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**Opening Statement by
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TO THE 48TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
New York, 3 February 2010**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I start by thanking the Chairman and members of the Bureau of the Commission for Social Development for your able leadership. I am also delighted that His Excellency Hamidon Ali is participating in this opening session of the Commission – the first functional Commission to meet in 2010 – in his capacity as the President of ECOSOC. We look forward to your leadership, not only during this Commission, but throughout the coming months in what will be an important year for development.

We meet at this 48th session of the Commission to produce a consensus policy outcome on social integration and its linkages to poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all. The World Summit for Social Development placed at the core of social development these three interconnected and mutually reinforcing issues. It is therefore critical that they continue to be strengthened and remain central in policy decision-making.

As you recall, the 47th session of the Commission devoted itself to clarifying the elements and meaning of social integration, as a concept and international commitment. The session brought heightened international attention and a deeper understanding to the crucial role of social integration in achieving the overarching goals of peace, security and development.

At this policy session, the Commission will have a further opportunity to strengthen the profile of social integration, and apply its strategies and principles to tackling the many challenges the world currently faces – from new and lingering conflicts, to food insecurity, climate change and the global financial and economic crisis.

Mr. Chairman,

Fifteen years ago, the Social Summit in Copenhagen marked a turning point in development thinking. It put the focus where it should be – on people-centred development. It was a firm expression by the global community to work together to build fair, equitable and inclusive societies.

As we mark the 15th anniversary of the Social Summit, we must take stock of progress made, identify remaining gaps and challenges, and reflect on lessons learned.

We have witnessed considerable progress over the past 15 years with regard to the adoption of international instruments to promote inclusion and integration of social groups. These efforts began with the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the

World Programme of Action for Youth, all adopted in 1995. It continued with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2002, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, each adopted in 2006.

These instruments have helped to guide governments as they develop national strategies to combat discrimination and intolerance. At the same time, they have supported and promoted greater participation of these groups in the labour market, the educational system and the political process, as well as encouraged more active involvement in their communities.

Mr. Chairman,

While we should be encouraged by the progress we have made thus far, we must also be realistic. Challenges to achieving social development remain daunting, and are further compounded by the continuing effects of the financial and economic crisis.

Even though there are some signs of recovery, that does not bring much relief to families still reeling from job and income losses, and struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads.

Moreover, the longer-term predicament of climate change continues to unfold. We must bear in mind that poor and marginalized people and communities are likely to be affected disproportionately, as they have fewer coping mechanisms and are less able to diversify their livelihoods.

One of the key lessons that we have learned about development in the years since Copenhagen is that economic growth alone is not enough to reduce poverty and hunger. It is also crucial to reduce inequality. Yet, we are confronted with rising inequality between and within countries, which has reduced the impact of growth on poverty reduction. We have to ensure that everyone in society is able to share in the benefits of economic development. Effective social integration helps to accomplish this.

To combat these challenges, and to promote greater social cohesion and stability during such uncertain times, we must renew our efforts to guarantee people a minimum set of essential social transfers and services. Last April, the United Nations Chief Executives Board launched a social protection floor as one of its nine joint crisis initiatives. I applaud this effort. Nothing less will do to actively address the crippling effects of increased vulnerability arising from global economic instability and from dislocations caused by climate change.

Mr. Chairman,

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, 2010 will be an important year for development. Among many events, the General Assembly will convene a High-level plenary meeting on the MDGs, which will take place in September. We might ask ourselves how the Commission's work during this session can facilitate implementation of the MDGs?

We can certainly argue that *none* of the MDGs could be achieved *without* pursuing the underlying objective of social integration – a society for all. Socially inclusive policies not only support pro-poor growth and development, they also

help to avert social conflict and political instability, creating favorable conditions for development and achievement of the MDGs. Moreover, the MDGs cannot be met if certain segments of society – including women, older persons, persons with disabilities, youth, indigenous persons, and migrants – are excluded.

So, as we embark on this policy session of the Commission, I encourage you to help pave the way forward so that the central message of Copenhagen will be kept alive. By adopting a policy outcome, you have a unique opportunity to propel forward an issue which is fundamental to our shared vision of human progress.

As you take on this challenge, I wish you much success in your deliberations. I look forward to the Commission's outcome, which will help chart the future direction of social integration policies.
