

**Statement by Ambassador Dalius Čekuolis,  
President of the Economic and Social Council  
Open Debate of the Security Council on the Peacebuilding Commission  
New York, 31 January 2007**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Russian Presidency of the Council for convening today's meeting and inviting me to this debate, which, together with other relevant steps, will help us to improve the contributions of the United Nations bodies to the success of the Peacebuilding Commission, in line with their specific competencies and mandates.

Time and again it has been noted that there is a strong correlation between low levels of development and violent conflict. Nine out of ten countries with lowest human development indicators have experienced conflict at some point or other since 1990. According to World Bank estimates, a civil war lasts at least 7 years on average, with the growth rate of local economy reduced by 2.2% each year. The downward spiral of poverty, conflict and added impoverishment is difficult to reverse.

In broader terms, given the linkage between development, peace and security, more focused efforts should be made to advance and oversee the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Economic and Social Council was given the mandate by the 2005 World Summit to focus on the implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda through its Annual Ministerial Reviews. In doing so, the ECOSOC intends to continually assess how conflict is affecting the implementation of the UN Development Agenda.

International assistance can play a major role in addressing the challenges faced by conflict-prone countries and filling some of their capacity gaps. The recommendations made by experts on the volume and sustainability of international aid to fragile states and countries emerging from conflicts therefore deserve our full consideration. In particular, research suggests that the optimal period for absorbing increased aid is about six years after a peace settlement, by which time donors tend to move on to another country in crisis. We are ready to assist the Peacebuilding Commission in utilizing these insights in its plans and activities. We believe

that our respective intergovernmental bodies should exchange views, analyses and policy recommendations on these and other matters.

Yet another is example of the perspectives ECOSOC can share with the Peacebuilding Commission includes policy actions on youth employment, because young unemployed people, in countries where this phenomenon is massive, are an easy target for recruitment into armed groups.

As recently as last year, the Economic and Social Council considered the issue and developed policy recommendations regarding the mainstreaming of youth employment into national development plans and development cooperation programmes. ECOSOC continues to be concerned about the situation in some regions of the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, where the two phenomena of youth unemployment and conflict continue to feed on each other.

Through increased interaction and readiness to share relevant experience, we can contribute to strengthening the value added of the Peacebuilding Commission. In this respect, ECOSOC is ready to share its lessons learned, especially given that the pioneering work of the ECOSOC's ad hoc advisory groups on countries emerging from conflict was in a way a forerunner of this qualitatively new organ which is the Peacebuilding Commission - a body meant to ensure an integrated approach to peace building on the basis of the links between security, development, rule of law, and human rights.

The ECOSOC ad hoc advisory groups on Haiti, Guinea-Bissau and Burundi have been successful in promoting coordinated support to post-conflict countries through a comprehensive approach to relief, peace and development. In an effort to assess and constantly improve its work, ECOSOC has carried out a lessons-learned exercise from the experience of the ad hoc advisory groups, including that on Burundi which is now being considered by the Peacebuilding Commission. Here are some of them.

First, the experience of the ad hoc advisory groups on Burundi and Guinea-Bissau highlighted the need to have appropriate mechanisms to mobilize donors and promote the translation of pledges into disbursements.

Second, there is a need to go beyond immediate problem-solving in the countries considered to defining, from the very beginning, a vision towards longer-term rehabilitation and support, in order to ensure that assistance is sustainable and not undermined by organizational and functional problems encountered on the ground.

Third, the international community should maintain concrete development support to a country in question even when factors on the ground (for example, an electoral process) may incline donors to adopt a "wait and see approach".

Fourth, it is essential to make good coordinated use of the work of United Nations entities to complement the policy approach of the intergovernmental body by strong support at the technical and operational level.

Fifth, a good articulation must be ensured between UN actors and regional partners of the countries concerned, including regional and sub-regional Organizations, regional Development Banks and the United Nations Regional Commissions.

These and other lessons emerging from the continued work of ECOSOC's ad hoc advisory groups can be further discussed and brought to bear on the future work of the PBC. We hope we can further explore practical modalities for interaction between ECOSOC and the PBC, in line with the General Assembly resolution 60/180 which describes the institutional junction between ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission, and Resolution 61/16 on the reform of ECOSOC.

Our common objective should be to mobilize the whole institutional machinery of the United Nations to promote across-the-range policy approaches and best practices to develop answers to the complex and difficult needs of post-conflict countries and prevent their relapse into conflict. The meeting today, Mr. President, is a good step in that direction. On its part, ECOSOC is ready to contribute to the best of its ability, collectively and through its individual members on the PBC organizational committee, to developing the strategic goals and defining a viable Peacebuilding strategy of the PBC, and thereby ensure its lasting added value. Thank you.