



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

**Opening statement by H.E. Amb. Frederick Shava
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “Innovations for
Infrastructure Development and Promoting Sustainable Industrialisation”**

31 May 2017 (10:45 a.m.), ECOSOC Chamber

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to welcome you to the 2017 Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “Innovations for Infrastructure Development and Promoting Sustainable Industrialisation”.

I want to thank all of you for being here, including our distinguished guests and participants who have travelled great distances to be with us.

I would also like to thank at the outset the inter-agency Core Group, which has put forward substantial efforts to this overall initiative. This Group includes UNIDO, FAO, UN DESA, UNDP, UN ECA, UN-Habitat, OHRLLS, OSAA, UNCTAD and WIPO.

At the beginning of my tenure as the President of ECOSOC, I identified this issue as a priority concern for the work of the Council in 2017.

In addition, Member States had previously agreed to focus on Sustainable Development Goal 9 on infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation as one of the goals for in-depth review for this year’s High-level Political Forum.

However, my interest in putting the spotlight on this topic is also rooted in my experience as someone who has spent most of his life in Africa.

In my travels across the continent, I have seen how limited access to reliable transportation, energy and communication can limit people’s opportunities. At the same time, throughout my travels, I continue to be amazed by the desire and capacity to create and innovate in the region. There is a palpable sense that significant progress is underway when travelling through many of Africa’s cities and communities.



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

facebook.com/UNECOSOC

twitter.com/UNECOSOC

youtube.com/UNECOSOC



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Yet, we know that the underlying challenges are vast. Many of you will be familiar with this complex reality within your own regions. There is so much untapped potential in the absence of resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialisation and an enabling environment for innovation.

Excellencies,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and targets – recognises the importance of infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation for eradicating poverty and expanding opportunities for people, especially the poorest.

The Agenda reflects the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary global landscape. This is an era in which on the one hand, we are exposed to unprecedented levels of scientific and technological achievement on a daily basis, while on the other, almost 770 million people worldwide continue to live on less than \$1.90 a day.

The strength of this new Agenda is that it addresses this paradox, including through its universality and emphasis on taking integrated, coherent approaches to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

With respect to SDG 9; making progress in the three inter-connected areas which we are discussing today, is both a stand-alone goal and a cross-cutting objective within the 2030 Agenda.

Infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation are enablers of growth and sustainable development. Making progress on SDG 9 will have positive ripple effects on other SDGs, such as SDG 1 to end poverty; SDG 2 on zero hunger; SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education, SDG 6 on water and sanitation, SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; and SDG 11 for sustainable cities and communities, among others.

Given its dynamic and inter-linked nature, pursuing the achievement of SDG 9 will need to be prioritised in national, regional and global policy making.

Therefore, the purpose of this one-day Special Meeting is to engage high-level representatives from key sectors and stakeholder groups with respect to SDG 9 in order to forge recommendations and propose practical steps for ECOSOC to support and move forward.



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

[facebook.com/UNECOSOC](https://www.facebook.com/UNECOSOC)

twitter.com/UNECOSOC

[youtube.com/UNECOSOC](https://www.youtube.com/UNECOSOC)



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

During the next several hours of discussion, I count on all of those in this room to share ideas and insights so that we can collectively make progress.

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to report to you that we are not “starting from scratch” in this area.

This is a message that we heard repeatedly from the various experts that we engaged in the preparations for this Special Meeting: Build on –and strengthen—what already exists to make progress in this area.

As you may be aware, today’s meeting was preceded by two preparatory events, away from UN Headquarters, to help enhance the ties between ECOSOC and national, regional and other perspectives on the 2030 Agenda.

The first meeting put a regional lens on “Innovations for infrastructure development and sustainable industrialisation”, and was held in Dakar, Senegal, in March.

Our starting point at the Dakar meeting was a shared understanding within the region that employment creation is the number-one priority in Africa. The continent has the world’s fastest growing labour force, but nowhere near enough jobs.

Structural transformation and strengthening the industrial sector can help to address this fundamental challenge. After all, the example of many emerging economies outside of Africa has demonstrated the importance of developing robust and sustainable industry to reduce poverty and increase prosperity.

To get there, we need to improve the quality and quantity of investment in infrastructure to ensure that essential services are supported and that urbanization is sustainable. To give a sense of the scale of the challenge, between now and 2020, UN ECA estimates that about US\$ 93 billion is needed to bring Africa’s infrastructure up to speed. That is a lot to accomplish in the next three years.

Leadership and national ownership are key to ensuring that policies are stable and oriented towards the long term. This is especially important in the context of largescale infrastructure projects which can be years in the making. However, it can also contribute to improved trust between public institutions and the people they serve.



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

The second preparatory event was a global expert meeting on “Agriculture and Agro-industries Development toward Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems”, held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in April.

We convened to discuss how agriculture and agro-industries development could be better aligned to inclusive economic development in developing countries, both in Africa and beyond. With the right frameworks in place, GDP growth originating from agriculture and value addition thereof can be more effective at reducing poverty than growth coming from other economic sectors. This is due to the high proportion of people who depend on agriculture for their livelihood in a number of developing countries, more so in Africa.

Sustainable agriculture and the development of agricultural value chains can also be particularly beneficial for smallholder farmers, rural youth and women.

There is huge potential in this sector. Two-thirds of the working poor in emerging and developing economies rely on agriculture to sustain their livelihoods. We need to improve their working conditions, productive capacity and access to bigger, better markets.

Improving agricultural value chains and linking them to local, regional and global markets holds great potential for improving people’s well-being. Furthermore, the examples of some African countries and LDCs has shown that linkages between agriculture, agro-industry and other sectors, can create high value added and generate social and economic returns.

Most of the recommendations coming out of Victoria Falls called for better overall enabling environments for agriculture and agro-industries development. As part of this, there is a lot of work to do in improving business climates and addressing risks – and the perceptions of risk – of investors and other development partners interested in this sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a result of the extensive preparatory work that has gone into this initiative, and the outcomes of the meetings held in Dakar and Victoria Falls, I look forward to welcoming the remarks of Mr. Li Yong, Director-General of UNIDO and Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General of FAO, in a moment. I am especially grateful to these two leaders and to their strong support, throughout the preparations for today’s Special Meeting.

From the outset, I was adamant that I wanted us to “move the needle” forward on this topic by forming one or two concrete proposals that could be pursued for taking action.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

facebook.com/UNECOSOC

twitter.com/UNECOSOC

youtube.com/UNECOSOC



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

UNIDO and FAO responded by identifying two important initiatives that they will be announcing in their respective interventions.

Although they will describe these initiatives more fully, I would like to note that in my view, these proposals – the Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) and 3ADI+ -- reflect the best of what the UN and its partners can do when working in tandem.

What does that mean?

It means these proposals are the product of consultations with key stakeholder groups from local, national and regional levels on SDG 9 and its inter-linkages with other Goals and targets.

It also means that they were guided by a commitment to ensuring that progress on infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation is consistently aligned with the key objectives of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

And as I emphasized earlier, these are proposals that build on what is already in place and lessons learned in order to advance progress.

Surely, we have more lessons to learn over the course of today.

As the result of the Special Meeting, it is my hope that the work which preceded it and throughout the work which will come in support of the 2030 Agenda, the Council will remain committed to supporting action on SDG 9 and related Goals and targets.

I look forward to today's discussion.

Thank you.