

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

Statement by  
MR. SHA ZUKANG  
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
to the  
SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ECOSOC Chamber, NLB, New York, 4 October 2010, 3:00 p.m.

Madam Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Second Committee today. I congratulate you, Madam Chairperson, as well as the members of the Bureau, on your recent elections.

Your work this year – like last year – is framed by the recent global financial and economic crisis. Its reach and scale have had few historical precedents and we are still seeing the fall out....decreased capital inflows.... lower remittances...high unemployment.

During 2009, governments took courageous actions to combat the crisis and avoided a global depression.

Now we are on a path of recovery but it is fragile and uneven. The recovery also appears to have lost momentum in the past few months.

Two major factors are dragging the global recovery: one, the balance sheets in financial institutions and households are still far from sound due to the crisis and two, government stimulus measures are being phased out. Indeed, some governments have enacted fiscal austerity measures. There are concerns that this early retreat from stimulus packages may pose a risk of plunging economies into a new recession.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the global economy in such a delicate state, it is imperative that development needs are central to all fiscal policies and stimuli. In balancing budgets, special efforts must be made to ensure that the social needs of the vulnerable groups are adequately met.

Furthermore, economic uncertainty should not – and cannot – be an excuse for slowing down our development efforts or backing away from international commitments. To the contrary, uncertainty is a reason to speed up delivery on the Gleneagles commitments and the

UN 0.7 per cent aid target. The fall out of the crises must not rest on the backs of people living in already desperate conditions.

Madam Chairperson,

We are meeting after a successful Millennium Development Goals Summit, the high-level review of the Mauritius Strategy for SIDS and the high-level event on biodiversity.

Significant commitments were made on each of the eight Millennium Development Goals by governments, international organizations and by civil society, including \$40 billion in resources pledged for the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health.

The MDG Action Agenda adopted by world leaders provides a roadmap for priority actions to take between now and 2015.

But as we know, the task ahead will be arduous. We will carry out the difficult, tedious and at times overwhelming work necessary for redressing social and economic inequalities and helping countries back on track to meet the MDGs.

As we look ahead, I offer that the challenge we face – the challenge of development – has three major facets that demand our attention.

First, development must be sustainable. Every programme and action plan must take the long-view and be aligned with sustainable development principles.

The sad truth is that despite centuries of spectacular growth on our planet, two billion people live in poverty, many lacking access to basic social services. Five million infants still die every year of preventable diseases. If we continue on our current path we will bequeath poverty, not prosperity, to our children and grandchildren.

Only sustainable development, with its emphasis on inter-linkages between social, economic and environmental challenges, can provide long-term and durable solutions to global crises.

Excellencies,

There has never been a more urgent time to implement sustainable development solutions. I know that you are with me on this. I remind you that the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20, in 2012 is close upon us. It will be a landmark event for renewing commitment, assessing progress to date on sustainable development, identifying new challenges and creating a blueprint for future decades.

The Secretary-General has set up a dedicated secretariat housed in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and has designated me to serve as the Conference Secretary-General. I wish to take this opportunity to assure delegations that I will do my utmost to support Member States in the preparation and organization of the Conference, in close collaboration with

my colleagues in the UN system. We will tap the resources of existing coordination mechanisms, such as the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Group and the Environmental Management Group as we move ahead.

Success, however, will also hinge on further work on the themes of the conference – one, a green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development and two, the institutional framework for sustainable development. We need to hear about your action plans and how to weave them into a viable institutional framework at different levels.

I count on your support in connecting the dots between these issues and Rio+20 in Second Committee deliberations and in all upcoming high-level meetings and forums.

In tandem with preparations for Rio+20, a central priority for DESA in the coming years is MDG implementation. We will assist Member States with capacity development in implementation in five priority areas: social inclusiveness, sustainable development, public administration, official statistics and macroeconomic policy. We will provide advisory services in these areas in response to requests from countries so that our support for capacity development is aligned with specific country needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Lastly, I turn to global governance, the third facet of our development challenge.

The need for effective global economic governance has never been greater. It is driven in part by the growing interdependence across countries due to globalization.

As the Secretary-General has stressed, governments have acted in a spirit of multilateralism. Protectionist measures have largely been avoided. Stimulus packages were enacted. New financing was provided to the IMF and the World Bank.

Most of these measures were taken by the Group of 20, an ad hoc informal grouping, representing large contributors in the global economy.

Some view a limited membership as necessary for effectiveness. More than one third of the world's people and 85 per cent of its countries, however, have no voice in the G20.

Others point to the UN's inclusive, global membership – while conferring legitimacy – as an impediment to timely decisions.

The G20 and the UN can play complementary roles in the ongoing economic recovery. However, on overall global economic governance, the UN has a central role.

I ask for your guidance during the Committee deliberations on this and related issues.

Madam Chairperson,  
Distinguished Delegates,

In closing I reiterate that in our current economic climate, development needs must be at the heart of all financial policies and stimulus measures. If governments treat development needs as after-thoughts we will all pay a heavy price in years to come.

We must also focus on making development sustainable by integrating the three pillars – environmental protection, social development and economic development.

In eighteen months, we will need to deliver an institutional framework on sustainable development to the world. We will need to chart the course for a green economy that promotes sustainable development and poverty eradication. It will help us implement the Millennium Development Goals and map out our post-2015 agenda.

My team and I will do our very best to facilitate your important work.

Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*