



**Statement by Assane Diop,  
Executive Director, Social Protection Sector, ILO, Geneva**

**UN ECOSOC Coordination Segment**  
*(United Nations, New York, 7-9 July 2008)*

Round table discussion on the theme:  
“Coherence: Strengthening the normative and operational link in  
the work of the UN on rural employment”  
*(9 July 2008, 10 a.m.)*

\*\*\*

It is a privilege and a pleasure to act as moderator for this important panel discussion on “Coherence: Strengthening the normative and operational link in the work of the UN on rural employment”

As outlined in the Concept Note, the round table provides a platform for the chairs of functional commissions and governing bodies of UN funds, programmes, and specialized agencies to discuss ways to harmonize their work and ensure that policy guidance generated through inter-governmental

deliberations effectively translates into a coherent UN system approach to implementation.

This is a challenging task for us.

This round table on coherence – one of four – focuses on rural employment to eradicate poverty and hunger.

This is a topic of great importance, given that about half the world's population and three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas. The topic has been given added impetus by the recent rapidly rising food prices. The resulting global food crises has serious implications for efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals, especially goal 1 on the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger and the global goal of achieving decent work for all. This is principally because the poor typically spend a larger share of their incomes on food and are, therefore, the most vulnerable to increases in the prices of food.

This adds even greater urgency to the task before us.

This week we are in the Coordination Segment of the ECOSOC. Our overall task is to examine how the system – governments and the relevant agencies – are responding to the policy approaches developed by the High-level Segment last year.

I particularly appreciate the initiative to hold a panel discussion amongst the governmental chairs of our respective agencies. This highlights the need for intergovernmental coordination between the different ministries involved in the work of the different agencies.

A particular challenge we all face is how to ensure that “coordination” does not become “complication”. Especially in view of the urgency of the food crisis we must find ways to add value to the specific responsibilities of our different agencies in as simple and straightforward a way as possible.

Delivering as One is our slogan but we must ensure that the delivery is in no way delayed by the effort to coordinate, but rather accelerated and made more effective.

In this respect, our panel is focussed less on the immediate need to ensure that hungry people do not starve but on how to transition from that effort into boosting agricultural production and at the same time improving the purchasing power of the poorest so that we meet the MDG of halving poverty and the number of people who suffer from hunger.

In large measure this challenge revolves around raising the productivity and earnings of agricultural workers, who with their families and rural communities constitute the bulk of the world's poor and hungry.

This year's International Labour Conference included a general discussion on The Promotion of Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction. The President of the ILO's Governing Body,

Ambassador Rapacki, will introduce them to you. I will just highlight the mandate they gave to the ILO to work together with all relevant agencies to implement the tripartite consensus we reached in June between governments, employers' organizations and trade unions from all over the world.

The Concept Note for this round table presents us with four rather wide-ranging questions to address – on page 4 – and I expect panellists and participants may add to this list

However, we should conclude by 12.30. May I therefore suggest that we invite each of our seven panellists to speak for about seven minutes. That would give us time for some questions and observations from delegates before giving the panel a second round to respond to each other and to you.

So, at this stage I would like to invite you to highlight how and to what extent your respective organisations have taken

into account or plan to take into account the challenges of addressing rural employment.

\*\*\*