

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Ali Hachani
President of Economic and Social Council**

**ECOSOC Meeting to Commemorate
the International Human Solidarity Day**

15 December 2006

Madam President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Under-Secretary-General José Ocampo,
Mr. Under-Secretary-General Anwrul Chowdhry,
Mr. Associate Administrator Ad Melkert,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year the General Assembly proclaimed the International Human Solidarity Day to be celebrated on December 20 of each year. We are just a few days away from that day and commemorate it today, at the forum of the Economic and Social Council.

Solidarity gained new prominence with the Millennium Summit Declaration which identified it as a fundamental value to international relations in the twenty-first century and essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially poverty reduction.

The Economic and Social Council, as a principal body for the promotion of economic and social development and ensuring policy coherence, is well positioned to enhance coordination of undertakings towards the implementation of the UN Development Agenda. In that respect, it is only proper to reflect on the role of ECOSOC in forging the spirit of solidarity and cooperation for the achievement of the UN Development Agenda.

The Economic and Social Council has a central role in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, the monitoring of the progress of the Millennium Development Goals, and promoting development cooperation. The role of ECOSOC is especially vital for fostering global cooperation based on Solidarity between the North and South, between development partners, including specialized agencies as well as between the United Nations entities, governments and civil society organizations.

The 2005 World Summit reaffirmed international determination to realize the agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals. The summit which prompted some positive steps on debt relief, aid and other issues, has tasked ECOSOC with mandates to advance the UN Development Agenda.

The Annual ministerial review initiated this year should provide a comprehensive review of the implementation of the UN Development Agenda. The ministerial review has a potential of becoming a major mechanism to strengthen accountability for international

commitments to the agreed development goals and ensuring full cooperation of all its partners.

It is my hope that the Biennial Development Cooperation Forum, also mandated by the Summit, will offer a much needed assessment of international development cooperation as well.

To succeed in the implementation of these new tasks and, above all, to help alleviate poverty, partnership guided by solidarity is indispensable, while stressing again the theme chosen this year for the human rights day, which is relevant to our discussion also, that “the fight against poverty is a matter of obligation , not charity”. Indeed, we should never be tired of repeating that “today, poverty represents one of the gravest human rights challenges in the world”.

What we need is to continue to search for innovative solidarity mechanisms to finance poverty eradication and promote social development.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, we have witnessed many solidarity-based initiatives in the area of social and economic development, such as the World Solidarity Fund, the Initiative against hunger and poverty, the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), the Digital Solidarity Fund, and solidarity levy on airline tickets, to name just a few. The model launched, thirty years ago, by this year’s Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank, illustrates that such initiatives can grow and extend and are recognized as contributing to peace and stability.

ECOSOC endorsed the decision of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to establish the World Solidarity Fund to eradicate poverty and promote social development in developing countries. I hope the international community will renew its commitment to the Fund and make it operational.

Tunisia, my country, was among those developing countries which recognized the importance of voluntary, solidarity-based programs aiming at poverty reduction when it established its National Solidarity Fund nearly 15 years ago. I am proud to convey to you that the operations of the Fund contributed to the reduction of poverty in my country to its current level of less than 4% of the population by focusing the allocation of resources obtained through voluntary contributions made by citizens, civil society, and enterprises, besides the Government, on small projects aimed at improving basic infrastructure and the socio-economic environment of low-income people living in remote areas of the country.

What is achievable nationally can be attained globally. The principles of solidarity should be applied through different mechanisms to achieve the goal of poverty eradication. The international community has made good initial steps in that direction but more efforts are needed and the Economic and Social Council should lead the way.

I am happy that her Excellency Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly, could take some of her busy time to come and address this event. I am also grateful to our distinguished speakers who will help shed light, from their different perspectives, on the value of solidarity. I hope we will have an interesting discussion which will, I am sure, contribute to confirming ECOSOC in its strengthened role.

Thank you.