



**Opening Remarks by  
His Excellency Mr. Martin Sajdik,  
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**ECOSOC Special Meeting**

## **Ebola – A Threat to Sustainable Development**

**5 December 2014**

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Excellencies,  
Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this Special Meeting of the Council on “Ebola: A threat to sustainable development”. We have gathered today because the Ebola outbreak needs our utmost attention.

Firstly, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the Ebola outbreak. I would like to welcome the representatives of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali, and commend the resilience of their people, as well as the tireless efforts of their Governments. I would also like to express strong support for the efforts of the African Union to contain the Ebola Outbreak.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for mobilizing the UN system for a coordinated response to the Ebola outbreak. The establishment of the first ever health mission, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) has been a turning point in the international response to the Ebola outbreak. Considerable progress has been made as a result of enhanced and coordinated response by Governments and the international community.

We remain very concerned about the emergence of a new chain of transmission in Mali. This is also a reminder that we need to step up our efforts to stop the spread of the Ebola outbreak.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,

Your strong presence here today demonstrates the international community's solidarity with the affected countries in West Africa. But this is not enough.

The Ebola outbreak has taken too many lives. And our utmost urgent task is to stop this outbreak. This is an emergency that goes beyond the health sector, with implications for children's education, people's livelihoods, food security and businesses. These challenges require a strong and coordinated response from the international community.

That is why, the Economic and Social Council—as the United Nations' principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on development—has brought all of you together to delve deeper into the economic and social dimensions of the Ebola outbreak in affected countries, the region and the rest of the world.

We are here today to find solutions to address the multidimensional nature of the Ebola outbreak, and to make countries resilient to future health emergencies and crises. While the Security Council and the General Assembly are focused on mobilizing international support for stopping the outbreak in the short-term, the ECOSOC must begin to plan for a post-Ebola response that will ensure that the affected countries do not fall too far off track from progress already achieved towards the MDGs. In doing so, linking the current response to longer-term systems strengthening in the affected countries will be critical for sustainable development results.

This is not the first time, the Economic and Social Council holds a special meeting on a development-related emergency. In years past, the Council, using its convening power has brought together Ministers, Parliamentarians, development partners, businesses, foundations, academics and NGOs to provide it with broad recommendations on ways to respond to the African food crisis and Avian Flu in 2005, global food crisis in 2008 and 2013, and the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines last December. And during the peak of the AIDS crisis, it was ECOSOC's leadership and oversight which led to the establishment of a joint and co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS in 1994.

I urge you all to consider how ECOSOC's political legitimacy, convening power, substantive expertise and stakeholder networks can help us respond to the multidimensional nature of the Ebola outbreak or any future health or development related emergencies. How can we use or build on existing mechanisms for a more effective and comprehensive response?

The worst affected countries are counting on our support in fighting the Ebola outbreak. The Economic and Social Council stands ready to help mobilize the ECOSOC system, in particular the Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies and its network of non-governmental organizations, for an effective coordinated multi-sectoral response to ensure that economic recovery efforts help stabilize the worst affected countries, strengthen preparedness and prevent future outbreaks.

Thank you.