

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT HIGH LEVEL OPENING OF  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**New York, 2 July 2012**

Mr. President of the Economic and Social Council,  
Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here, and I thank Ambassador Koterec for his leadership.

We meet under the shadow of continued global uncertainty.

A modest economic recovery in some countries should not disguise the precarious state of the world economy.

All around the world people – especially young people – are concerned about jobs, fairness, opportunities.

Getting the global economy back on track will require decisive action -- and the courage to take difficult decisions.

Short-term measures have bought us time, but they have not resolved the underlying dysfunctions.

Recovery is not just a matter of macroeconomic adjustment; it is a development issue.

From a long-term perspective, the solution is to pursue a new model of growth within the framework of sustainable development and enhanced international cooperation.

Just over one week ago the Rio+20 Conference closed.

It was a victory for multilateral cooperation.

We must now build on this momentum.

High on the list of priorities is jobs -- decent jobs ... predictable and stable incomes ... for city dwellers ... for small farmers ... for the poor and the marginalized.

Here, allow me to pay tribute to a past President of ECOSOC, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, and the father of the Decent Work concept, Juan Somavia. He will be leaving office at the end of the summer.

Juan, thank you for your many years of service to the United Nations. I know everyone here joins me in wishing you the best.

As Director-General Somavia often says, we need to tackle the jobs crisis head-on through productive investment, targeted policies and coordinated intervention.

Only by generating decent – and decently paid – employment can we help the poor and vulnerable to escape poverty traps and build resilience.

Today we unveil the MDG Report 2012, which offers the most comprehensive picture yet on global progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

It offers considerable reason for encouragement, especially as we look forward to defining a post-2015 development framework.

The number of people living in extreme poverty has been reduced by half, well ahead of schedule.

And millions of lives have been saved, thanks to improvements in child survival, expansion of HIV treatment, and malaria prevention programmes.

Between 1990 and 2010, more than two billion people gained access to improved sources of water, such as piped supplies and protected wells, and living conditions are better for more than 200 million people in slums.

We have achieved parity in primary school enrolment between girls and boys, and many countries have made significant progress towards universal primary education, even as child populations have grown.

These results represent a tremendous reduction in human suffering.

They are a clear validation of the approach embodied in the MDGs.

But, they are not a reason to relax.

Success is uneven within countries and regions.

Projections indicate that in 2015 more than 600 million people worldwide will still lack access to improved water sources, almost one billion will be living in dire poverty, and hunger will remain a global challenge.

Mothers will continue to die needlessly in childbirth, and children will still suffer and die from preventable diseases due to lack of adequate sanitation or nutrition.

Meanwhile, biodiversity loss continues apace and greenhouse gas emissions continue to pose a major threat to people and ecosystems.

This was the backdrop to Rio+20.

In Rio, governments renewed and strengthened political commitment to sustainable development.

They provided a foundation for building the future we want.

Among the most significant of the Rio outcomes is the agreement to launch a process to establish universal sustainable development goals, SDGs.

The SDGs will build on our advances under the Millennium Development Goals, and they will be an integral part of the post-2015 development framework.

The United Nations system stands ready to support Member States in developing these SDGs and the tools we will need to measure their success.

The MDGs have given policy-makers a unifying framework for global development ... a clear agenda with measurable goals and targets ... and a common, inspiring vision.

As we look beyond 2015 we must do the same.

We need an agenda that is concrete, action-oriented and focused on poverty eradication, inclusive economic and social development, environmental sustainability and peace and security for all.

I will count on this Council for advice, for leadership – and action.

I wish you a productive meeting.

Thank you.