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**Statement by
H.E. MR. LÉO MÉRORÈS
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Opening of the Development Cooperation Forum
New York, 30 June 2008**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a milestone as we gather to hold the first Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) of the Economic and Social Council. We are inaugurating what will become a standing high-level policy dialogue on development cooperation engaging developed and developing countries and the range of development cooperation actors under the aegis of the United Nations.

When they created the DCF in 2005, world leaders assigned to it the responsibility to review trends in development cooperation, promote coherence among the different development activities of the different development partners and strengthen the normative and operational link in the work of the United Nations. UN Member States also mandated it to identify gaps and obstacles in development cooperation and make recommendations to make it more coherent and effective in pursuing the Internationally Agreed Development Goals. This is a broad responsibility that we all have to face together. The DCF has thus to analyze, help in understanding and promote broad based action by a range of stakeholders to enhance development cooperation effectiveness.

The creation of the DCF comes at a time when there has been a dramatic change in development cooperation. The architecture of development cooperation is becoming more complex, and is being pulled in differe

earlier this month in Rome with the support of the Government of Italy. Its theme was the role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness.

This preparatory process also demonstrated that the special value added of the DCF lies in its multistakeholder character. Your participation today shows the ability of the DCF to engage the range of development actors, governments from developed and developing countries, bilateral development cooperation agencies, foundations, global funds, NGOs, the private sector and regional and international organizations. Because of this, the voice of the DCF is unique, building as it does on so many different perspectives. Another special characteristic of the DCF is the fact that it is a Forum. We do not expect formal statements to be made. We expect a frank and thought provoking debate on development cooperation issues.

This objective has guided the preparation of the programme for this DCF. We have a rich programme ahead of us, with keynote addresses and parallel interactive special policy dialogue sessions. We will have the opportunity to debate issues ranging from the allocation of aid and national capacities for absorption of aid to South-South and triangular cooperation and the role of civil society in increasing the impact of development cooperation. We will also dedicate a session to the exchange of national experiences on how development aid supports national development strategies. We will hold a special policy dialogue on aid effectiveness, which will serve to define our input to Doha and Accra.

Our discussions will thus cover a rich array of issues. I will capture the gist of your debate throughout this Forum in a Summary, which will also serve as the input of the DCF into the negotiations for the Accra process and the Doha Conference.

Beyond specific thematic issues, we also have to reflect on the future of the Development Cooperation Forum. As soon as this ECOSOC session is over, we will start preparing for the next DCF in 2010. This year, we should provide some guidance on how best to develop the role of the DCF.

One aspect will relate to the follow-up to this week's discussions on aid. You might like to consider whether the DCF might need to take a greater on-going role in reviewing progress in scaling up aid, mutual accountability and aid effectiveness. The need for a Forum to undertake such a task has emerged in the negotiations of the Accra Action Agenda.

There are many other tasks ahead of the DCF. A range of other development cooperation issues need urgent attention. These include access to science and technology for development. We must also remember that the DCF was asked by the General Assembly to undertake a regular review of international economic and development policies and their impact on development.

With the increase in food prices, climate change and the current economic slowdown, it is abundantly clear that we need a place to debate the impact of such crises on development cooperation and to determine the steps to address negative impacts. I see a crucial role for the DCF in undertaking that task.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us use the rest of today and tomorrow to come up with bold and innovative ideas and recommendations that can have a resounding impact on the approach to development cooperation and on the situation of developing countries. Let us show that the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council have a unique contribution to make in the debate on development cooperation.

Thank you.
