

Launch of the World Day of Social Justice
February 10, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Conference room 4

Introductory remarks

Ms. Rachel Mayanja, ASG, DESA

On behalf of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I would like to welcome you all, distinguished speakers, delegates, civil society representatives, UN staff members and ladies and gentlemen to this first observance of the World Day of Social Justice.

I am sure you are here because the cause of social justice is important to you professionally and personally.

As already pointed out the Ambassador Lintonen, we will focus today on the three pillars of Copenhagen: poverty eradication, full employment and social integration and how they relate to our goal of achieving social justice for all.

I am especially pleased to be in the company of such eminent panelists today, who will speak their minds about social justice and its importance in a globalizing world.

Let me present them all to you.

Her Excellency **Mary Robinson** is the former President of Ireland (1990-1997) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002).

As an academic, legislator and barrister, she has always sought to use law as an instrument for social change, arguing landmark cases before the European Court of Human Rights as well as in the Irish courts and the European Court in Luxembourg.

She is a recipient of numerous honors and awards throughout the world.

Mary Robinson is a Member of the Elders, Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, and Vice President of the Club of Madrid. She is also the Honorary President of Oxfam International, President of the International Commission of Jurists, and Patron of the International

Community of Women Living with AIDS (ICW). She serves on several boards including the UN Global Compact .

Currently, Mary Robinson is active as the Founder and President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative.

Thank you your Excellency for being with us today.

Mr. Lucas Benitez is co-founder of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a community-based workers organization fighting for fair wages and humane working conditions for farm workers. Since its founding in 1992, the Coalition helped to uncover and bring to justice many modern-day slavery operations.

The Coalition was the recipient of the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award, and most recently the 2007 Anti-Slavery Award from Anti-Slavery International.

Mr. Benitez was also awarded a Do Something BRICK award, which recognizes outstanding leaders, under the age of 30, who measurably strengthen their communities.

Ms. Renana Jhabvala has been working with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), based in India, since 1977. The philosophy of SEWA is that of poor, self-employed women organizing for social change. SEWA has been supporting its members in capacity-building and in developing their own economic organizations.

Ms. Jhabvala was elected Secretary of SEWA from 1981 to 1994. At present she is SEWA's National Co-ordinator as well as the Chair of SEWA Bank. She is also the Chair of SEWA Bharat, the National Federation of SEWAs. She was awarded a Padmashri (Indian National Award) in 1989.

Closing remarks

Thank you all, our distinguished panelists, Permanent Representatives, Delegates, civil society representatives and ladies and gentlemen for your contribution to our discussion on social justice today.

As recognized by the resolution establishing the World Day of Social Justice, the observance of this Day should help us consolidate our

efforts in poverty eradication, in promoting full employment and decent work, gender equality and access to social well-being and justice for all.

Perhaps the most telling is that we are all responsible for social justice, the governments, civil society, employees and workers' organizations and ordinary citizens.

I hope that this event inspired and encouraged you all not only to reflect on the importance of social justice but to effectively promote it in your respective communities for a better future with dignity and prosperity for all.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.