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THE PRESIDENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
H.E. AMBASSADOR MARTIN SAJDIK

REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
SAMOA, 1 SEPTEMBER 2014

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour for me, in my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, to address the opening of this international conference.

I am pleased to note that its overarching theme is on partnerships. I believe that it is only through genuine cooperation amongst all stakeholders that we can ultimately achieve our aspirations in a world increasingly characterised by globalization, widening inequalities and a persistent deterioration of the global environment.

Effective partnerships for development are proven mechanisms for successful sustainable development outcomes. As we transition from the Millennium Development Goals into the Post-2015 period, we must ensure that partnership mechanisms become central to the implementation of the new development agenda, including in particular for SIDS. Small Island Developing States have already understood that it is through different types of partnerships that many challenges can be overcome. This conference is proof, with its theme of genuine and durable partnerships, that scaling up and replicating good examples can benefit all Small Island Developing States.

Distinguished participants,

Successful partnerships encompass the broadest range of actors, from state to non-state, including business and the private sector. These mechanisms are well placed to speed

up implementation of sustainable development as they include a wide range of expertise and means of implementation. They also embody a vast array of experiences and innovations.

This Conference, having for the first time partnerships as an official part of the programme, will demonstrate the important role of partnerships as implementation tools. I can see that all six multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues that are to be held reflect well all three dimensions of sustainable development. I commend the Presidency for this approach which symbolises the political will to seriously advance sustainable development in all its dimensions and by including all relevant stakeholders. This is very well in line with the approach of the international community and was reflected in the High-level Political Forum held this past July.

The HLPF, during its first meeting under the auspices of the Council, not only showed its full potential to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, but also clearly demonstrated fulfilment of its mandate to address the challenges of countries in special situations. One of the dialogues held was exclusively dedicated to SIDS, with video links to Town Hall meetings in Barbados and Samoa. The key messages emanating from this dialogue addressed the specificities of SIDS in sustainable development and showed that they have accomplished a lot, but that still more needs to be done in terms of inclusiveness and capacity building, as well as addressing climate change and managing oceans, both economically as well as environmentally.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to provide you with my “vision” of ECOSOC’s future role in the area of partnerships, in particular those involving the private sector and foundations and those among Governments.

As the gateway to the United Nations for all non-state stakeholders, the Council has, and will continue to provide, a unique platform where governments, NGOs, business, academia and the philanthropic community, and others, can come together to forge ways for promoting sustainable development. Since 2008, it has convened an Annual Partnerships Forum, bringing together these actors to discuss how partnerships across a variety of sectors, including global public health, agriculture and food security, education and gender equality, can help to advance an array of Millennium Development Goals.

As we look to the future, ECOSOC has another opportunity to leverage the networks already created over the years. We intend to take another look at how partnerships can reflect the changing realities of international development and the post-2015 development agenda. A golden opportunity now exists for fine-tuning the role of partnerships for more impactful results.

I believe that the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda will see a flowering of new partnerships involving the private sector, foundations, and an array of other actors, in line with agreed global commitments. All stakeholders must be willing to hold themselves accountable in terms of their human rights record, capacity to deliver, and financial transparency, among other parameters. This will require a new framework for reporting on progress so as to ensure that their actions are in line with global objectives and commitments. I feel that ECOSOC would be the ideal platform for such reporting.

First, the Council has the mandate to follow-up the implementation of the outcomes of world summits and conferences held in the 1990s. Second, the Council has also been given an oversight and coordination role vis-à-vis the UN system, and as such, should review and provide guidance on the partnerships in which these organizations are involved, including

with the private sector. The results of the review would be shared with the HLPF, thereby providing an opportunity for further reflection and reinforcement.

Moreover, the Council's multi-stakeholder Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), is another space where Government to Government partnerships has been discussed since 2007. At the recently concluded 2014 DCF, the Council engaged a range of stakeholders-- from donors and programme countries, Southern partners, civil society, philanthropic foundations, members of Parliament, local and regional authorities, private sector and international organizations-- in an open and inclusive policy dialogue on how a global partnership for development, involving mostly Member States, could work in practice beyond 2015. It also identified ways to enhance national and global accountability and effective monitoring of development cooperation. In my view, this Forum is well placed to promote global accountability for development cooperation commitments beyond 2015 and can help monitor and review a renewed global partnership for development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I strongly believe that ECOSOC is well positioned indeed to put the full strength of its system in support of partnerships. One good example where this could come into play is in promoting the right environment for partnerships at the local level. Experience has shown that through creating an enabling policy and institutional environment at the local level, one which helps foster local ownership of partnership initiatives, such partnerships become more impactful and sustainable. ECOSOC could draw on the expertise of its subsidiary bodies, including particularly the Regional Commissions, to generate new and innovative ideas on ways in which partnerships, especially at the local and regional levels, can be made more effective in the Post-2015 period.

I believe also that the Council can use its Annual Partnerships Forum to help nurture such engagements by disseminating its achievements, including best practices and lessons learned, promoting the replication of successful partnership models, and facilitating greater collaboration and coordination among different types of partnerships. The Council currently engages in an ongoing dialogue with other non-state actors, such as parliamentarians and academia. However, it is my view that it should increase its interaction with these groups so as to add input and value to ECOSOC's work. One way could be to hold similar events as the Annual Partnerships Forum with each of these non-state actors on an annual basis so as to strengthen their engagement and involvement for added impact.

Distinguished participants,

Let me end by assuring you that as we elaborate a more coherent role for ECOSOC on partnerships, the Council will continue to identify ways that SIDS priorities will feature in both the Annual Partnerships Forum with the private sector and foundations and the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, as well as the new initiatives I am proposing the Council undertake as we transition from the MDGs to the Post-2015 era.

ECOSOC is committed to addressing the unique policy challenges of Small Island Developing States. I am convinced that the outcome of this conference, including its Partnership Dialogues, will be indispensable in providing the elements for the Council's future consideration. I therefore wish all of you successful deliberations in the days ahead.

Thank you.