



The President of the Economic and Social Council

Statement of the
President of the Economic and Social Council
H.E. Dr. Ivan Šimonoviæ, Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Croatia to the 57th session of the General Assembly
Plenary meeting

Introduction of the report of the
Economic and Social Council for 2002

Wednesday, 27 November 2002

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

I thank you for this opportunity to introduce the 2002 report of the Economic and Social Council.

This year has been a very important year for the Council - one in which it both helped advance the international development agenda and undertook new challenging tasks. I will briefly highlight some of the key outcomes of the Council's session and then address the issues of the follow-up to conferences, peace-building and conflict prevention as well as the cooperation between ECOSOC, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Overview on some segments of the 2002 ECOSOC session

ECOSOC's **high-level segment** was devoted to human resources development, and in particular health and education. It gave concrete content to the policies and means required to implement the Millennium Development Goals in these areas. The segment adopted a Ministerial Declaration stressing that health and education are central to sustainable development and poverty eradication, and should be a core concern of macroeconomic and other policies. The Declaration makes a strong call for providing more resources for education and health, in particular for HIV/AIDS and the Global Fund. It gave new impetus to Governments, the UN system, and civil society for working towards better health and education for all. A number of ministers of health and

education, and of heads of UN system agencies took part in the meeting. A particular feature of this year was the extensive participation of civil society in the segment and its preparations, notably through the NGO forum. Specific reference is made, in the Declaration, to this contribution of civil society.

In the debate during the **operational activities segment**, the main focus of attention was on funding for the development work of the funds and programmes and harmonizing and simplifying their procedures. The Council also focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the UN system development work. Many delegations expressed interest in building further the segment as a global forum to provide overall policy guidance to the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The resolution adopted by the Council mandated key themes to guide and reorient operational activities of the UN system in the short and medium terms.

ECOSOC's **coordination segment** focused on how to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and the impact and effectiveness of its work. The segment adopted agreed conclusions that create a solid foundation for strengthening the Council's contribution to an integrated and coordinated follow-up to major UN conferences and summits. The agreed conclusions also contain a number of important elements that are supportive of the reform agenda that is currently being developed for the General Assembly.

During the **humanitarian affairs segment**, the Council gave guidance for reinforcing the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the UN system and of others. It also stressed importance of ensuring a smooth transition from relief to development. The resolution placed a special focus on assistance to vulnerable groups.

In the **general segment**, the Council focused on guiding the work of its subsidiary bodies, strengthening their functioning and enhancing the complementarities among them. This role of the Council is becoming all the more important as we proceed to implement the goals set at Monterrey, Johannesburg and earlier UN meetings in a cohesive and effective way. This year, for the first time, a meeting of the Bureau of ECOSOC with the chairpersons of the functional commissions was organized, followed by a panel discussion with members of the Council. This meeting provided an important forum for coordination and cooperation among the functional commissions, as well as with ECOSOC and contributed to strengthen the relationship between the Council and its commissions.

The Council also looked at the report of its newly established Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It established a support secretariat for the Forum within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This will be important in helping ECOSOC to guide and coordinate the UN system work, and to raise awareness on indigenous issues.

Follow-up to UN conferences and summits

The Council met between the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. Thus one key concern that ran through its session was the follow-up to the commitments made at these conferences, the Millennium Summit and other conferences and summits.

As we move into a phase of implementation of the complex and interrelated goals established at these events, it is essential that the UN shows that it can provide practical orientations on issues that are of utmost concerns. This is even more important at a time when an uncertain economic situation and a rapid globalization process are posing great challenges. The 2002 session of the Council demonstrated that ECOSOC had the ability to do so.

The Council reiterated its commitment to help the General Assembly in furthering the goals established by the Millennium Summit and other major conferences including Monterrey and Johannesburg. In many ways, its work helped advance the practical follow-up to these commitments.

The promotion of integrated responses to major UN conferences and summits is an area where the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should be closely working together. The Council has pursued consistent efforts to promote an integrated follow-up of conferences and on how to best conduct conference reviews. In 2002, it stressed the importance of using fully the existing UN bodies for conference reviews. Many delegations in the General Assembly have supported the establishment of an open-ended ad-hoc working group, under the auspices of the President of the General Assembly, to address the issue in a comprehensive manner, also taking into account the on-going discussion of the reform process.

The policy guidance from the Assembly will assist the Council in its task of promoting coherence in the implementation of conference goals, which are important means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Council notably pursues this task by addressing cross-cutting themes of conferences and guiding the work of its commissions and the UN system on conference follow-up. It thus contributes to the development of a holistic and comprehensive approach in the development agenda emerging from recent conferences.

The Council's July session adopted a resolution on the follow-up to Monterrey. This resolution places particular emphasis on the Council's role in ensuring coherent implementation of the Monterrey Consensus by UN economic and social entities and the system as a whole. The Council is determined to carry out effectively the central role assigned to it in the Monterrey follow-up process. It is currently reflecting on how to best dispense this mandate through its joint meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions. Last year's spring meeting reflected on how this could be done - for the first time, WTO was actively engaged in that meeting together with the BWIs and other stakeholders of the Monterrey process. For next year, we are currently thinking to extend the meeting to a

day. Forums with NGOs and the private sector could be held prior to the meeting, where civil society could discuss with representatives of the BWIs and the UN on issues addressed at the ECOSOC meeting.

Peace-building and conflict prevention

Another area where we need to mobilize our efforts to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration is peace-building and conflict prevention. In response to a request by the General Assembly, the Council agreed to establish - during its 2002 substantive session - an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict. The Group will aim to examine the humanitarian and economic needs; to review relevant programmes of support; to prepare recommendations for a long-term programme of support that integrates relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in a comprehensive approach; and to provide advice on ensuring the adequacy and coherence of international assistance. This is a concrete step taken by the Council to strengthen its contribution to an integrated approach to peace-building and development. Guinea-Bissau was the first country to request that such an Advisory Group be formed. I would like to stress that the criteria for the composition of the Group were not based on regional representation, but on the need to have a small and efficient representation of countries that can contribute the most to addressing the situation in Guinea-Bissau. On 25 October 2002, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau was established by ECOSOC. It already visited Guinea-Bissau and it will submit a report on its recommendations to the Council by mid-January 2003. In performing its task, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau will closely cooperate with Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

The year 2002 was indeed marked by increased interaction between ECOSOC and the Security Council. I addressed the Security Council four times. Most recently, in October, I had the opportunity to speak at the Security Council Public Meeting on Cooperation between the UN System and the Central African Region in the Maintenance of Peace and Security as well as the Public Meeting on Women, Peace and Security. The President of the Security Council addressed ECOSOC, for example, on the recent commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Mozambique. We intend to continue this interactive exchange in the future, especially, as we are increasingly aware of the close linkages between peace, security - including terrorism - and issues of economic and social development.

Cooperation between ECOSOC and the General Assembly

In addition to conference follow-up and the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Countries Emerging from Conflict, many other outcomes of the Council are of key relevance to the work of the General Assembly - such as on human rights, social development, gender mainstreaming, to mention only a few. They will help the second and third committees in their work.

A more substantive and interactive relationship is developing between the Assembly and the Council. This relationship should help in providing practical orientation to the international community in the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. In this regard, it will be important to maximize synergies between ECOSOC and the Second Committee. My experience as President of ECOSOC has shown me the potential of ECOSOC is meeting many of the core concerns of the international community. The charisma, the convening power, the sense of engagement that have been the hallmark of the UN conferences of the 1990s can be captured in ECOSOC. The session and the high-level segment engaged an impressive roster of ministers and policy makers, development partners and organizational decision-makers. Ministerial roundtables facilitated an interactive exchange on topics related to the goals of the Millennium Summit.

The process to reform ECOSOC, in follow-up to the coordination segment, is continuing under the leadership of the Bureau. The work of the Council could still be made more efficient. One important condition in that regard is to decide as early as possible on the themes for the Council's high-level and coordination segments to allow sufficient time for their preparations, including the organization of roundtables and panels. Another area where the Council needs to further improve its work is its relationship with the BWIs. This is crucial for the BWIs as well as for the Council as a more efficient relationship between these two bodies can be the basis for broader-based and more inclusive global economic decision making. Still, we should recognize that the Council has improved its work tremendously in recent years. It is certainly not - if it ever was - a ceremonial body. It is a body that is active throughout the year- through its roundtables, panel discussions and the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

Let me conclude. The substantive session of ECOSOC showed us that it is possible, given the political will of its membership, to strengthen its role and efficiency of its work. During the current General Assembly there is a sense of expectation that overall work on strengthening the organization will get new energy and impetus. ECOSOC, for its part, will be actively supporting this process within its area of competence.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council to the Assembly.