

GETTING TO KNOW THE ECOSOC SYSTEM IN THE SDG ERA

Remarks by Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe (Zambia)

I am pleased to join you in this briefing to share my reflection, as a former ECOSOC President, about the Council and how it has adapted to the changing development landscape over the years.

ECOSOC has been subject to a number of strengthening efforts since its establishment to increase its effectiveness.

At the 2005 World Summit, Member States reaffirmed the role that the Charter and the General Assembly vested in the Council and recognized the need for a more effective Council as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development. This was also critical for the implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the MDGs. This led to the creation of the annual ministerial review and the development cooperation forum at ECOSOC within the context of ECOSOC strengthening efforts (A/RES/61/16).

For those of you who were in here at that time, you will notice that the national voluntary reviews (VNRs) built upon the AMRs that took place in ECOSOC during the period 2007-2015.

I presided over the Council in 2011 during the Millennium Development Goals era. Our work was guided by the outcome of the 2005 World Summit (A/RES/60/1) and the General Assembly's resolution 61/16 on strengthening of ECOSOC (A/RES/61/16).

It was a time of experimentation within the Council. With my strong belief in ECOSOC's ability to bring together a diverse set of stakeholders, our efforts focused on engaging stakeholders to make our discussions more dynamic and relevant for global challenges. The ECOSOC Partnership Forum, which was first convened in 2008, began to gather momentum. We brought together representatives from business, philanthropy, civil society, academia and other stakeholders to discuss ways to mobilize partnerships to support the development goals. The Partnership Forum inspired the UN system entities not only to launch their own initiatives, but also to forge new partnership models and initiatives with non-UN stakeholders for addressing sustainable development challenges.

And the following year, in 2012, ECOSOC organized its first Youth Forum, an initiative of the President, H.E. Ambassador Milos Koterec of Slovakia. It was in response to the demand of young people to find their own platform for engaging with the United Nations after their

successful contributions to shaping the post 2015 Development Agenda as part of the Open Working Group process. The success of the Youth Forum and the subsequent demand by young people to actively engage led to a full day meeting in 2013 and subsequent Forums have been transformed into two-day meetings. The main focus is the role of youth in the monitoring, review and the implementation of the Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

I commend the Council for its continued engagement with young people around the 2030 Agenda, as well as the challenges they face as youth. They are keen to make contributions not only on the youth-specific SDG targets but also to the entire panoply of SDGs. It is their future after all and they can play an important role in holding their Governments accountable for the commitments they have made.

Dear colleagues,

Having experimented with the creation of the ad-hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflict, the Council did not abdicate its responsibility when they have been transferred to the Peacebuilding Commission and went on to explore the peacebuilding and development linkages in the context of South Sudan.

I would like to pause here to pay tribute to my brother, Permanent Representative, Dumisani Khumalo of South Africa, who passed away on Sunday, 20 January. He was in the forefront of the creation of this innovative mechanism and became the Chair of the two ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau and Burundi. The mechanism was the inspiration for the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Under my Presidency, ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission convened a joint meeting on South Sudan in June 2011, shortly before its independence in July. The intention was to draw international attention to the development and state-building priorities of South Sudan, which had recently emerged from one of the longest ever wars. The focus on South Sudan continued in the Council's informal "transition event" in July the same year, providing substantive elements for ECOSOC resolution 2011/43 which placed the country on ECOSOC's agenda. The resolution highlighted the need for coordinated and coherent support by the UN system.

I am encouraged by the continued engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission. The recent focus on the Sahel has brought attention to the cross-border sustainable development challenges and the need for a regional approach to addressing these. This is key to breaking down the silos and ensuring that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development leads to the achievement of the SDGs in all countries.

Since my presidency, the Council has moved on. We are now pursuing a path to sustainable development. New forums have been created, such as the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development and the Multistakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for

sustainable development. We now have the High-level Political Forum meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC.

Dear colleagues,

While we need to make ECOSOC interesting to Member States and stakeholders, we need to keep in mind that we, Member States, make up the Council and serve in various subsidiary bodies. It is, therefore, our responsibility to engage fully and contribute to the important work of the Council.

The Council must not be shy to embrace new issues or opportunities. We are living in times of unprecedented technological change with implications for the sustainable development goals. With its redefined mandate for the High-level Segment, the Council has an opportunity to be ahead of the curve and explore the implications of these changes in our countries and communities. We have proven that ECOSOC can experiment and can adapt to respond to changes around us.

I would like to commend the efforts of Ambassador King for her ongoing efforts to raise the profile of ECOSOC and engage its members, including through her social media accounts and weekly newsletters. As members and observers, our obligation is to ensure that our ECOSOC remains relevant and a valuable forum for us all.

Thank you.