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**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
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ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)**

Briefing for ECOSOC on Post-2015 UN Development Agenda

New York, 4 April 2012

Ambassador Koterec,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this briefing on preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda.

I am pleased that ECOSOC has decided to take up this issue. You have much to contribute.

At the 2010 MDG Summit, Member States recognized the need to begin thinking about a post-2015 agenda, without neglecting efforts to reach the MDGs.

In response, the Secretary-General mobilized the UN family, and now we have a UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. This Task Team supports the consultation process by providing analytical inputs, expertise and outreach.

It is a welcome development.

Last fall, the post 2015 agenda was taken up at the General Assembly. It was discussed again at an informal briefing with delegations, last month.

We heard a clear message. Member States want to lead an open, inclusive consultation process that engages all relevant stakeholders.

We also heard a few other key messages and questions. Let me briefly highlight some of them.

First, everyone seems to agree that the Millennium Declaration and the MDG framework should be our starting point.

The MDGs may be simple in form, but they encapsulate the vision of the Millennium Declaration. And they have been highly effective in focusing global attention and galvanizing support.

Yet since 2000, new challenges have emerged and old ones have intensified. For example, delegations have pointed to:

- sustainable development,
- continuing conflicts,
- human rights,
- rising inequality, and
- demographic dynamics.

Moreover, many of these issues are interconnected and some span the globe:

- energy and climate change,
- loss of biodiversity,
- rising land degradation,
- increasing scarcity of freshwater,
- food security,
- marine degradation
- urbanization
- jobs, and
- increased frequency and severity of disasters.

How can our future development agenda provide a framework for collective responses to all of these global challenges?

Clearly the decisions taken at Rio+20 will have major significance for the post-2015 development agenda.

For example, there is the proposal on Sustainable Development Goals, with which you are familiar thanks to recent brainstorming meetings.

Further, any decisions on the key themes – green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development – will also be highly relevant.

It is too early to make predictions on how the post-2015 agenda will shape up.

But we are hearing one thing from all stakeholders: we need to work towards one UN development agenda, post 2015, with sustainable development at its centre.

Another key question is how do we avoid overloading this agenda?

The clear, concise nature of the MDGs has been a great asset. How do we preserve this, address new challenges *and* respond to the complexity of our times?

We have our work cut out for us.

One final issue I will mention is the need for balance between global agenda setting and national target setting.

We will need flexibility at the national level, taking into account country-specific circumstances, while still ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable groups are addressed.

Ladies and gentleman,

Let me now turn to the role of ECOSOC and its subsidiary machinery.

The ECOSOC system has been the custodian of the United Nations follow-up work on the MDGs and the internationally agreed development goals.

Therefore, it has a key role to play in defining a post-2015 UN development agenda.

Let me list some examples.

Through the Annual Ministerial Review, the Council monitors MDG progress. Because its theme changes annually, the AMR has covered each of the MDGs. Findings from the AMR have provided important lessons on the strength and weakness of the current MDG framework.

The Council has also helped to forge a link between the global, regional and the national levels. Regional preparatory events have allowed for regional inputs to feed meaningfully into global discussions. At the AMR National Voluntary Presentation, Member States share lessons learned in translating global policy guidance into concrete action.

The biennial Development Cooperation Forum also has an important contribution to make to the post-2015 discussion. By focusing on trends in development cooperation, it provides an important platform to discuss how best to respond to changes in the development landscape.

Additionally, ECOSOC engages with various stakeholders and can seek their views on the post-2015 agenda. For example, the DCF has strong relations with parliamentarians, local governments and civil society. And through its Global Partnership Event, ECOSOC is connected to the philanthropic community.

Finally, the entire ECOSOC system supports the implementation of the UN development agenda. The functional commissions play a key role in maintaining political momentum and they ensure focus is kept on accelerating implementation.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are at the early stages of this discussion. And these are just a few thoughts I would like to leave you with.

At this stage there are still many more questions than answers. But I hope this interactive discussion helps us move closer to the answers we seek.

Thank you.
