

5 December 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the ECOSOC Special Meeting on “Ebola: A threat to sustainable  
development”**

**Excellencies,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), His Excellency Martin Sadjik, for his leadership and for inviting me to address this Special Meeting.

We are meeting at the time when the most affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone continue to deal with the daunting challenges posed by the Ebola epidemic. I would like to express my gratitude for the support and solidarity the people and Governments of the most affected countries continue to receive from the international community. I also commend the ongoing work of the UN Mission for Emergency Ebola Response (UNMEER), and other international health workers who remain on the frontlines, at great sacrifice, to combat the epidemic.

There is notable improvement, as a result of the scaled-up response of national authorities, as well as the resolve and support of regional and international partners such as the African Union and the United Nations.

However, there is a lot more that remains to be done, as the progress is uneven. With more than 16,000 confirmed cases and over 7,000 reported deaths so far, the outbreak of Ebola has had a deeply tragic and devastating impact.

We should continue to focus on combating the epidemic and alleviating the suffering inflicted on families, communities, and the countries at large. The current crisis has put in sharp focus the need for building strong and resilient institutions, in this case health infrastructure, especially in post-conflict countries.

It is essential that beyond the immediate challenges, we also pay greater attention to the socio-economic recovery of the affected countries from the impact of Ebola, which threatens to derail their sustainable development efforts.

In this context, long-term term recovery will require significant mobilization of resources, infrastructure development and capacity building. The sustained commitment of the international community and the UN system will be critical. The affected countries' health-, as well as other social

and economic infrastructure, need to be built back better and improved, so as to safeguard against future crises.

Today's Special Meeting of ECOSOC is therefore timely as it provides a platform for better understanding of the threat posed by the Ebola epidemic to sustainable development.

### **Excellencies,**

The Ebola epidemic has had serious socio-economic impacts that are acutely felt by the three mostly affected countries. According to the World Bank, the effect of the Ebola epidemic on sub-Saharan Africa's economy is expected to be around US\$3-4 billion. It is also estimated that the short-term GDP growth rate projections in 2014 decreased from 4.5 % to 2.4% in Guinea, from 5.9% to 2.5% in Liberia and from 11.3% to 8% for Sierra Leone.

There are also reports by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, that up to 40% of farms have been abandoned in the most affected areas. UNICEF estimates show that at least 7,500 children have lost one or two parents to Ebola, while schools have remained closed indefinitely, leaving an estimated five million children out of school.

As we begin negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, it is important to underscore the inter-linkages amongst the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. While Ebola is primarily a health issue, it has far-reaching implications on other sectors including education, sanitation, and the economy, to mention a few.

As you are aware, the three mostly affected countries have been on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, and had made great strides in post-conflict peacebuilding over the years, especially in security, governance, political stability, social cohesion and economic recovery.

I would like to commend the Peacebuilding Commission for its efforts towards supporting the affected countries. Prior to this crisis, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone had made significant progress and were on an encouraging growth trajectory.

The severe impact of Ebola has the potential to reverse the peacebuilding strides made in the most affected countries. Going forward, the continued support of Member States, the UN system, multilateral financial institutions, and other partners will be crucial.

I look forward to the ideas and proposals from this important discussion on the threat of Ebola to sustainable development, and how the international community can support national governments and the region to address these challenges.

Thank you for your attention.