

**9 July 2008**

**2008 ECOSOC Substantive Session  
Coordination Segment**

**“The role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council”**

**New York, 9 July 2008**

**12:30-1:00 pm**

**Closing remarks by**

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Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the closing of the coordination segment, I would like to take the opportunity to make a few remarks on this session.

The follow-up to the 2007 Ministerial Declaration, which was the theme of this year’s coordination segment, has given us the opportunity to address a number of very important dimensions of poverty and hunger. I just would like to touch upon a few that I consider critical to the future work of the UN system.

This segment has focused on the following aspects of eradication of poverty and hunger: 1) food security; 2) rural development and the challenges of social welfare; 3) violence against women in all its forms and

manifestations; and 4) coherence between the normative and operational work of the UN system on rural employment.

The current global food crisis has highlighted a number of important gaps in the UN system approach to food security. In particular, it has emphasized the tenuous link between emergency response addressing immediate food needs and longer term development strategies essential to ensure sustainable food production. The food crisis has been an opportunity to reflect on current approaches and reorient our strategies and policies to ensure sustainable food security. As it has emerged from the discussions during this segment, there is consensus on the need to tackle the food crisis, climate change and energy shortages comprehensively within the framework of sustainable development. The system has moved quickly to devise a comprehensive strategy in this regard, but the challenge now is to make it operational.

The discussions have also highlighted that we, as a system, need to review our approaches and refocus on the rural sector to ensure that it becomes an engine of growth and poverty eradication. Key to this approach is to ensure that strategies to promote sustainable agricultural and rural development fully integrate the social dimension. The UN system has an important role to play in enhancing the overall understanding of the social impact of rural and agricultural development policies, especially on employment, in the formulation of national poverty eradication strategies. It has also an important role to play in supporting countries develop balanced approaches in allocating scarce resources to critical sectors. In this regard,

the UN system needs to join forces to enhance its analytical and research capacity in support to national efforts.

Rural employment has also emerged as central to poverty eradication efforts. Three-quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas where decent work deficits are typically severe. A paucity of economic opportunities and under-investment in rural areas, together with poor infrastructure and public services including education and often underdeveloped markets compound the difficulties of employment creation in rural areas. The UN has recognized the centrality of employment, especially rural employment, to eradicate poverty and hunger and promoted a comprehensive policy framework addressing the multifaceted nature of the problem. The broad consensus on this framework has promoted greater coherence and cooperation within the system both at the normative and operational level.

Violence against women persists in all regions of the world. It is not only a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality, but it is also a major impediment to poverty eradication and development. Prevention is essential to fight violence against women. Discussions on this issue during the segment have underscored the need for better tools to identify and tackle this problem. The Council's functional commissions have a critical role to play in this regard. Many lessons can be learned from the work of different commissions on this issue that need to be shared within the UN system. The coordination segment has provided a platform to do so.

Overall, this session of the coordination segment has highlighted that the challenges ahead for the UN system in strengthening its efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger are not only about scaling up current initiatives, but also about developing the capacities to adopt more comprehensive approaches.

Before concluding my intervention, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all participants to this important session of the Economic and Social Council. In particular, I would like to thank all the panelists, who made the debate in this year's coordination segment especially interesting and stimulating and provided important food for thought for all of us.

Thank you.