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Opening statement

by

H.E. Mr. Martin Sadjik,

President of the Economic and Social Council

**at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
under the auspices of ECOSOC**

30 June 2014

Excellencies,
Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me extend a warm welcome to you all. Thank you for coming to this first meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. Today marks the start of the implementation of one of the important recommendations of the Rio+20 outcome relating to the institutional framework for sustainable development, and it is a special privilege for me to preside over this meeting.

The confluence of several factors makes our meeting particularly timely and important.

Firstly, we are bracing for our final push to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals. The Forum can help to instil the concern for poverty eradication and sustainable development on this last leg of our journey to 2015. But most of all it can draw conclusions from the implementation of the MDGs when further shaping its own role in the implementation and the review process of the SDGs. But, as we know, the key messages for these final 1 ½ years of MDG-implementation will come from ECOSOC.

Secondly, the international community is at the moment deeply engaged in elaborating the sustainable development goals. In fact, the decisive negotiations of the OWG on SDGs will start on Wednesday 9.7. – is it a coincidence? – back to back with the HLPF: Our meeting should mark the start of the reflection on the broader post 2015 development agenda. It might give us – with the presence of our political leaders and of top officials from our capitals - some time to pause and reflect on how far we have come in elaborating this agenda and whether we are on the right track. The forum can give some input for the future agenda now and set the stage for a robust platform after 2015. Expectations are high and we need to live up to the hopes and aspirations. At the same time we have to act responsibly in view of the - parallel - processes connected with the shaping of the Post 2005 development agenda. We must not – by no means – interfere with these processes. We have to act very responsibly in this context! We should resist temptations to try to solve issues that are still under discussion in the OWG, thus paralleling the weeks-long attempts to conclude an outcome document.

Thirdly, our meeting is also important because the engagement of civil society in the UN has reached unprecedented depth. Rio in 1992 opened the doors of the United Nations to civil society. It structured their engagement through the Major Groups system. Intensive consultations

have been held to develop the post 2015 development agenda and the SDGs with unprecedented involvement of the major groups and other stakeholders. Tens of thousands of civil society representatives have contributed. We must now ensure the continued participation of civil society in the work of the United Nations on sustainable development and the post 2015 development agenda. This meeting of the forum must do just this. The engagement of civil society and other stakeholders envisaged in the legislation is far reaching and generous. I will work to ensure the realization of this commitment.

Fourthly, our meeting is an integral part of the reform of UN institutions in the area of sustainable development. Last week, the very first universal UN Environment Assembly was held in Nairobi. The outcome of which we will hear during the HLPF: for now only so much: It demonstrated the vitality and urgency of the environmental agenda. It is now our common responsibility, Ladies and Gentlemen, to shape the high level political forum as a platform where actors from the economic, social and environmental sphere come together to steer progress towards sustainable development. Let me use in this context some open words. The Forum – as often in the UN system – has not been “everybody’s darling” from the very outset. Some Member states have been nurturing strong hopes about for the Forum whereas others have been very critical from the outset. In circumstances like that it can not only be

expected by the Presidency and the Secretariat to act like magicians and invent a breath taking new venue. It will now be, at this given moment, during the upcoming also up to the HLPF friendly MS Member States to spare no efforts to convince the critical MS about the added value of the HLPF for all actors of the Post 2015 development agenda.

My fifth and last point is that we are to start shaping - in real terms - review and implementation of the post 2015 development agenda. I believe that this is a key point in determining the future success of the forum.

We will hold dialogues on concrete issues related to implementation, such as integrated policy making, Small Island Developing States and other countries in special situation.

A few dialogues will address the key dimensions of the post 2015 development agenda. We are to consider the implications of universality and integration; poverty eradication; international cooperation for sustainable development as well as sustainable consumption and production. We will also reflect on the varied regional priorities and how the agenda can respond to them.

The forum is also the United Nations platform to reflect on long term development trends and on policies to address them. We will have dialogues on charting pathways to the Future we Want – the very theme of the forum - and on the science policy

interface. We will also discuss the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report. A working document will be presented to give us a flavour of what the report could bring to the forum in the future. I believe this is a step in the right direction in strengthening the science-policy interface.

Another major focus of the programme will be preparing the forum for 2016. We must use the coming two years to shape the forum so that we can hit the ground running when we have the SDGs to implement from 2016.

With this programme, I trust that we will be able to cover the many facets of the theme you chose to address this year. I am glad that you come from such varied backgrounds. You bring experience from all dimensions of sustainable development – from finance to labour and social policy to environment. Integration is at the core of the forum's mandate, and it needs to be put in practice here, through dialogue, exchange of views, and sharing of ideas. If this is done at the global level, I am confident that similar conversations will take place at the regional, national and local levels. Together with integration, inclusiveness is a hallmark of the forum. I am heartened that you also represent UN Member States, the various Major Groups, Parliaments and local authorities.

A strong forum means faster progress towards sustainable development goals. It should accelerate the shift towards

inclusive, equitable and prosperous societies without poverty and a better future for all.

I have tried to shape the forum as the dedicated platform for reviewing post-2015 goals and commitments. I feel like a proud father today. There have been a number of mid-wives to whom I am deeply grateful. I feel confident that we will together nurture the forum from infancy into an enlightened adulthood. We have a rich programme ahead of us. We have a wealth of high level participants. I feel confident that we are going to have an excellent meeting that will fulfil the mandate of the forum.

I wish us all a good and productive meeting in the days to come.

Thank you.