

**Opening remarks**  
**H.E. Ambassador Ms. Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez**  
**Vice-President of ECOSOC**  
**ECOSOC substantive session, 2009**  
**Operational activities segment**  
**Wednesday, 15 July 2009**  
**Geneva**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to open the 2009 operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council, here in Geneva.

The agenda of the operational activities segment is extremely timely and relevant this year. This session takes place at a time when many countries are looking to the United Nations to help them respond to the global financial and economic crisis and address its impact on development, in the context of the food crisis and long term impacts of climate change. The convergence of these various crises casts a shadow over the timely achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

The United Nations has just convened a successful three-day conference on the impact of the world financial and economic crisis on development. A clear message of the Conference was that the global crisis cannot be an excuse to avoid meeting the range of prior commitments.

On the contrary, meeting these commitments is more urgent than ever if we are to help shelter developing countries from the worst impact of the crisis. This pressing “obligation to act” applies equally to the United Nations.

In December 2008, the Doha conference underlined – and I quote – “the important role of an effective, well managed and adequately resourced UN system through its operational activities in delivering capacity building support for development with long term sustainability”. It called for a substantial increase in voluntary contributions to the core/regular budget of the UN system.

This operational activities segment is thus critical to reflect on how the United Nations can help countries face the current multiple crises while at the same time keeping the compass on the realization of national priorities, the Millennium Development Goals and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals.

The clear principles and guidance established by the General Assembly in its 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system (TCPR) should guide and bolster the UN system’s support to programme countries.

The TCPR underscored that the universal, voluntary and grant nature of UN system operations, as well as its neutrality and multilateralism are part of the unique added value of the UN system’s support to developing countries. It called for action by the UN system to improve the way it works at all levels within the parameters of national ownership and leadership. It pointed to ways of ensuring greater coherence, efficiency and impact. It recognized how much the quantity and quality of financing affect the work of the UN system. And it identified themes to be mainstreamed throughout the work of the United

Nations system such as capacity development, gender equality and South-South cooperation. One of our key tasks during this segment is to ensure that the United Nations continues to forge ahead in implementing the TCPR while responding to new challenges.

The rich pallet of reports before you gives us a snapshot of the range of actions undertaken by the UN system to implement that resolution. A special focus will be placed this year on the resident coordinator system, financing, human resource challenges at the country level and simplification and harmonization. This mapping of how the UN system is going ahead in implementing each aspect of the TCPR will greatly facilitate the work of the Council in guiding and overseeing the implementation of the guidance of the General Assembly.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The agenda and work programme of this segment has been designed to help the Council to achieve this task.

The theme of the first panel this morning “the current economic, food and climate change crises and their effects on the achievement of the MDGs: the role of UN system’s support to national efforts” will be the occasion to focus on how the UN development system responds to the challenge to provide effective support to programme countries in addressing the impact of the current crises.

This afternoon’s “dialogue on UN system funding” is focusing on one critical topic repeatedly underscored by the General Assembly. The panel will discuss the importance of an adequate supply of core resources for the UN system and how to improve funding mechanisms at the country level, taking into consideration the changing aid environment and emerging national challenges.

Tomorrow morning, we will have the dialogue of the Council with the heads of Funds and Programmes. This dialogue is the occasion for the Council to exercise its oversight of these organizations which, taken together, represent an overwhelming proportion of UN development cooperation. In the afternoon we will have another short dialogue session on the capacity of resident coordinators, as well as on the issue of simplification and harmonization of UN system’s procedures, both of which are the subject of dedicated reports.

Strengthening UN country team’s coherent support to public health will be the focus of our last panel on Friday morning. This discussion will carry forward the theme of the Annual Ministerial review by focusing on the support provided by the UN system to programme countries both to answer health emergencies and to address chronic health crises such as high maternal or child mortality.

We have planned to devote four hours to the general debate between this afternoon and tomorrow afternoon. You will have the opportunity to give your views on progress and shortcomings in the UN system’s implementation of the TCPR. Let us make the most of the reports before us to have a focused productive debate that gives impetus to the implementation of this critical guidance.

The draft resolution that was presented for the consideration of this segment is concise and focused. It should serve as a good basis to give clear and action oriented guidance to the UN system. I hope that we can adopt it shortly.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The on-going informal consultations of the General Assembly on system-wide coherence are reflecting on how the Council can increase the relevance and impact of its work on operational activities.

While we should all engage in this reflection, I trust that our work during this segment will demonstrate that the Council has the capacity to do just that.

I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, to address the Council and introduce the reports before it.

Thank you very much.

Sir, you have the floor.