



DRAFT CLOSING REMARKS

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REGIONAL MEETING FOR AFRICA FOR THE 2012 ECOSOC ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are fast approaching the end of this most interesting and productive day. It has been my honour to participate on behalf of the Bureau of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and in anticipation of my new role as Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Africa.

I would like to thank our host, the Government of Ethiopia, our collaborating partners the African Union, as well as ECA, DESA and ILO for a superb meeting. The experiences shared will greatly contribute to the Annual Ministerial Review in July.

I especially thank all of the panellists and participants. Without your continued efforts, we will not succeed in creating an environment in the region in which people are able to start and grow businesses, build productive capacities and create – and fill – quality jobs. Absent that, we will continue to fail too many of our young people – a completely short-sighted and unacceptable waste of opportunity for our societies.

Let us pause for a moment and consider what we have managed to cover today:

- We have assessed progress and reviewed the major bottlenecks regarding SME development, productivity and job creation;
- We have considered the link between SME development, productive capacities, jobs and other development goals and challenges. Critical in this is the importance of promoting women's participation in enterprise development by creating the right policies and incentives.
- We have also heard interesting ideas about the promotion of entrepreneurship. There was a clear consensus that entrepreneurship is less about curriculum, and more about the enabling environment to foster innovation and productivity.

- Young people have not been left out of our discussions. To the contrary, the issues affecting youth, in both finding gainful employment and in creating small businesses have been brought into clear focus.
- A number of participants identified the need to share and learn from the good practices arising within this region. I believe that this meeting and the Annual Ministerial Review process can contribute to this end.

Distinguished guests,

ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review was created to advance a simple, yet powerful idea — that knowledge and experiences shared candidly and transparently are indispensable to successful, sustainable development.

Today's Regional Ministerial Meeting for Africa will help to ensure that when ECOSOC convenes in New York this July, we can draw on successful strategies for ensuring that SME development drives sustained growth and job creation in the region and beyond.

Thank you.