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**Opening statement by
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PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 2008 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
New York, 30 June 2008**

Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the opening of this year's ECOSOC's substantive session. We are honoured to have a number of distinguished guests here with us today.

This session of the Council is of special significance, particularly for two reasons. First, we are for the first time operationalizing all new functions of ECOSOC mandated by the 2005 World Summit. Secondly, we are meeting at a time when the world is grappling with emerging threats to the wave of prosperity and economic growth that we witnessed over the last decade or so.

In the wake of the rising price of food and fuel, the deepening credit crisis and persisting global imbalances, the declining growth of the world economy, we are facing serious threats to our efforts to lift people out of poverty growth. This crisis situation is further compounded by the challenges posed by climate change. The disruptive effects of climate change are already becoming apparent. This does not augur well for efforts to achieve the IADGs, including the MDGs.

Challenges for developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States are even more serious. There are risks of reversal of the gains made in the area of development over the last decade or so. In fact, some of the countries are

Linking the discussion of policy options to specific country experiences have resulted in a more hands-on debate. The National Voluntary Presentations during the AMR provide an opportunity to share an assessment of the volunteering country's progress towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and explore possibilities for addressing the lags in implementation. This year's AMR is also a manifestation of the growing partnership between developed and developing countries, especially in the pursuit of MDGs. This is perhaps for the first time that in multilateral forum we have both developed and developing countries reviewing their efforts to realize the development goals in a timely manner. While they have their respective roles in this endeavour, this partnership is a key to our success in achieving these goals. I believe that both developed and developing countries have to assume their obligation in our collective pursuit of prosperity for all. This long cherished goal can only be realized through strengthened global cooperation.

I would like to congratulate governments of Belgium, Chile, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Luxembourg, Kazakhstan and Finland for volunteering this year. We look forward to their presentations and hope their presentations would pave the way for further strengthening the global partnership for development.

This year's AMR is also enriched by a regional perspective from West Asia. The regional consultation graciously hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has produced recommendations for action on sustainable urbanization.

By systematically drawing upon regional consultations and country level assessments, the AMR will help bridge the gap between "where we ought to be" and "how much more we have to go". I am confident that the global discussions enriched by regional and national contributions will help in promoting the integration of the three elements of sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The DCF is envisioned as an inclusive United Nations Forum for ensuring coherence in development cooperation to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. At a time of growing uncertainty regarding the timely realization of the Millennium Development Goals, the DCF is uniquely placed to facilitate policy dialogue among a wide range of development actors. Therein lies its potential to be a leading venue for inclusive global dialogue and policy review on key development cooperation issues.

The Stakeholder Forum in Rome and the high-level symposiums in Vienna and Cairo engaged parliamentarians and high-level representatives from civil society and local governments in an open and interactive dialogue on their roles in contributing to effective

development cooperation. I thank the Governments of Italy, Austria and Egypt for hosting these important events.

The innovative modalities of cooperation established for the AMR and DCF have brought renewed dynamism into the implementation of development goals, by promoting greater interaction among the different constituencies. The inclusion of civil society organizations, parliamentarians as well as local government and private sector representatives is essential in sustaining the engagement and commitment of all stakeholders in bridging the implementation gap. The E-discussions, the