

## **Informal Summary**

### **Opening of the High Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2008**

**Monday, 30 June 2008, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
UNHQ, New York**

The high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was opened by **H.E. Mr. Léo Mérorès**, ECOSOC President. He stated that this session is of special significance both as the first to operationalize all the new functions of ECOSOC mandated by the 2005 World Summit and as one taking place at a time when the world is grappling with a number of emerging threats. Rising food and fuel prices, the deepening credit crisis, global imbalances, declining growth and climate change each threaten efforts to lift people out of poverty and disrupt attempts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. The President highlighted that, particularly, Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries face the serious risks of reversal of development gains, social unrest, instability and negative consequences of global warming. Concrete, concerted and collective action is needed to adopt mitigation and adaptation measures. Only by taking a long-term perspective and pursuing development in a sustainable manner can we ensure the well-being of present and future generations.

Mr. Mérorès emphasized that the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) can contribute to efforts to generate a coherent response to integrating the three elements of sustainable development; promote collective solutions; galvanize action at national, regional and international levels; and narrow the gap in implementing the United Nations development agenda. The President also underscored the potential of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) to facilitate inclusive policy dialogue and policy review on key development cooperation issues and to contribute to the Accra meeting on aid effectiveness and the Doha Conference on Financing for Development. The President reflected that ECOSOC has become much more than a month-long meeting, noting the many activities that had preceded the substantive session. Mr. Mérorès also underscored that the Council can play an important role in highlighting humanitarian needs while also promoting long-term sustainability, such as through the meetings on food crisis and climate change.

A message by the Secretary-General, **Mr. Ban Ki-Moon**, was delivered by Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. The Secretary-General cautioned that despite demonstrable progress, the world is facing delays in reaching the goals of the United Nations development agenda. Moreover, new challenges require our urgent attention and collective action: namely, the slowdown in global economy reflecting systemic weaknesses in global financial markets, rising food and energy prices, the threat of climate change and the deterioration of our natural environment, and continued skepticism regarding globalization due to rising inequalities.

Mr. Ban acknowledged the various efforts of the UN system to swiftly address the food crisis. Yet, he stressed the need for longer-term planning to improve world food security and reduce rural poverty by revitalizing agriculture, especially in developing countries. To find a solution to the challenge of rising fuel prices, we must also focus on long-term solutions, encouraging sustainable production and use of efficient and clean sources of energy, more fuel efficient modern technologies and changes in overall production and consumption patterns. The Secretary-General called for urgent collective action to respond to climate change, and noted that this ECOSOC session should give new impetus to realizing the achievement of economic growth, social development and environmental protection in an integrated and balanced manner. To manage globalization for the benefit of all, we need to ensure greater coherence in global policies in the areas of finance, trade, aid and investment.

The Secretary-General said that the Development Cooperation Forum should become the principal venue for global dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation and should give due attention to cross-cutting imperatives, such as human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability. ECOSOC has become an interactive forum where collective solutions to common as well as individual challenges are discussed and debated. Mr. Ban welcomed the broad participation of stakeholders who are key partners in helping implement the development agenda. Indeed, he said that ECOSOC has proven that it can spearhead concerted effort to find pragmatic solutions to complex challenges.

The key note address at the opening of 2008 high-level segment of ECOSOC was delivered by **Dr. Rajendra Pachauri**, Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on climate Change and by **Lord Stern of Brentford**, author of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.

Dr. Pachauri and Lord Stern emphasized the utmost urgency of acting as soon as possible to mitigate the effects of climate change. Both speakers underscored the consequences of delayed action not only in its economic costs but also the fact that climate change could become irreversible, resulting in unimaginable upheavals that the planet may not have suffered in millions of years.

**Dr. Pachauri** gave examples of the impact of climate change on the inhabitants and natural resources of the planet. He pointed out that 1.1 to 3.2 billion people would experience increased water scarcity by 2080 and that crop revenues could fall by 90 per cent in Africa by 2100. Some 20 to 30 per cent of species would be at risk of extinction if rise in temperature exceeded 1.5 to 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Stressing the urgent need for mitigation, he provided various potential targets for mitigation, on increase in global mean temperature, stabilization level of greenhouse gases in the environment and the years needed for carbon emissions to peak. In his presentation, he also provided cost estimates of required investments and timeframe for these mitigation targets.

Mr. Pachauri pointed to the fact that adaptation to the impacts of climate change and promotion of sustainable development share common goals and determinants, including building access to resources and equity; stocks of human and social capital; access to risk-sharing mechanisms; and institutional capacity. In this connection, he underscored the importance of putting in place policies to improve sustainability and adaptive capacity.

Maintaining that the present model of development is not sustainable and that industrialization has caused high pressure on our natural resources and has produced huge amounts of greenhouse gases, he called on the international community to commit to alternate development paths. This would require major changes in a wide range of areas, including economic structures, geographic distribution of activities, consumption patterns and demographics. In his view, stabilization of the climate could be achieved – with less than 0.12 point reduction in global GDP growth, if action is taken now – by deploying a portfolio of existing new technologies and expected future ones, provided proper and effective incentives are in place for their development.

**Lord Stern** said that climate change and development are the two greatest challenges of our time, which are inextricably linked, and to maintain development and poverty eradication gains, it is necessary to address both simultaneously. Stressing the urgency of taking action, he noted failure to do so could lead to massive migration and huge conflict over resources. He underlined the need to generate political will to put prudent policies into action, especially towards the low carbon growth.

He provided probabilities for stabilizing greenhouse gases levels at various increases in temperatures and included initial cost estimates for countries of around one per cent of their GDP to keep the concentration levels below 550 parts per million. But with the evidence that the planet was getting hotter and faster than previously thought, the cost estimate jumped to 2 per cent of GDP for required lower concentration level of 500 parts per million.

He asserted that the way to stabilization was roughly known and provided a global framework containing key elements to achieve 50 per cent cut in global emissions by 2050 in line with the concentration level of 500 parts per million. This translates into 2 tons per capita and for rich countries this would represent a cut of at least 80 per cent of their emissions from the current level. Developing countries would take on their own targets at latest by 2020 and during this time the rich countries would demonstrate low-carbon growth and would live up to their ODA and other funding commitments arising from climate change and would share new technologies.

**Interactive discussion:**

In response to a question, about the existence of a model of successful carbon-free development for developing countries to pursue, it was explained that it was possible to maintain development with a combination of pragmatic policies, clean energy sources and new technologies. On the usefulness of markets for mitigating climate change, it was

noted that markets could be fixed to be a positive contributor to the process though they could not provide all the solutions.