

30 March 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
Integration Segment**

Delivered by H.E. Mr. Einar Gunnarsson, Permanent Representative of Iceland, on behalf of H.E. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly

H.E. Mr. Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

H.E. Mr. Perry Gladstone Christie, Prime Minister of the Bahamas

H.E. Mr. Stefan Lofven, Prime Minister of Sweden

H.E. Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Vice-President of ECOSOC

Mr. Deputy Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, to address the Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council, focusing on the theme “Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”.

As we formulate an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda, the theme is both important and timely. To realise the overarching objectives of the new agenda, namely poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development, creation of opportunities for employment and jobs for all will be essential. This session provides a valuable opportunity for in-depth discussions on this important issue.

Excellencies,

In spite of notable progress towards reducing poverty over the last decade, unemployment has increased globally, particularly since the global economic and financial crisis of 2008.

Currently, over 200 million people worldwide are unemployed, and the figure is expected to rise in the coming years according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Nearly 900 million workers are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the US 2 dollars a day poverty threshold. Women and youth continue to be disproportionately affected by unemployment, while income inequality continues to worsen in most countries.

To reduce unemployment and create more quality jobs, we need a holistic and integrated approach. Our efforts to increase employment and job opportunities must be underpinned by the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

For many countries, especially the least developed and developing, this entails structural transformation and diversification of economies, to move away from low labour productivity sectors towards high productive sectors, such as industry and services.

Given that agriculture is a major source of employment in many developing countries, it is crucial to improve agricultural productivity and value-addition in order to increase output and raise incomes for those employed in this sector.

We should also give greater attention to the promotion and expansion of domestic, regional and international trade, which is the engine for growth. Currently, there are worrying trends showing a slowdown of global trade in goods.

In this context, the need for a fair and rules-based trading regime is critical and conclusion of the Doha round trade negotiations which have been ongoing since 2001 is long overdue. It is important to build on the multilateral framework on Trade Facilitation reached at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali in 2013 to boost the multilateral trading system.

There are encouraging trends of growth in tourism, which in 2013 generated earnings of about US\$ 1.4 trillion globally. The impact of tourism on employment is very significant and this goes beyond sectors where tourists directly spend money.

In view of the multiplier effect of tourism and its linkages with many sectors of the economy, development and promotion should be given attention in order to yield the significant dividends in employment creation.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Situations vary from country to country, so we cannot have a universal blueprint or approach to creating employment and decent work for all. Each government has to take into account their own reality and identify the right mix of policies.

At the same time, international coordination of relevant policies, such as macroeconomic and labour market policies is important. For many developing countries, attraction of foreign direct investment, transfer of technology and capacity building are crucial for transforming their economies and improving employment creation capacities.

We need policies that facilitate women's employment, including the promotion of equal pay, gender-sensitive work environments, and equitable opportunities for advancement.

We have to do more to address youth unemployment, as it not only results in significant economic costs, but can also undermine social and political stability. Better education and training systems are needed that combine school-based education with vocational and work-based training, so as to facilitate a smoother transition from school to work. Efforts should also be made to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurship by young people, including through facilitation of access to affordable credit.

I will convene, in conjunction with UNFPA and ILO, a High-level Event on the Demographic Dividend and Youth Employment on June 1, 2015. The event will provide an opportunity for Member States and stakeholders to consider ways of working with governments in countries with a youth bulge, to make the investments needed to reap the demographic dividend, including through employment opportunities for young people.

It is important to ensure that workers are able to operate in safe and healthy conditions and that their rights are protected. Social protection measures, including unemployment benefits, health care should also be developed and improved.

Excellencies,

Environmental sustainability should be a priority in any sustainable growth and development strategy. Studies have found that through adopting the right policies, transitioning to a greener economy can create high quality jobs and may not necessarily equate to job losses.

As we prepare for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July, the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in September, as well as a new global climate change agreement in December, we have a historic opportunity to change our world for the better.

We should redouble our efforts towards the creation of employment opportunities and decent work for all. This is essential to give everyone an opportunity to contribute to and benefit from sustainable development.

Thank you for your kind attention.