

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Tuesday, 4 April 2006

10 – 11:00 a.m.

**INFORMAL PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE ECOSOC ON THE THEME
OF THE 2006 HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT**

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT

H.E. Mr. Ali Hachani (Tunisia)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all of you to this preparatory meeting for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on the theme “*Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development*”. This event, which has become a key feature of our work, is very important in clarifying and beginning to identify solutions to the challenges of promoting productive and full employment and decent work. Your response to our call is testimony to the seriousness you attach to this quest.

As you all recall, it was the Copenhagen Summit in 1995 that put the question of employment at the center stage of the United Nations agenda. Since that Summit, there have been several reaffirmations of the important role of employment in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Only last year, our heads of states and Governments made the highest commitment in this regard when they declared their strong support for a fair globalization and resolved to make the goals of full and productive

employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our national and international macro-economic policies, among others. The choice of this theme, therefore, underpins our determination to implement these undertakings and thereby make a concrete contribution to the eradication of poverty and sustainable development.

Creating productive and full employment and decent work is partly a question of increasing productivity and economic growth. It is also a question of ensuring preparedness for the work place through education and training, and setting fair rules for that ensure equal opportunities to jobs, with special emphasis on the needs of the youth and women. But beyond that, and in a context where national efforts are alone are insufficient to generate the required outcome, and where our experience suggests that economic growth does not necessarily translate into more and better jobs, the task before us acquires a high level of complexity. Moreover, the unemployment question is not a problem for developing countries only, it is equally a problem for developed countries, although the magnitude and the challenge it poses weighs much more heavily on the former. When growth and employment generation stagnate in developed countries, it drags down developing countries as well.

This means that in seeking solutions to the employment question, we should look beyond conventional wisdom, and also recognize that there will be a significant role for international cooperation, especially in the areas of trade, investment, finance and technology. And, to bring all these dimensions together, it seems quite clear that our primary intention should be to bring the employment creation and decent work agenda more concretely into national development strategies. Effective solutions will apply the macroeconomic, social and political antidotes in various proportions but at once. In addition, in situations of extreme poverty, and

in some cases where crises and other emergencies exist, generating the kind of economic performance that provides a minimum chance for tested employment creation strategies to work, require unique prescriptions. It is against this background that the confluence of different expertise from governments, civil society, the private sector, academia and the media here for the next two days is very encouraging.

In wishing you a successful dialogue, let me urge you to focus on the need for practical and implementable recommendations that we can take forward as your contribution to the substantive session of the Council in July, and also feed into the High-level Dialogue on International Migration later in the year.

I now invite Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to make his opening remarks.