

Joint special event of ECOSOC and the PBC on

“MDGs in countries emerging from conflict”

19 July 2010, 3 – 5 p.m., ECOSOC Chamber (NLB)

Distinguished Deputy Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this joint Special event of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. I am very pleased to continue the cooperation of our two bodies. Today’s meeting testifies to the fact that these efforts are bearing fruit.

In two months from now, member states will take stock of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), assess where progress has been made and identify the gaps that need special attention if all the goals are to be achieved by 2015. Many of you are involved in the negotiations of the outcome document. Let me take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the two Co-facilitators of these negotiations, Ambassador Staur of Denmark and Ambassador Badji of Senegal for suspending negotiations this afternoon so as to give the opportunity to you many of you to attend this special joint event of ECOSOC and the PBC.

We are grateful to you, Deputy Secretary-General, for being with us and agreeing to deliver a keynote address on an issue that is at the heart of your efforts and those of the Secretary General to achieve the MDGs by 2015. I am especially grateful to H.E. Ambassador Wittig, Chair of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for co-chairing today’s event. We both share the view that closer collaboration of our two intergovernmental bodies is important and could help to improve our individual and joint contributions to addressing the specific challenges and needs of countries emerging from conflict.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The UN Millennium Declaration rightly emphasized the critical role of peace and security for human well-being and for eradicating poverty in all its forms. Of the 34 countries that are farthest from reaching from achieving the targets and goals set out in the United Nations development agenda, 22 are in or emerging from conflict.

Armed conflict can erase many years of development gains and very often the social and physical infrastructure needed for economic and social development is destroyed. As we emphasized during discussions on last year's theme on "global public health", maternal mortality rates in conflict-affected countries tend to be extremely high, in fact the highest globally. Infant and child mortality rates also tend to rise significantly during conflict, and very low life expectancy rates still persist several years after the end of armed violence. Education systems and infrastructure are also degraded, and limited access to clean water and sanitation, which lasts for several years after the end of conflict, plays a significant role in worsening the health status of the populace.

However, the good news is that many countries are moving forward, including some of the poorest, which demonstrates that the MDGs are achievable when appropriate policies, prudent planning, good governance and adequate resources are underpinned by political commitment. But progress is highly uneven across countries and even within a region the challenges sometimes differ greatly. Some countries appear to have made steady gains towards a number of MDGs whereas others have reversed course on some targets while making progress on others.

But economic and social development can only take place if basic security is provided. At the same time, a successful and rapid implementation of economic and social programmes can help to stabilize the fragile security situation in many countries. It is true that many states are likely to transition rapidly in and out of conflict, making the environment for the implementation of development strategies more difficult. This is why

we need to take cognizance of the nexus between development and security and do more to systematically mainstream security concerns into development strategies and programmes and vice-versa.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is why this joint special event between our two bodies is so important. The Council's conduct of annual ministerial reviews of progress made in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, gives us the opportunity to continually assess how conflict is affecting the implementation of the development agenda, and to review and share lessons learned on with the Commission on how MDG-based strategies can help forestall violent conflict or help in preventing the relapse into conflict. However, as I have emphasized earlier, the need for basic security and political stability for development means that the Council can also benefit from the lessons learned by the Peacebuilding Commission on how to integrate security and other concerns within a rights-based framework to improve the chances for sustainable development.

On a final note, I would like to note that ECOSOC's oversight role in matters of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance is of particular value in promoting better integration between relevant policy and operational dimensions of peacebuilding and longer-term development. The Council's Development Cooperation Forum can also provide a unique opportunity to examine how development cooperation can best support countries in conflict or emerging from it thereby complementing ongoing work in the Security Council and the PBC on advancing the concept of an integrated approach to peacebuilding.

Therefore, I am, once again, very pleased that we are having today's meeting and I am looking forward to the presentations of our panellists as well as your contributions in the interactive part.

Thank you for your attention. I would like to now give the floor to Ambassador Wittig, Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission for his welcoming remarks, before inviting the Deputy Secretary General to deliver a key note address.

Ambassador Wittig, you have the floor.