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**Statement by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation,
Head of the Russian Delegation to the 2007 ECOSOC Substantive Session
H.E. Mr. Alexander YAKOVENKO
at the Annual Ministerial Review: "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and
hunger, including through the global partnership for development"**

Geneva, July 4, 2007

Mr. President,

The Russian Federation welcomes the first Ministerial review of the progress made in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, which should be the central element of the high-level segment of the ECOSOC's annual substantive sessions.

We share the international development agenda reflected in the decisions made at the major UN conferences and summits (Millennium Summit, International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, World Summit in 2005), as well as the internationally agreed development goals, first and foremost the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

We note with satisfaction that the first ever ECOSOC's Annual ministerial review is dedicated to the eradication of poverty and hunger, which is, without any doubt, one of the most pressing issues here and now.

We are confident that the Review will allow the international community to reach a new level of understanding of how to deal with this issue and define the necessary concrete steps forward.

Mr. President,

Fight against poverty and hunger is, of course, primary responsibility of the countries themselves. We recognize that the achievement of certain Millennium Development Goals, including those related to the poverty eradication, reducing child mortality and others, remains a topical issue for Russia. We are particularly concerned about significant, at times, disproportions across regions. Federal Government and Regional Administrations in the Russian Federation take necessary steps to speed up the progress in these areas. During the years of economic growth poverty in Russia has declined two times. Regional indicators has also improved: from 1999 to 2005 the proportion of regions where the poverty rate is less than 20% of the population has increased ten times from 4% to 40%.

At the same time a key to success in the fight against poverty is the global partnership for development, as domestic efforts should be reinforced by the internationally agreed international measures taking into account national specificities and with respect to the sovereignty and national ownership.

Russia supports the concept of global partnership for practical implementation at all levels of the commitments made in the outcome documents of the major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Global partnership remains a topical issue due to the fact that despite the overall positive dynamics in the world economy during the last years, many developing countries, first of all the least developed countries, are off-track to meet the MDGs. Special attention should be given to the specific problems and needs of Africa.

We are confident that the United Nations should play a central role in enhancing international development cooperation in close collaboration with all the other multilateral agencies dealing with the issues of financing, trade and development, in order to contribute to the progressive economic growth, eradication of poverty and hunger, and ensuring sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Driven by the principles of solidarity and equal partnership Russia for many decades has been providing significant development assistance to countries and peoples that share common historical destiny with our country. Our assistance enabled a number of countries to deal with their major economic challenges and to lay the foundation of the subsequent industrialization.

Successful graduation from the transition period and achieving sustainable rates of economic growth enable us to embark on enhancing our international development assistance.

There is no need to once again dwell on our efforts, both on bilateral and multilateral levels, to alleviate the debt burden of the developing countries. Apart from debt relief, by the end 2006 Russian development assistance has doubled compared to 2003-2004 and exceeded 200 mln. US dollars annually.

In the last year we have doubled our contributions to the UN Funds and Programmes, other UN entities.

Our development assistance has also been increasing on a regional level as well as through bilateral channels, including targeted assistance to a number of countries, vocational training for developing countries, humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, during its G8 Presidency in 2006, Russia committed to finance, in the coming 4-5 years, initiatives to fight infectious diseases, as well as in the field of education and energy security to the total amount of about 600 mln. US dollars.

This June the President of the Russian Federation endorsed the Concept of the Russian International Development Assistance, which stipulates policy principles, goals, objectives and the main guidelines for future work in this field. Preparation of this Concept was an important milestone on the way towards the establishment in Russia, in accordance with the President's order, of an effective development assistance mechanism.

Russian international development assistance policy is aimed at building a stable, just and democratic world order, poverty eradication as well as at ensuring sustainable economic development in the developing and post-conflict countries, overcoming the consequences of emergencies, including natural and manmade disasters, promoting dialogue between civilizations, eliminating the root causes of the modern security challenges.

The implementation of the Concept will allow to gradually increase Russian financing for development commitments, which according to the existing plans, might reach in the coming years 400-500 mln. US dollars annually, and, along with creating an enabling socio-economic environment, to set up a sustained tendency towards reaching in the long term the UN recommended target of 0,7% GNP to ODA.

Mr. President,

In conclusion let me express our confidence that ECOSOC in its new, reformed form will make a significant contribution to the eradication of global poverty, and our first Annual ministerial review will be an important benchmark on the way towards enhancing international cooperation in this field.