

**Statement by Ambassador Dalius Čekuolis,
President of the Economic and Social Council
Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, 2007 Regular Session
New York, 22 January 2007**

Excellencies,
Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
NGO Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today at the opening of the 2007 regular session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. This Committee has played a vital role in bringing on board the contributions and valued expertise of one of the important development partners of the United Nations, that is, the non-governmental organizations.

This Committee devotes a great deal of its efforts to provide guidance and support to assist NGOs in contributing optimally to the work of the Council. It is also tasked to follow the evolving relationship between the United Nations and the NGO community. I can confidently say that, over these years, the NGO community has indeed contributed immensely to the work of the Council.

The time has come to further advance the UN development agenda defined by the Conferences and Summits held since the 1990s. Accordingly, the Council has adjusted and adapted its working methods to respond to the changing environment with effective participation of development partners, particularly with the NGO community.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Beginning this year, the Council will have a strengthened role with the adoption of the General Assembly Resolution 61/16 on 20 November 2006. This resolution has asked the Council to bring together all development partners to promote a coherent and consistent approach towards achieving the United Nations

Development Agenda. The overall objective is to scale-up partnerships which will lead to the realization of the goals established in the UN including for the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty.

As mandated by the 2005 World Summit, this year the Council will introduce the Annual Ministerial Reviews (AMR) and a biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). These are the two new mechanisms to assess progress made in the implementation of the internationally agreed-upon development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to review trends in international development cooperation. We could consider the AMR providing new accountability to the promises made by the international community. And the DCF as a vehicle for taking the Council's engagement with the development stakeholders to a new level. As important development partners, the non-governmental organizations are invited to the AMR and DCF to contribute to the discussions. They will help to provide solutions so as to make sustained advances towards the target date for achieving the MDGs.

Another activity linked with the AMR is the "AMR Innovation Fair" which the Council secretariat is evoking to establish and which will involve the NGOs and the private sector. It will be an event during the high-level segment of ECOSOC. The Innovation Fair will serve as a new vehicle for providing NGOs and the private sector an opportunity to interact with the Council. At the "Innovation Fair" success stories and best practices in addressing development issues could be presented. It is also an opportunity for sharing experiences and encouraging development partnerships.

NGOs are welcome to make their contribution to the five segments of the Council: high-level, coordination, operational activities, humanitarian and general segment. The high-level segment will continue to feature a special high-level meeting with the international financial and trade institutions.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

The role of civil society has expanded over the years in the field of operational activities. Those organizations involved in operational activities will continue to share their expertise with Council Members during the operational activities segment. As you are aware, emphasis continues to be given, in this segment, to the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities, through which key-system wide policy orientations for development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN system will be established.

NGOs have helped to build the commitments reached at the international summits and conferences held since the 1990s. ECOSOC members are confident that they will continue to work with their governments and the UN system to ensure that these commitments become a reality.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is undeniable that the world has made progress in advancing the development agenda. In this global effort, it is obvious that Member States alone cannot resolve today's challenges. The need to fully realize the potential of NGOs with their expertise and resources has become crucial. They must help define priorities, design national strategies and deliver services. Internationally, NGOs can mobilize support among key constituencies and work with governments to advance development priorities.

Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his first statement to the ECOSOC on 17 January 2007 stressed the importance of engaging civil society organizations particularly the NGO community to promote the UN Development Agenda. He said, I quote "Today, no development effort – whether advocacy for a broad cause or support for specific goals – can make real headway without support from civil society. ECOSOC remains our Organization's primary forum for engaging this essential constituency in our development work".

Excellencies,
Mr. Chairman,
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In this global mission, I rely, in particular, on the contribution of the over 2800 NGOs in consultative status with the Council, to help us realize the great promises of the UN Development Agenda and its Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you