



H.E. Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak
Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council

Integration Segment

29 May 2014

CLOSING STATEMENT

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have thus concluded the programme of work of the integration segment of the 2014 session of the Economic and Social Council and I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who has taken part in this three-day event.

We had the honour of welcoming a President, a Vice-President and a number of ministers and mayors during these three days. Your inputs have been truly invaluable in providing key recommendations, sustainable solutions, and innovative ideas that will effectively enhance the quality of ensuing policy decisions on the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The first-ever integration segment has been a success. The Economic and Social Council has provided a unique platform that brought together Member States, local government officials, the United Nations system, the ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies, representatives from civil society and other actors to stimulate dialogue on how sustainable urbanization can be achieved through incorporating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The integration segment has further strengthened the Council's role in promoting the effective collaboration and coordination between various stakeholders to produce a large scale response to the emerging cross-sector challenges to sustainable development.

Over the past three days, we have witnessed the exchange of regional, national and local experiences, practices and strategies that demonstrated how urbanization can be transformational in the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Integration implies a balanced consideration of all these three sustainability dimensions.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue on the various dimensions of urbanization, namely, the demographic, economic, environmental, institutional, and socio-spatial challenges, has assisted in identifying the effective tools and instruments that will facilitate an integrated and balanced sustainable development approach.

The interactive panel discussions generated a number of substantive responses to key issues to sustainable urbanization, particularly, in addressing urban prosperity and urban inequities; promoting sustainable urbanization in Africa; and identifying effective governance, policy-making and planning mechanisms to support rapid urban growth. To address these complex multi-dimensional issues, local authorities must partner with national governments as well as other stakeholders to promote a more holistic and integrated approach to planning and building sustainable cities.

This approach would be critical in creating employment opportunities, providing efficient transportation and communication networks, greener buildings, an efficient human settlements and service delivery system, improved air and water quality, reduced waste, improved disaster preparedness and response and increased climate resilience.

In order to develop and promote multi-dimensional integrated responses, capacity building is necessary to build more effective institutions that can improve policy coordination and cohesiveness to ensure long-term sustainability. To this end, urban planning and design requires the concerted action at all levels of government alongside cross-sector coordination to scale up the resilience of cities. Another important element would be adequate technical capacity to analyze and manage these processes.

It is evident, overall, of the inherent contributions of cities as engines of economic growth and socioeconomic development. We must continue to generate and build upon the responses of the international community to address the inter-linkages between sustainable development and urbanization in order to enable the world to overcome some of the major global challenges at hand. It is thus critical that we harness the potential of urban areas to promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies in order to achieve sustainable, equitable and inclusive development for all.

Long-term sustainability can only be realized with new linkages and stronger ties among various tiers of government that support coordination and cohesiveness. All stakeholders, including National Governments, local authorities, the United Nations system and civil society actors, must work together to promote a holistic and integrated approach to urbanization.

The rich discussions and recommendations that came out from the three-days of integration segment will be compiled into a Vice-President's summary and will be made available on ECOSOC website next week. This outcome will not only feed into the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of ECOSOC, but will also serve as ECOSOC's contribution to Habitat III in 2016.

With that, I hereby declare closed the integration segment of the 2014 session of the Economic and Social Council.