

New UN Economic and Social Council president outlines priorities



Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro (left) and outgoing ECOSOC President Hamidon Ali (right) congratulate Lazarous Kapambwe of Zambia

18 January 2011 – The newly-elected President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Lazarous Kapambwe of Zambia, today outlined the body’s agenda for the coming year and pledged to work to strengthen its effectiveness in carrying out the United Nations’ global development agenda.

“I represent the region that is lagging behind the most in terms of development in all socio-economic sectors and I pledge to do my best to ensure that Africa’s challenges as well as all other regions are tackled in the best way possible by the Council,” Mr. Kapambwe, the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the UN, told ECOSOC in his acceptance speech.

In his remarks, Mr. Kapambwe said that ECOSOC needed to accelerate its review and coordination of the implementation of the eight Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.

He also noted that ECOSOC could benefit from contributions to its work by international academia and institutions, such as parliaments, local governments and national and regional economic and social councils.

Mr. Kapambwe was [elected](#) ECOSOC's sixty-seventh president at an organizational meeting of the Council today. ECOSOC is the United Nations' principal organ to coordinate economic, social, and related work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions. It serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to member states and the UN system.

Mr. Kapambwe stressed the importance of promoting closer collaboration between the Council and its functional commissions, and better linking of its work with that of the executive boards of UN funds and programmes, as well as other UN regional entities, in order to enhance the UN's system-wide coherence.

On the issue of peacebuilding, Mr. Kapambwe indicated that ECOSOC has a clear role to play in strengthening the link between post-conflict situations and development.

"I intend, during my tenure, to pursue as a priority the deepening of the dialogue between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, through more regular joint bureau meetings," he said. The Peacebuilding Commission is an intergovernmental advisory that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

Mr. Kapambwe pointed out that climate change has exacerbated the threat of natural disasters to development, peace and security – making it imperative that ECOSOC pay close attention to the connections with its policy making and coordinating roles.

On efforts to aid Haiti, which is dealing with the effects of the January 2010 earthquake, a cholera epidemic which erupted in October and political turmoil following elections late last year, the ECOSOC president said he was committed to ensuring that Haiti remained on top of the Council's agenda.

"We look forward to future recommendations of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on how the UN system, in collaboration with the international community, can strengthen its support of a Haitian-led recovery process," Mr. Kapambwe said.

[Addressing](#) the ECOSOC meeting, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro noted ECOSOC's experience and expertise in a wide spectrum of UN concerns, including climate change, human rights, humanitarian crises, global poverty and underdevelopment.

"You can help us make the most of this year's strategic opportunities," she said, adding that despite progress made towards achieving the MDGs, one billion people still live in extreme poverty and five million infants still die every year of preventable diseases.

"In order to create a more stable and prosperous world for future generations, we need durable solutions based on a sustainable approach that links social, economic and environmental challenges," said Ms. Migiro, noting that ECOSOC is critical to the process thanks to its ability to bring many partners to the table and promote wider engagement on all levels.

“All of our efforts must be underpinned by a strong United Nations. That is why this year is also a time to continue strengthening the United Nations from within,” the Deputy Secretary-General said. “This Council can provide effectiveness where it counts – in the field, on the ground where we operate, in areas blighted by poverty, war and natural disasters.”

In his remarks to the meeting, the outgoing president of ECOSOC, Hamidon Ali of Malaysia, outlined the Council’s successes over the past year, highlighting, among other accomplishments, the recognition that gender equality is not only a development goal in itself, but a means towards achieving other globally agreed development priorities, including the MDGs.

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