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**Opening Statement
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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, last September, world leaders agreed on an action agenda to intensify the global fight against poverty and hunger. This Commission's review of poverty eradication provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the implementation of the MDG action agenda, taking into account lessons learned and the challenges many countries still face.

The critical review you will undertake of poverty eradication in all countries – within the context of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly – will lay the ground work for a productive policy session next year. It will also contribute to the forthcoming UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, as well as to the preparatory process of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20. And it will help advance the goals of the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

Addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty has become even more challenging within the current fragile economic and social environment. The global jobs crisis is still unresolved, and unemployment rates remain well above pre-crisis levels. Millions of workers have been pushed into vulnerable employment. In recent months, a growing number of countries have endorsed fiscal austerity measures, cutting resources available for poverty reduction. At the same time, there are warning signs that a new food crisis is emerging.

Distinguished Delegates,

The goal of eradicating poverty can only be achieved through inclusive, equitable policies that address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including youth, older persons, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities.

Around the world, youth have been hard-hit by the global jobs crisis. Our poverty eradication efforts will not be successful unless young people have access to decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods. The unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 was 12.6 per cent in 2010. This translates into 78 million unemployed young people in 2010.

We are now at the mid-point of the highly successful International Year of Youth. Governments should use the platform of the Year to more effectively mobilize international and national action to address the needs and aspirations of young people. In particular, this can be done through the full implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, through mainstreaming its recommendations into national poverty eradication strategies.

At the same time, it is critically important to be mindful of the needs of the growing number of older persons in our societies. The issue of ageing has been receiving increasing attention, as evidenced by the recent establishment of an open-ended working group by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. Of special concern to this Commission is the launch of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. This review and appraisal exercise comes at an important time with the renewed focus among Member States on the situation of older persons. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with its partners, the Regional Commissions, stand ready to provide Member States with the support they need to make this review and appraisal a success.

More also needs to be done to ensure that persons with disabilities are included as an integral part of our efforts to eradicate poverty. This must start with the recognition that disability is a cross-cutting development issue. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development will present his report on efforts to mainstream disability in the international development agenda and in the dialogue on poverty eradication.

In addition, guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities and other international commitments, the work of this session of the Commission can contribute significantly to the preparation for the 2012 high level meeting on disability and development.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year, the Commission adopted the first resolution on promoting social integration. It highlighted the importance of a more integrated, coherent and inclusive approach to address the specific needs of vulnerable communities, social groups and individuals, including people living in poverty. The review of the implementation of this resolution recognized that a growing number of countries have taken innovative approaches – including adopting social protection strategies – as a means to promote social integration and reduce poverty.

Indeed, countries that have successfully reduced poverty and improved social conditions on a broad scale, are those that have developed comprehensive social protection programmes. Governments should consider introducing a social protection system as a concrete step towards the eradication of poverty.

Families remain the main source of social protection in many poor countries. In 2014, we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The Commission has the important task of deciding on the framework of preparations for this important anniversary. We welcome the important support of Governments in promoting the objectives of the International Year of the Family and the observance of its upcoming anniversary.

This year, we will launch the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives. The observance of the Year acknowledges the important contribution of cooperatives to socio-economic development, including poverty eradication. I encourage you to join in the efforts to strengthen cooperatives. Not only do cooperatives help to address poverty and unemployment by creating jobs and raising incomes of people in the various sectors of the economy, but they also serve as a catalyst for social organization and cohesion.

Mr. Chairman,

The activities that I have just highlighted are connected by a common objective – that is, poverty eradication. These activities will be effective only if social goals are given high priority, and only when economic growth is inclusive, and equitable. This Commission has an important role to play in making poverty eradication the centerpiece of economic, social and environmental policies.

I trust that the important deliberations of the Commission will build solid ground for a far-reaching policy outcome, next year. The crucial work you will be doing in the next ten days will also build momentum for Rio+20 and the forthcoming conference on the LDCs.

I wish you every success in your deliberations during this important session of the Commission.

Thank you.
