

1 July 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC**

Mr. President of the Economic and Social Council,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Esteemed Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you today in Geneva at the opening of the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council.

I would like to thank my good friend, President Nestor Osorio, for the invitation to address this important meeting, and take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to his commitment to strengthen ECOSOC.

The General Assembly and this Council have a long-standing tradition of cooperation, which has been intensified over the course of the 67th Session. Together with the Secretary-General—whose leadership is held in high regard—we are working closely together on a number of issues of common interest, including our Organization's ongoing reform and revitalization efforts.

Excellencies,
The way we advance these endeavors will influence much of the United Nations' work for decades to come, helping to shape the future course of international relations.

The contours of a new, more complex global compact are emerging. One of its defining features is the ever-increasing interdependence, brought about by the inexorable convergence of markets, peoples, technologies, and forms of communication across national borders.

This will require a stronger commitment by Member States to work in concert to face a multiplying number of challenges, in order to advance the greater good of the world.

At the same time, we are witnessing a rise in geopolitical uncertainty. Both the quantity and frequency of occurring flashpoints across the world is on the upsurge, leading to a general decline in the predictability of outcomes.

It is against such a backdrop that world leaders came together a little over a year ago in Rio de Janeiro to adopt the historic “Future We Want” document, which set the framing principles of the post-2015 agenda.

They outlined a holistic vision, premised on a symbiotic relationship between the three dimensions of sustainable development—namely economic, social, and environmental. Success or failure in one will reinforce the same trend in the other two.

They conferred new mandates upon the General Assembly, assigning to us the responsibility of converting the global aspirations they proclaimed into practical actions.

We now have a little over nine hundred days to carry out these tasks. They include conceiving and adopting the Sustainable Development Goals; designing options for financing them; and establishing the institutional foundation for a workable High-level Political Forum to Follow-up on the Implementation of Sustainable Development.

This last one is perhaps the most complex and sensitive of the workstreams to emerge from the Rio+20 Conference, for in my view, the post-2015 agenda will only become a reality once the world agrees on mechanisms to scrutinize the enactment of the SDGs that must be “global in nature and universally applicable to all countries.”

Last week, the two facilitators I appointed to fulfill this task—the Permanent Representatives of Brazil and Italy—reported a breakthrough in consultations regarding the future role of the High-level Political Forum.

According to the text of the draft resolution—which I scheduled for adoption in the General Assembly on July 9th—the Forum will replace the Commission on Sustainable Development, a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, while building on its strengths, experience, resources and inclusive participation modalities. Its annual meetings—comprising a ministerial segment, as well—will be held under the auspices of ECOSOC, and chaired by the Council’s President. Starting in 2016, the Forum will conduct regular reviews on the follow-up and implementation of the SDGs. Its results will form part of a ministerial declaration that will be included in the annual ECOSOC report to the General Assembly for approval, in the form of a resolution.

Excellencies,

I believe the agreement reached on the High-level Political Forum paves the way for the review process on reforming ECOSOC to come to a rapid conclusion. The co-facilitators I have appointed for this purpose—the Permanent Representatives of Belgium and Guyana—have produced a draft which has been circulated to Member States for further comment. I hope that the text can be finalized before September, in time for the General Assembly to adopt it by the end of the 67th Session.

I take this opportunity to respectfully urge delegations to keep working closely together on setting the parameters of the 21st century ECOSOC. In the time ahead, I will closely follow progress in the consultations, and stand ready to help.

Excellencies,

I believe a more dynamic Council, making fuller use of its powers under the Charter, can make an even stronger contribution to the work of the General Assembly.

One important area of complementarity of our work is reflected in the choice of topic for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review—namely the role of science, technology, innovation and culture in attaining the MDGs and promoting the development agenda more broadly.

During the 67th Session, I have organized numerous high-level events on these issues. I hope their respective conclusions can serve as valuable reference points in the Council's deliberations.

For instance, we organized four workshops on the scientific and technological needs of developing countries in the context of poverty eradication. The first two were held at the end of April, and focused on how to strengthen national R&D capacities in fields such as agriculture and renewable energy. The second pair took place in late May, providing an opportunity for participants to discuss how technology transfer and enhanced international cooperation could help LDCs achieve sustainable development.

On May 16th, I convened the General Assembly for a thematic debate on Sustainability and Climate Change: the Energy – Water Nexus. We explored how environmental degradation, growing populations, and increasing consumption needs are putting increasing stress on water supplies and energy production, which are becoming more interrelated and require practical and cost-effective solutions.

The General Assembly considered the topic of Culture and Development on June 12th. We exchanged views on the impact of cultural heritage and creativity on efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, reduce social inequalities, tackle unemployment, and conserve the environment.

A few days ago, on June 26th, I chaired a thematic debate on Entrepreneurship for Development. Participants spoke of the need for empowering socially-conscious entrepreneurs to harness innovative scientific and engineering technologies in order to create paradigm-changing products and services.

Excellencies,

Today, ECOSOC begins a month of intensive work that will touch upon many of the most important competencies it shares with the General Assembly.

Thursday's thematic debate on how the Council can help elaborate the post-2015 agenda thus comes at an opportune moment.

I believe your conclusions could provide valuable inputs for the Special Event to Follow-up on Efforts towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which will be held on September 25th, during the High-level Segment of the General Debate of the 68th Session.

It will be the final occasion for world leaders to decide on actions to be taken to complete the MDG process, and for them to provide guidance to the Secretariat and other stakeholders on the priorities they will need to focus on as the deadline approaches.

In my view, the Special Event's outcome document should provide a roadmap for how to effectuate a smooth transition from the MDGs to the SDGs.

Member States have yet to reach an agreement on this critical issue. I respectfully urge all stakeholders to seize this opportunity, and craft a concluding text that clearly points the way forward.

In my view, the MDGs need to fold into the emerging SDGs framework. By 2015, we should have a single, integrated development framework, not two parallel tracks.

Excellencies,

Without more efficient and coherent multilateral engagement, the international system is in a danger of running adrift.

I believe a revitalized General Assembly and a reformed ECOSOC, by combining their efforts through building a more substantive and interactive relationship, can lead the United Nations in setting the world on a more equitable, prosperous, and environmentally sound path.

We need to fully restore confidence in the capacity of this Organization to deliver on its promise, contained in the Preamble of the Charter, to “employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.”

This generation must accomplish something for which our experience has ill prepared us. We must become more selfless, greater in spirit, larger in outlook—otherwise, we shall not be able to effectively address the needs of humanity in the 21st century.

As we reflect on our further steps, we may draw inspiration from the words of one of the world's greatest statesman, Nelson Mandela, a heroic figure whose political legacy and moral weight has left a lasting mark on our times.

“Our human compassion,” he said, “binds us the one to the other—not in pity or patronizingly—but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common [predicament] into hope for the future.”

Whether we succeed may well stand or fall depending on whether we have enough compassion and strength to transform the hope for a better world we all share, into a tangible strategy to achieve the universal transition to sustainability.

Thank you very much for your attention.