

11 November 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the ECOSOC 2011 Retreat on “Enhancing the Role of ECOSOC”**

Delivered by Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, Senior Special Advisor to the President

Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, President of the Economic and Social Council,
Distinguished members of the ECOSOC Bureau,
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Senior Special Advisor to the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, I have the pleasure of delivering the following message on the President’s behalf. The President was not able to join this retreat due to a prior commitment.

I thank the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and members of the Bureau for organizing this timely retreat.

The Council’s legitimacy, representative character, and UN Charter mandated responsibility, make it a valuable forum for international dialogue and decision-making.

It is, therefore, necessary that ECOSOC should strengthen its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination of economic and social issues, and should play a major role in the follow-up to and the implementation of the outcomes of relevant major UN conferences and summits.

The programme of this retreat provides a useful opportunity to explore ways and means of further enhancing the Council’s role and effectiveness in addressing the challenges encountered in the area of global economic and social development. A focus on how ECOSOC could respond timely and meaningfully to the new and emerging concerns would surely be of particular value.

A key priority of the on-going session of the General Assembly is to strengthen the UN system for global governance, through creative, adaptive structural changes. Emerging challenges to the international system have resulted in suggestions of reform to UN bodies.

In particular, serious concerns relating to food security and the global financial and economic crisis have exposed how fragile and fragmented global economic governance has become. It is very appropriate and in all of our interest for ECOSOC to assume greater responsibility in this area.

I believe that ECOSOC reform efforts should be an on-going exercise, taking into account the ever-changing global scene. In this context, reforms should focus on its added value in its role for overall coordination, avoiding duplication with other bodies or the proliferation of meetings.

The General Assembly, as the apex body of the UN system with its overall responsibility, will remain engaged in providing encouragement and leadership to this process. For that, you will have my continuing commitment.

Strengthening ECOSOC assumes increasing importance as the Rio+20, the MDGs target year of 2015, and the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda of the UN are all converging on the global agenda. Last week, I hosted an important briefing on the advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

From my perspective in the General Assembly, ECOSOC has a number of opportunities to build on its existing strengths and increase its effectiveness.

One area that requires attention is the relationships between ECOSOC and intergovernmental organizations. ECOSOC's effectiveness will be further constrained if it does not engage strategically with these existing as well as emerging institutions.

Another relevant area is the relationship between ECOSOC and the Bretton Woods Institutions. Here, there is need to build on earlier successes in improving their cooperation and coherence on global economic and financial matters, and in bolstering ECOSOC's identity as the "port of entry" for discussions on these issues.

Recognizing that peace and development are two-sides of the same coin, it is encouraging that ECOSOC intends to focus on the inter-linkages between peace, security and development. As you know, peaceful settlement of disputes, particularly mediation, is one of the main themes of my Presidency.

I hope that these gaps in global economic governance – and strategies for ECOSOC to overcome them – will be central to your deliberations at this retreat.

I look forward to continuing the collaboration between the General Assembly and the ECOSOC to ensure that today's United Nations is equipped to address the new global realities.