

# United Nations

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## Statement by Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to the Closing Session of the Economic and Social Council Geneva, 27 July 2007

Delivered by Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director, Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Economic and Social Council has entered a new era. This substantive session of the Council will be remembered as a turning point. By implementing the vision of the 2005 World Summit, this session has opened new avenues for the work of the Council.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and other members of the Bureau for your leadership and deep commitment to the work of the Council. I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation to delegations for their dedication and collaboration.

There were many new signs this session, from the selection of topical issues, thorough and extensive preparations, and innovative and creative changes in the format of discussions to the new level of engagement by all stakeholders, stronger partnerships through the innovation fair, and interactive and candid discussions. We need to build on these innovations. ECOSOC's actions for implementation of the UN development agenda should be clear and unambiguous.

The first Annual Ministerial Review, with a special focus on the issue of eradication of poverty and hunger, exceeded all expectations. I believe that the excellent national voluntary presentations by Bangladesh, Barbados, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Ethiopia and Ghana provided us with vivid details of the challenges and opportunities that countries are confronting in realizing this goal. There were five clear messages. Firstly, national development strategies are working but not at the pace required. We need to accelerate and scale-up the implementation process. Secondly, the global partnership should be made more effective in all its dimensions. Third, the global economic environment should be made pro-development and pro-poor. Fourth, monitoring the implementation of commitments and accountability should be strengthened. Finally, emerging threats — like climate change and desertification — that hamper efforts to realize these goals, should be addressed urgently.

The Council this year found creative ways of approaching the most topical issue of climate change. It was not only the candid discussions at the panel during the high-level segment but also, Mr. President, your personal initiative to bring key policy makers together for a useful discussion that have opened new possibilities for the Council's work in this and other areas. We need to build on these efforts and ensure that the Council becomes an effective forum for deliberations on such challenges.

We also examined ways of making our development cooperation more effective, coherent and coordinated. The official launch of the Development Cooperation Forum marked our first collective step in filling this gap. I was heartened by the spirit in which Member States welcomed the Forum as an inclusive and universal platform which has the potential to increase the impact of development cooperation on the internationally agreed development goals. We need to work collectively to realize this potential.

There are four clear messages that have come out of the discussions during the Forum's launch this year.

Firstly, a key challenge in cooperating for development lies in making the process truly country-driven and inclusive. The pursuit of better impact of assistance must be based on national ownership and leadership — while taking into account domestic but also international accountability.

Secondly, predictable and stable funding coupled with effective monitoring of aid quality should be seen as essential components of efforts to enhance the impact of development cooperation. In this regard, and with concerted effort, the Development Cooperation Forum could become a multilateral forum for discussing aid effectiveness and donor harmonization.

Thirdly, the growing importance of South-South and triangular cooperation cannot be overemphasized. Yet, it is by no means a substitute for North-South cooperation. The Forum can contribute to promoting better understanding of South-South cooperation and put in place appropriate mechanisms to support it.

Finally, broad agreement exists on a number of principles on promoting effective and coherent international development cooperation. The task of the 2008 Forum will be to offer strong analysis and provide guidance. We will have to do that in close coordination with the Financing for Development processes leading up to the Doha review conference in 2008.

The spirit of partnerships was a defining feature of the substantive session. The practical reflection of partnerships was shown by exhibitors at the first-ever Innovation Fair. There, a dozen UN-system organizations, several NGOs and private sector entities exhibited practical solutions for the reduction of hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The Fair has made it manifestly clear that ECOSOC *can* attract key actors on such issues. I hope that future Innovation Fairs will become the hub for promoting partnerships for implementing the UN development agenda.

Mr. President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The other segments of the Council covered a wide range of issues, from employment generation, humanitarian operations and the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) to countries emerging from conflict.

The 2006 Ministerial Declaration has truly mobilized the UN system and governments in making employment and decent work a central objective of their policies and activities. The development of a toolkit is just one example of the follow-up activities that the UN system has undertaken. This augurs well for strengthening linkages between the high-level and coordination segments of the Council and shows how normative work should be translated into practical implementation.

The Council's work in the humanitarian segment has moved from strength to strength. Clear guidance has been provided by the Council on capacity-building of national, local and regional organizations; broader partnerships among humanitarian organizations; the incorporation of a gender perspective in humanitarian operations; and the need to improve humanitarian stand-by capacities. The Council had a constructive discussion on the use of military assets in natural disaster response. We now need to adopt a regular practice for turning to the Council whenever major natural disasters occur. This would be a step towards the implementation of its mandate to address these emergencies.

This year is one for TCPR and thus an important policy year for the UN's operational activities. A number of themes emerged in our discussions, which will inform the debates of the General Assembly. These include the importance of national ownership and leadership of UN operational activities; further improving support to transition from relief to development through better coordination with peacebuilding efforts and more sustainable funding, and, above all, the importance of increased and more stable and predictable core resources.

By extending the mandates of the Ad-hoc Advisory Groups on Haiti and Guinea-Bissau, the Council has once again established the unique contribution it can make to the long-term development of such countries. I believe that the Council's work in this area can and should contribute to enriching the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. I will work with members of the Bureau in further strengthening the ties between the two bodies.

The Council has had a successful session, and this would not have been possible without the active support of civil society. I would like to thank the Swiss Government and CONGO for helping organize the Civil Society Development Forum prior to the high-level segment of ECOSOC, which was attended by more than 500 participants. Civil society brings great energy to ECOSOC. Please continue this involvement.

While congratulations are clearly due, a number of challenges remain. There is no cause for complacency. We should consider this year's success as a first step on the road ahead. I would like to draw attention to some of the issues that require urgent action.

First, the innovation, energy and dynamism that we have witnessed in the high-level segment need to permeate other segments as well, particularly the general segment. We need to think together as to how to make this segment more engaging and productive.

Second, we need to decide on the multi-year programme of work for the Annual Ministerial Review, as it holds the key to the success of future Reviews. We need sufficient lead time for making thorough preparations, as does the entire ECOSOC system, including UN system organizations.

Third, we would welcome early volunteers for the National Presentations during the Reviews. The process is useful both for ECOSOC and for the volunteering country. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Netherlands for its offer to make a presentation next year. I hope other countries will follow suit.

Fourth, countries should convene regional consultations for the Annual Ministerial Review and symposia for the Development Cooperation Forum, as these would help in broadening the engagement of various actors. I know Egypt is going to host one later this year. But there is a need to expand this process.

Finally, I would like to invite you to work with me in crystallizing the lessons learnt from this session and exploring how can we use these to further improve the work of the Council.

We need to pursue each of these issues with vigour, intensity and a sense of urgency.

Mr. President,

ECOSOC has indeed come a long way. Yet, the real test is how we deliver on our promise of improving the lives of millions of people around the world. That remains the paramount challenge. ECOSOC has changed — and, as home to all development actors, it should become the platform to make the changes for economic and social progress everywhere.

I wish you all a restful summer.

Thank you.