DESA: For all their ground work and facilitation. The interpreters: who made us understand each other despite our myriad of languages and accents. My colleagues in the bureau: H.E. Jan Grauls of Belgium; H.E. Abdulkalam of Bangladesh; H.E. Guttierrez and H.E. Roman-Morey of Peru and H.E. Milos Koterec of Slovakia, our new President. My Staff at Zambia Mission. And you, the Member States for all your support and active participation. To all of you, I owe a big debt of gratitude.

I thank you all and wish our new President all the very best and success of his 2012 tenure.

I thank you!