

**OPENING STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. HAMIDON ALI
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
AT THE 48TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
3 FEBRUARY 2010**

Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to have been invited to address the opening of the Forty-Eighth Session of the Commission for Social Development.

As you are aware, the Economic and Social Council is the main forum in the United Nations for discussing international economic and social progress, and for formulating policy recommendations on these matters. Moreover, since 2005, under its Annual Ministerial Review, ECOSOC is responsible for assessing progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the other goals and targets agreed to at the major UN conferences and summits. Together, these constitute the United Nations Development Agenda (UNDA).

As I have stated in an earlier statement during the assumption of the Presidency of the ECOSOC, the Council and its functional commissions must be performance-driven, result-oriented, and it must succeed. As the first of ECOSOC's functional commissions to meet each year, the Commission for Social Development plays a pivotal role in defining the United Nation's work on development for the year ahead. Moreover, the ability of the Commission to pursue a proactive and constructive agenda, to adopt more focused agreements and resolutions, to improve the atmosphere of discussion and to look at technical solutions to issues, beyond reflecting political principles, as well as contributing effectively to the operational aspects of the UN's work will be the challenge for the Commission.

Distinguished Delegates,

This year in particular, there are obvious connections between the Commission's work and the theme of the 2010 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women". Social integration aims to promote non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. Despite progress made in certain areas, women still experience persistent – and often severe – discrimination and vulnerability. As the report of the Secretary-General on promoting social integration notes: "Gender-based discrimination, the most prevalent form of institutionalized inequality, continues to obstruct social inclusion efforts."

Accordingly, efforts to expand women's access to education and employment opportunities, as well as to remove barriers to their participation in decision-making processes, can directly contribute to both women's empowerment and the building of more socially inclusive societies.

Chair,

Given the mutually reinforcing messages of social integration and gender equality and the empowerment of women, I can assure you that the policy outcomes from this Commission will be given full consideration in the discussions at the AMR.

Of course, social integration reaches far beyond gender equality, and is a fundamental ingredient in the pursuit of overall development goals. Unfortunately, however, this message has not come across as loudly and clearly as it should. Therefore, I encourage you to clarify and strengthen this point as you craft a policy outcome on social integration in the days ahead. As the outcome documents from this Commission will be transmitted to ECOSOC, you will have an opportunity to influence the development debate, including the discussions taking place during the upcoming high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to assess progress towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

The emerging issue that the Commission will be examining this session conveys an additional key point of synergy with the work of ECOSOC. As you know, ECOSOC is a key inter-governmental forum to enhance understanding of the implications of all crises on development efforts and to promote a coordinated response of the United Nations system. The ideas generated from the discussions on the emerging issue of "policy responses on employment and the social consequences of the financial and economic crisis, including the gender dimension" will contribute important insights.

The Note by the Secretariat on the emerging issue also provides a number of valuable recommendations on responding to the crisis. These include prioritizing employment creation and social protection for all women and men; protecting core social spending in health and education; promoting policies that accelerate jobs recovery by increasing the job content of growth; and giving special attention to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups hit hard by the crisis. Once again, these are important messages that will be carried forth to ECOSOC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your deliberations explicitly coincide with the work of ECOSOC on many levels – from gender equality and the empowerment of women, to overarching development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, to galvanizing a response to the financial and economic crisis.

Therefore, I look forward to the outcomes of the forty-eighth session of the Commission and their elaboration within ECOSOC. I also wish you great success as you engage in the tasks ahead.

Thank you.