

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Milos Koterec**

President of ECOSOC

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development

Rio+20 Summit

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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**Mr/Madame Chair**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It's a privilege to be here today — and a pleasure to speak to you in this delightful city.

To Her Excellency the President of this esteemed country, her government and people, I convey deepest thanks for hosting this meeting. Much effort has gone into the preparations, with already visible, excellent results.

Much has been said and written, too, about the first Rio Earth Summit — and rightly so, for its achievements were many.

It crafted 3 new conventions designed to safeguard the global environment. No less decisively, Rio 1992 helped articulate the core principles of the sustainable development agenda:

1. That environmental protection must be part of the promotion of development, rather than a check on it.
2. That poverty eradication is central to the process.
3. That while all countries have a responsibility to protect the environment rich nations should shoulder a greater burden.

How then, in 2012, can Rio+20 exert similar lasting influence?

We must, at the very least, dispel any unrealistic hopes. In some areas, of course, there will always be easy “wins” — like improving access to cleaner energy or to safe drinking water, two cases where the interests of human health and the environment overlap.

Yet in still many more areas, however, tradeoffs between promoting development and protecting environment are simply unavoidable. To pretend otherwise is to believe in a silver bullet.

Success in the real world thus depends on making these tradeoffs explicit in policymaking: factoring economic cost-benefit into environmental laws; integrating environmental tradeoffs into economic development; ensuring, above all, that

we leave future generations with the capacity to live as well as we do today.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

There is another lesson to be drawn from past conferences: such occasions offer tremendous impulse to the lingering urge to create ever-more international structures, treaties, and institutions.

This time around, let's resist that urge. Instead, we need institutions which encourage policymakers to come together, to acknowledge the tradeoffs, to make hard decisions and to better guide development actions.

Happily, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Many of these institutions already exist. Let's strengthen them, accentuating their positives, eliminating their negatives.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council, for its part, has made tremendous strides in recent years on the road to greater efficiency and effectiveness. The “3 pillars” of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — have become firmly entrenched in ECOSOC's work with each passing day.

Long recognized for its unmatched inclusiveness, the Council is also putting its abundant store of good-will to better use:

- We're forging closer ties with the trade and financial institutions, intensifying our dialogue throughout the year.
- We're becoming more innovative and promoting broader engagement. At last month's Youth ECOSOC event, for instance, hundreds of young people gathered to discuss employment challenges. Their priorities, it turns out, are much the same as ours: quality education, green growth, and jobs aplenty.
- ECOSOC is also scaling up outreach to the private sector — through initiatives like our recent Civil Society dialogues or Partnership Event, both of which do splendid work promoting public-private development efforts.

Indeed, the Council's inter-disciplinary expertise and inter-sectoral approach — honed over 60+ years — positions it well to coordinate both international sustainable development responses and the post-2015 development framework.

Likewise, ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review and Development Cooperation Forum have emerged as hubs for global sustainable development policymaking — on everything from jobs, to aid, to science and technology.

In the years ahead, I expect their clout to only continue to rise.

Still, progress should not be mistaken for complacency. On the cause of sustainable development in particular, ECOSOC must do far more. Here's my own plan:

1. Sustainable development merits its very own ministerial-level meeting. This September's ECOSOC Ministerial meeting will hopefully be a watershed.
2. The proposed high level political forum should be created within ECOSOC system. This would give a major boom to the integration efforts.
3. Let's reimagine that the Annual Session, revitalizing it with a series of powerfully compact sessions — neither shorter, nor longer in aggregate, but spread out instead over the course of a full year.

The net result? More focused, productive meetings. Improved monitoring and review of progress in outcome implementation. And, most importantly, the elevation of sustainable development to its rightful place in multilateral dialogue.

Like it or not, the die is cast: we live in a new phase in the Earth's history, one where human influence on the planet now dominates all others.

In such a world, avoiding impact on the environment is no longer an option. Rather, the issue at hand is how to manage that impact: choosing which parts to minimize, which to tolerate, even which to embrace.

In short, better planetary management.

To get there, we'll need more effective institutions, including a stronger Economic and Social Council. A brighter, more prosperous, more sustainable future demands nothing less.

Thank you.