

UNITED NATIONS



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

REMARKS AT THE
2014 ASTANA ECONOMIC FORUM
RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE AGE OF CHANGES IN G-GLOBAL FORMAT
ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN, 21-23 MAY 2014

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

[IN RUSSIAN]

I am absolutely delighted to be here and to see a lot of familiar faces, colleagues and friends, development leaders, and the shapers and doers of the international community.

I have been impressed by the richness of the discussions, as well as the in-depth focus of the plenary.

On a personal level, this is also a very special moment for me. I have spent long parts of my career in this region, and it is the first time in 15 years that I have returned to Astana.

In that time, Astana has moved forward profoundly. It is now a thriving metropolis of great stature. Whilst Astana may be visually unrecognizable from its past, it has kept its vibrancy and strongly-held cultural heritage. The President of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Nursultan Nazarbayev, deserves praise for overseeing this development, and I would also like to express my gratitude and commend the President for his leadership and vision in hosting this important forum.

[IN ENGLISH]

I need to switch back to English now as I would like to share with you the words I have come to learn to be the six most dangerous in the English language. They are:

“We’ve always done it this way”

And indeed, the General Assembly recognized this and voted overwhelmingly for reform of the Economic and Social Council. This was also a recognition of ECOSOC’s substantive leadership of the UN system, and paves the way for the Council to play a central role in the Post-2015 development agenda.

ECOSOC and Astana share a commonality of purpose. We seek a more inclusive governance system, that caters for present and future generations.

The Millennium Development Goals not only changed the discourse in this direction, but they also captured the attention of policy makers, thereby entering the public consciousness. Their simplicity, measurability, and time-bound nature made the agenda both attractive and accessible.

With this marked success, we must persist and make a final push to achieve the MDG targets, not just in isolation; but across all income and social groups. We must reflect on the lessons learnt throughout the MDG period, and translate these into our thinking and actions as we design the Sustainable Development Goals that replace them.

The new agenda will be grounded in eradicating poverty and moving us towards a sustainable path. It will go beyond the scope of MDG framework, promoting continuous learning, adaptation and replication across regions and over time.

Monitoring and accountability of the new goals will need to be scaled up and be supported by the whole UN System.

The insitutional transition I am overseeing, with the High-level Political Forum for ministerial level meetings convened under the auspices of ECOSOC, provide new fora for discussing global challenges. This will include an Integration Segment, to monitor and

promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. All of these are to happen for the first time this summer in New York.

ECOSOC's responsibility for convening the High Level Political Forum coupled with its broad responsibility for setting the dialogue and agenda, puts ECOSOC at the heart of development and it will be the central coordinating body going forward.

I see this same spirit of cooperation here today in Astana. One that strengthens multilateral bonds and builds trust. A spirit of inclusiveness and collaboration. We all want a more prosperous, more democratic, and more equitable world.

Yet we cannot achieve that goal when over one billion of our fellow humankind live in desperate conditions that offer little hope of a better life for them or their children.

We cannot stop conflicts or defeat extremism when our young people see a future with no jobs, no hope, and no education.

We cannot build a stable, global economic system when workers and families find themselves on the wrong side of globalization, susceptible to far away markets and out of reach of modern technologies.

We cannot advance democracy and protect human rights when poverty, hunger and lack of opportunity threaten to undermine the rule of law necessary to make those rights real.

And we cannot mitigate and adapt to climate change until we gain access to greener energy and sustainable livelihoods.

Our influence and our leadership start here, at events like this. We must demonstrate that multilateralism works, especially in making tough decisions together, for the good of all.

Against this backdrop and a shift towards greater global interdependence, we must include all stakeholders in our processes. Advocacy groups, business, NGOs and UN member states must have an equal voice in shaping the vision for a sustainable and just society.

We at the United Nations have made great strides on this front. The World We Want initiative of the UN is one of the biggest civil society undertakings ever, gaining the perspectives of over one million people. It gathers the priorities of people from every corner of the world to help us build a collective vision that will be used to plan the post-2015 agenda, one that is based on the aspirations of all citizens.

Over two million people have expressed their opinions so far. They have voted overwhelmingly for better education and health, and for honest and responsible government.

We must heed these calls. The people have spoken and we are duty-bound to listen.

Distinguished Delegates,

When I was elected as President of the Economic and Social Council in January this year, I promised to address the pressing global challenges of our time. Our commitment is to strengthen cooperation among all nations; our goal is to guide the world towards a sustainable development path, so that we may overcome the varied global challenges we face.

Today we are at a crossroads moment: Do we take the road of multilateralism and inclusivity, or do we silo our efforts. The issues currently on the global agenda will shape people's lives for generations to come, and this underscores the timeliness of our discussion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development was once only the province of humanitarian organizations, charities, and donor governments. Today it is simply a moral imperative.

There are many matters that are of global significance, but each nation around the world also faces its own set of challenges. Bringing together the key international leaders of our time is an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from innovative work elsewhere.

I look forward to the remainder of this forum.

Thank you.