

**REMARKS ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SOLIDARITY DAY
20 December 2006 (observed on 15 December 2006)**

by

H. E. Ambassador Dalius Cekuolis
Vice President of ECOSOC

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Hachani, President of ECOSOC for organizing this important meeting. This is a commendable initiative.

Solidarity remains a cornerstone of global cooperation for development. In this time and age, we see many manifestations of solidarity ranging from global commitments for achieving development goals, broad-based coalitions working to improve the lot of humanity to the private foundations coming to the fore to support the less fortunate and the have nots.

I believe that the value of solidarity manifests itself most clearly in the eighth Millennium Development Goal on Global Partnership for Development. One of the important elements of this goal is to spread technology and share knowledge. This MDG refers explicitly to making information and communication technologies (ICT) available in cooperation with the private sector. It is becoming increasingly appreciated that the spread of ICT is not an end in itself, but rather a means to achieve so many of the other goals humanity has set. Today, I explicitly mention it because ICT can be extremely powerful forces in fostering solidarity among pockets of humanity.

Tools like the Internet and mobile telephony, together with traditional mass media, serve to make individuals more aware of what is going on in the world – with messages emanating from sources ranging from global news outlets to single bloggers operating in the far corners of the globe. The Internet, in particular, provides many opportunities for individuals to form bonds and unite in action around common causes – across physical distances, political borders, cultural barriers and even languages, as free translation tools are improving. We have seen examples of web-based solidarity as disparate individuals and groups coalesce around issues such as HIV/AIDs; landmines; poverty; the rights of workers, women and youth; and countless others. This is making a visible mark on the work of the United Nations.

More than any other demographic group, the younger generation is particularly adept at using ICT to increase the reach and effectiveness of their social activism, finding innovative ways to apply the myriad tools to raise awareness and rally support and local action amongst physically separate communities that become *virtually* united by shared beliefs and goals. This ability to collaborate without regard for borders or time zones or culture or religion – I am confident – will sow the seeds of great solidarity among coming

generations, as they embrace what makes them similar and what goals they share – not what makes them different.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have heard a great deal about the responsibility of developed country governments to live up to commitments to provide ODA, to forgive debt, to equitably share the benefits of globalization and take other actions to support the development efforts of developing countries. Ensuring the sharing of technologies and knowledge between developed and developing countries is a meaningful part of this effort. ECOSOC has made contributions to this endeavour through such innovative mechanisms like the ICT Task Force. But there is still lot needs to be done.

While billions remain unconnected to modern communication and information technologies or lack skills and training, they do not have the opportunity to leverage the promise of ICT. It would be an act of solidarity to support efforts to bring these technologies to the poor and geographically remote. Many United Nations agencies and programmes are working vigorously toward this outcome in partnership with Member States, the private sector and civil society.

As we celebrate International Human Solidarity Day, let us also fully utilize the power of ICT to spread our message of equity, justice and unity in diversity.