



**Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe
President of ECOSOC**

**Global Preparatory Meeting
28 April 2011, New York**

Distinguished guests,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome all of you and thank you for attending today's Global Preparatory Meeting on education, in advance of ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review in July.

The AMR, though still a recent creation, has developed into the Council's signature event. Let me sing some of its virtues.

It is high-level, drawing key stakeholders and outside experts to the development table, key figures like Gordon Brown and former IMF Chief Economist Raghuram Rajan, who will both attend this year.

No less important, the AMR is results-driven — carefully monitoring progress, as it does, on the Millennium Development Goals and offering governments practical, proven strategies to scale-up efforts, all in an intimate and interactive setting.

Return to the present, for a moment, and with it, the excellent programme of speakers assembled here today.

On a day devoted to innovation in education, it is fitting that the United Nations should report on some successful innovation of its own: in this case, a fine example of leveraging technology.

This past February and March, two successful internet "e-discussion" dialogues on education best-practices were held — one internal to UN practitioners, the other, a lively Facebook forum open to the public.

More on this shortly, from the e-discussion moderators themselves.

And later this morning, a distinguished panel will address the theme of “what’s new and notable” in education — discussing everything from the merits of cash-transfers to the challenge of introducing greater choice and competition in public education.

Before handing the baton off to my colleagues, however, I would briefly like to share some of the highlights from ECOSOC’s Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Arab Region, held back in December in Doha, Qatar.

It seems that while progress has been achieved in this region in the education-related MDGs and EFA Goals, a lot more needs to be done if the EFA Goals are to be realized. Economic, social, religious and political barriers to education remain for many, thereby making access to education problematic for women, girls and other marginalized groups. Governments need to therefore do more to ensure equitable educational and learning opportunities for all.

Other messages emanating from this regional meeting included the need for greater efforts on the part of all stakeholders to ensure quality education, reduce school drop-out, repetition and failure rates. There was also an urgent need for more and better quality teachers. Also, more classrooms and better conditions of school building and infrastructure was paramount. Particular attention also needed to be paid to providing sanitary and other facilities for girls, thus removing one of their key obstacles.

Innovative approaches are needed, with the private sector and civil society providing assistance in enhancing access to education for the hard to reach populations. The private sector must be more actively engaged to facilitate the transition from basic education, vocational training, higher education and non-formal education into the labour market.

These are some of the main messages coming out of that preparatory meeting. My colleagues in the bureau will now report on the outcome of some of the preparatory meetings held in other regions so far.

I now pass the baton to His Excellency, Mr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen, Vice-President of ECOSOC, who will brief us on last month’s Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific.

Thank you.