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STATEMENT BY H.E. Ms. SYLVIE LUCAS,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LUXEMBOURG
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
AT THE HANDOVER OF THE ECOSOC PRESIDENCY

NEW YORK, 15 JANUARY 2009

Madame Deputy Secretary General
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for my country and for me to serve as the President of the Economic and Social Council for this year and I would like to thank the members of the Council for reposing their confidence in me.

My country attaches particular importance to the work of the Economic and Social Council. As a founding Member of the Organization, my country endeavours to contribute to promoting the purposes and principles of the Charter, showing solidarity and concrete commitment to the causes of development, peace, security and human rights. Luxembourg's cooperation policy is geared towards poverty eradication, particularly in the least developed countries. Its efforts are consistent with the goal of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental aspects. In the current economic and financial crisis, my country is, more than ever, committed to pursue its efforts in terms of official development assistance and contributing to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Luxembourg's presidency of the Council will also be guided by this same spirit of sustained engagement. We will spare no efforts to live up to your expectations.

Before outlining the work ahead of us in 2009, let me first of all thank Ambassador Léo Mórórès for his able leadership and his important contribution to the work of the Council during the past year. He has set the bar very high and, if I may say so, it will be a very hard act to follow. I would also like to thank the other members of the Bureau, Ambassador Andrei Dapkiunas from Belarus, Ambassador Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima from Cape Verde, Ambassador Park In-Kook from the Republic of Korea and, my own predecessor, Ambassador Jean-Marc Hoscheit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we have the opportunity to capitalize on the progress made over the last three years to fully exploit the potential of the new functions of the ECOSOC bestowed by the 2005 World Summit outcome. We need to build on our successes and tackle the challenges at hand to promote a stronger, more assertive and action-oriented Council.

Our main challenge is to further strengthen the quality and relevance of the work of the Council on development. In 2009, the Annual Ministerial Review will focus on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global health". This theme provides us an opportunity to put the spotlight on the

health related Millennium Development Goals and promote their realization. Taking advantage of its unique cross-sectoral nature, the Council can focus on the inter-linkages between health related goals and the overall development agenda, and highlight those dimensions that are critical in putting in place effective policies.

In preparation of the high-level segment, the Council should strive to bring together a wide-range of development actors from around the world – from government representatives, to experts, specialized institutions, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, foundations and private sector entities – who can contribute to the objectives of the 2009 AMR and advance the realization of the health agenda. This should be the marching order for the series of events that are being planned to prepare the ground for the 2009 substantive session of ECOSOC.

The first of these occasions will be a Special Event on Philanthropy on Global Public Health, to be held on 23 February. This meeting will be an opportunity to engage foundations and the private sector together with the UN, to find creative solutions to step up progress towards the health MDGs and to promote global equity.

My hope is that the Council will help expand the range of partners cooperating with the United Nations, and facilitate the growth and flow of philanthropic resources on a global basis. The meeting should aim at mobilizing interest and support for philanthropy world-wide and creating a compact among nations to promote this outcome.

A number of events are also being planned in preparation for the 2009 AMR. The Review will assess progress in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and identify best practices and innovative ways to solve development challenges where progress is slow. The AMR will focus on cross-cutting issues in public health as they impact economic and social development in general and the achievement of the MDGs in particular. A global preparatory meeting for the 2009 AMR as well as regional meetings looking at issues like mainstreaming traditional medicine in sustainable development, financing strategies for healthcare, e-health or access to health services will set the stage.

Ten countries have volunteered to make national presentations during the 2009 AMR. This clearly demonstrates that the National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) mechanism is viewed by many Member States as an important instrument to review progress, assess impact and promote best practices. My own country made a National Voluntary Presentation in 2008, and we found it a very useful and rewarding exercise. The challenge for the Council is to capitalize on the momentum to consolidate this mechanism and strengthen the accountability role of the Council. In this regard, it is essential that the Council continues to follow up on the initiatives and progress made by NVP countries.

Many more initiatives, including by civil society, are in preparation. Generally speaking, we will have in 2009 the opportunity to mobilize, under the umbrella of ECOSOC, support around important initiatives concerning the health sector, such as the Secretary-General's Health Initiative. I intend to work very closely with the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly to make this year a decisive year for action on the health agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished delegates,

At the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development held in Doha just a few weeks ago, our leaders not only provided fresh impetus and renewed mandates for continuing work on Financing for Development, but addressed also some very specific requests to the Council. Among them, the request to consider the need for a strengthened and more effective intergovernmental inclusive process to carry out the financing for development follow-up at its Spring Meeting and its 2009 Substantive session with a view to making recommendations for final action by the General Assembly during its 64th session. I intend to start consultations as soon as possible with all stakeholders of the Monterrey process in order to define how best to fulfill the mandate given to us and to prepare the first important exchange in this respect : our High Level Meeting with the World Bank, IMF, WTO and UNCTAD, which is to be held on 27th of April.

Another important decision taken at the Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development was to hold a conference on the world financial crisis and its impact on development to be organized by the President of the General Assembly. In this regard, I intend, with your support and cooperation, to explore how best ECOSOC might make a useful contribution to the ongoing debate, and more particularly to the systemic issues referred to in paragraph 78 of the Doha Declaration, which fall within the mandate of our Council. There again, our Spring Meeting with the Bretton Woods Institutions, WTO and UNCTAD seems to be the right forum for such a discussion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another important priority on the Council's agenda for 2009 is to continue to strengthen the Development Cooperation Forum. Last year, the first meeting of the Forum succeeded in helping to establish the role of the ECOSOC as convener of multi-stakeholder consultations on key development issues. For example, several key policy recommendations were reflected in the ACCRA Action Agenda.

The challenge for the next DCF in 2010 will be to establish full recognition of the Forum among Member States and other stakeholders as the main forum for strengthening mutual accountability in development cooperation. In this context, as

mandated in Doha, efforts should also be pursued to enhance the cooperation with other relevant institutions, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to advance dialogue and cooperation among the increasingly diverse community of development partners.

In the Doha declaration, we recognized that microfinance, including microcredit, an issue my country attaches great importance to, has proven to be effective in generating productive self-employment, which can contribute to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We underlined the need to appropriately support, in a coordinated manner, the efforts of developing countries, including in capacity-building for their microfinance, including microcredit institutions. We will thus seek to strengthen ECOSOC's action in promoting and bringing about inclusive financial sectors.

More generally, the Council should also continue to strengthen its role and capacity to respond to emerging issues and crises. Unfortunately, there has not been shortage of those in recent years, from the food and the energy crises to the impending risks of climate change. The challenge is to continue to keep the focus and follow up on these important issues to ensure that we do not return to business as usual and to look ahead.

The Council should also strengthen its relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission. ECOSOC, with its unique expertise and experience in dealing with the development challenges of countries emerging from conflict can contribute substantially to the work of the PBC in many ways. I am looking forward to meeting with the new Chair of the PBC, Ambassador Munoz, to discuss possible avenues for a closer cooperation in the future.

Madame Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are in the middle of a deep financial and economic crisis, which is affecting the whole world and risks to set back the clock for development. This Council should offer a venue to address the crisis's multiple dimensions and implications for poverty and sustainable development and solicit concrete initiatives to help alleviate its impact on the most vulnerable.

I look forward to working with all of you to continue establishing ECOSOC as the leading forum on the coordination and implementation of the United Nations development agenda.

Thank you very much.

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