

Economic and Social Council

ECOSOC

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International Association of Economic and Social

Councils and Similar Institutions

(10.30 – 10.45 hours)

(first draft)

Thank you Mr. President

Authorities,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is a great honour for me to take the floor in this prestigious setting in the framework of the Coordination activities of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

I bring you the greetings of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, the AICESIS.

This is a young Association which was set up only 10 years ago but it is already very representative and counts members from all the regions of the world.

The Countries of the world that are now represented through their Economic and Social Councils are about 70.

This is therefore a rather extensive network of Bodies, of representative Associations, of qualified people who are backed by longstanding experience in organized civil society.

As you know, each Council consists of the Organizations that represent the social partners – labour and entrepreneurs – and other stakeholders of civil society that are active in each Country.

Each Council collaborates with the Parliaments and Governments of their respective countries to which they put concrete proposals aimed at improving the economic and social life, at increasing labour and decreasing poverty, at redistributing wealth and at ensuring greater social fairness.

The method that we use is discussion and feedback, social dialogue and finding common ground.

This is why all too often our work does not attract the media.

We are not under time constraints as is true for politics and so we can dwell on the bigger picture and look at problems over the medium and long term.

We seek convergence and solutions with the broader, long term picture in mind.

The financial milieus are still troubled both at the global level and at the level of individual Countries and, as you know, the G8 and G20 Summits are seeking to examine in depth the possibility of defining new governance rules.

The real economy has started to recover, albeit not smoothly, and with considerable differences in the various parts of the world.

Throughout the developed world demand is still weak while there is a strong debate between those who call for rigour in public

spending and those who are in favour of interventions and investments so as to support and speed up recovery and competitive growth.

The major emerging markets are leading the way to recovery but interdependence in the world is becoming stronger and each large region increasingly needs the other regions.

The world is becoming increasingly globalized but, in many respects – as observers have pointed out - it is also getting smaller, in other words it is increasingly conditioned by the choices made by each player.

Albeit with some difficulty, the decisions on environmental issues and climate change marked a first insufficient step forward at the Copenhagen Conference promoted by the United Nations and which was attended by many political leaders of the major countries.

Even though some glimmer of hope can be perceived, the outlook is still gloomy for the social issues, the loss of jobs and the impact of the crisis on the weaker social groups.

Effective action, therefore, is most urgent in order to facilitate the creation of new jobs.

Even more urgent is the need for youth policies aimed at facilitating their adjustment to the economic and social life.

In general, the new generations have a good educational background, they have prepared themselves diligently for the labour market.

But then they have to invest huge amounts of energy, all too often uneventfully, to find the right job opportunities and to find places of responsibility.

This may become an acute problem if we do not succeed in finding the right channels and adequate solutions.

I am convinced that our Economic and Social Councils can play an important function, each in dependence of their institutional characteristics, in prompting dialogue and discussions among the stakeholders of the economic and social life of each Country.

States and Governments in each Country are doing their utmost to cope with the economic difficulties, seeking to curb their negative effects and stimulate recovery.

However I think that the rigor with which they are seeking to redress the public budgets must always be accompanied by thorough and concrete measures aimed at sustaining economic recovery and at enabling the creation of jobs.

I think that our contribution, that is made on the basis of our direct understanding of civil society, with its Organizations and Associations, may be a precious contribution for working out shared solutions to the momentous problems we are facing.

As an economist and university professor and as politician and minister in my Country, I have had the opportunity of studying and assessing these problems.

Nowadays the world is experiencing times of great uncertainty.

And I had the opportunity of emphasizing this aspect in the speech I delivered as President of AICESIS at the 3rd International Forum promoted by the OECD in South Korea (Busan) in October 2009, which focused on indicators for measuring growth and prosperity.

OPPURE whose title was “Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life”.

The uncertainty is determined by economic difficulties and by the widespread awareness that development will not grow constantly.

Besides lowering the quality of life for everyone, this uncertainty could produce new social divides in our societies, it could widen the gaps between different social groups and further worsen the conditions of the poorer layers of society.

Our Economic and Social Councils can contribute to identifying responses that are more balanced and attentive to social needs.

In this way they can give a positive contribution to strengthening social cohesion which is not only a fundamental asset per se, but is also the indispensable condition for a strong and widespread economic growth, because it is animated and driven by the willpower of our societies.

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations . the ECOSOC – may increasingly become the forum where our Institutions, which are the direct representatives of civil society, can come together and discuss these issues.

The main theme of our work – of the Association that I represent – is, in this point in time, the contribution that the Economic and Social Councils can give to worldwide economic, social and environmental governance.

A new three-party governance with growing participation and dialogue among Institutions, labour forces and entrepreneurial representatives.

With these wishes I would like to conclude my welcome address to you at this Coordination Session, thanking you for having listened to the voice of the Economic and Social Councils that are present in the world.

And I commit myself to bringing to this authoritative forum the results of our work.

I would now like to conclude by once again expressing the warm greetings of AICENSIS and by wishing you all the best in your work on my own personal behalf.