



Statement by
H.E. MR. LEO MERORES
PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE REPORT
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL FOR 2008
New York, 3 November 2008

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to introduce the 2008 report of the Economic and Social Council (A/63/3).

The Council's Substantive Session in July took place at an important juncture. It was a transition year for ECOSOC, which has now operationalized many of the new functions given to it by the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in particular the biennial Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) and the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) of the international development goals.

Today, allow me to briefly highlight the key outcomes of the Council's work so far and then focus on the future, including the steps forward.

We began the year with the annual Special High-level Meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD. The meeting made an important contribution to the preparations of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, which will be held in Doha, Qatar from 29 November to 2 December 2008.

Turning to the High-level Segment, the 2008 DCF, including its series of preparatory meetings, was a success. Given the broad mandate, an important objective of the preparations for the first DCF was to establish the Economic and Social Council as a principal forum for global dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation. Secondly, the aim was to contribute to the outcome of key intergovernmental processes such as the upcoming Doha Review and the recently concluded Accra Forum. These objectives have been achieved with several policy messages of the DCF reflected in the Accra Action Agenda.

A number of factors account for the preliminary success of the DCF, including the perceived quality of the high-level symposiums held under the auspices of the Forum; the professionalism and political balance of the analytical work, including the Secretary-

General's report; the ability to attract key development cooperation actors; and the strong public support from stakeholder groups such as parliamentarians, civil society and local governments. The DCF, in fact, is seen as having established comparative advantage in organizing multi-stakeholder consultations on aid issues.

While progress has been made in building political support for and ownership of the DCF by the whole range of stakeholders, the Forum also faces several challenges. One is to strengthen the 'distinct identity' of the DCF as a leading global forum for dialogue among senior policy-makers dealing with development cooperation at the country-level. A related challenge is to further raise awareness of the DCF amongst practitioners at the country-level, especially since adding experiences from the local level to the debate at the global level is a particular comparative advantage of the Forum.

It is important that the preparations for the 2010 DCF further strengthen the Forum's contribution to international development cooperation. An important policy recommendation of the 2008 DCF was that the Forum should play a key role as an international mutual accountability mechanism that would draw together analysis of progress in national and global-level mutual accountability processes. For the 2010 DCF to be able to advance the global dialogue on this important issue, it is important that Member States and other stakeholders actively participate in the upcoming preparatory process.

The 2008 AMR focused on sustainable development, which encompasses economic growth, social development and environmental protection. It helped spur the efforts of countries to implement the global consensus on sustainable development at the national level and provided practical guidance to assist in those efforts. The Review also served to advance the on-going work on climate change. This was also bolstered by the Climate Change and Development event organized in the run up to the substantive session. This meeting discussed ways on how developing countries can cope with climate change and how to reduce the world's carbon footprint.

The National Voluntary Presentations (NVP) during the AMR continue to be seen by Member States as a very important mechanism for strengthening accountability for fulfillment of development goals. This year brought presentations from developed countries, namely Belgium, Finland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, which discussed lessons from their development policies and programmes. Chile, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, and Tanzania shared both their success stories and the specific constraints to implementation at the country level. The success of the AMR as a collaborative review mechanism is reflected in the large number of volunteers for 2009 and 2010.

The impact and visibility of the High-level Segment were enhanced by an extensive series of side-events such as AMR Innovation Fair, Ministerial Breakfasts and panel discussions, organized by Member States, entities of the UN system, and non-Governmental stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. Together, those served to promote and catalyze tangible, multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementing the international development agenda.

The 2008 High-level Segment concluded with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration. It underscored the need for urgent, collective and collaborative action by all members of the international community to address global financial turmoil, rising food and fuel prices, environmental degradation and climate change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many other outcomes of the Council's Substantive Session are of key relevance to the work of the General Assembly. They will assist, I am sure, the Second and Third Committees in their work.

First, ECOSOC is entrusted with the follow-up to the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development (TCPR). As called for by the Council, the UN system is now proceeding with the implementation of the Assembly's resolution on the TCPR and the resolution adopted by ECOSOC this summer gave new impetus to these efforts.

Secondly, Member States recognized and encouraged the ongoing strengthening of humanitarian coordination, particularly on partnerships, funding, leadership capacity for the field and through gender mainstreaming in humanitarian assistance. Member States underlined the importance of national capacity building, disaster preparedness and risk reduction as well as strengthened legal disaster relief frameworks. Member States also reacted to the reality in the field by condemning the increased attacks against humanitarian personnel, urging the persecution of perpetrators.

The Council has now started to convene emergency sessions, such as the one on the global food crisis this year. The time may have come to adopt a regular practice for turning to the Council whenever major emergencies occur. The Council organized a meeting on the Food Crises, which was very well attended.

Thirdly, the Council's role in peacebuilding and post-conflict development was also recognized and received unwavering support from Member States. The extension of the mandate of the Ad-hoc Advisory Group on Haiti is a manifestation of the confidence that Member States placed in the Council's role of supporting the country's long term development.

The Council's informal discussion on possible modalities of interaction between ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission, using the framework of the work of its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, generated a general consensus on the need to further explore how to bring development work into the Peacebuilding Commission and how to bring the peace and security dimensions of peacebuilding into the work of ECOSOC. In my view, the time has come to clarify the relationship between the PBC and ECOSOC and to define the modalities for their interaction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Council intends to expand the range of stakeholders that the United Nations can partner with in promoting the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Its Philanthropy Event discussed how corporate philanthropy can contribute to advancing the MDGs, particularly for sustainable development. The Council intends to further expand its outreach to the philanthropic community and could continue discussions how to facilitate the growth and flow of philanthropic resources on a global basis and the possible establishment of a UN Philanthropy Day as a way to mobilize interest and support for philanthropy world-wide.

My experience as President of ECOSOC has shown me that the convening power and the spirit of engagement that have been the hallmark of the UN conferences are captured in ECOSOC. The Council has opened new vistas of cooperation among various stakeholders. I find this an encouraging sign. The Council has great potential for becoming the Forum for promoting collaborative action in the pursuit of current crises. I urge you to utilize this potential to its fullest.

Thank you.
