



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

Joint Briefing of the PGA and the President of ECOSOC

20 January 2025

President of the General Assembly,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to join the President of the General Assembly in welcoming you to this joint briefing of the GA and ECOSOC. We are committed to working together to coordinate efforts, align priorities and identify complementary areas where both Charter bodies can respond to world challenges more effectively.

And if I may say so, I really appreciated the President's remarks today and for the close collaboration between the two of us, as well as our offices, on trying to coordinate the work of our two bodies.

Everyone will appreciate that there is a complex choreography to the events that we are describing, and it will take some time to make sure we are working closely together – and I appreciate the President's leadership in this regard – it is very meaningful.

Allow me to begin by recognizing my fellow members of the Bureau of ECOSOC -

- His Excellency Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea;



- Her Excellency Maritza Chan, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica;
- His Excellency Krzysztof Szczerski, Permanent Representative of Poland;
- His Excellency Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal, and all things being well he will be my successor next year.

We work together as a bureau, and we work as a team and the team has been expanded through the election of new members to the Economic and Social Council whose terms began on 1 January. Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Finland, Mexico, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, and Uzbekistan.

Excellencies,

Let me start by reminding all of us that we have five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The world continues to face interconnected crises, including rising inequalities, poverty, hunger, climate change and conflicts. But, with the proper actions we can still put the SDGs on a better track – on a good track. And the collaboration between our two bodies, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, is going to help us make this happen.

Building on the momentum of the Summit of the Future, we continue to mobilize the ECOSOC system to help provide the tools necessary for Member States to achieve the SDGs. The system will also support preparations towards key intergovernmental processes in 2025, such as:

- the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (June 2025), and your teams will be hearing a lot from us on the importance of working together on FfD. We will have numerous opportunities going forward, including meetings with the World Bank, to reinforce the negotiating process for the FfD4;



- the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (March 2025),
- the UN Ocean Conference (June 2025)
- the Second World Summit for Social Development (November 2025).

All of our work will be guided by the overall theme of the 2025 ECOSOC and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) – *“Advancing sustainable inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind”*.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the priorities which I set out in my first speech in July.

One – that we will work to deal with the crisis of the displacement of people we see around the world - because of conflict, climate change, and deep inequalities which means promoting well-managed migration systems and adherence to the international protection of those tens of millions forced to the margins of existence.

Two - we will also shed light on how to harness Artificial Intelligence (AI) to accelerate implementation of the SDGs in a manner that is safe, responsible, inclusive, and based on human rights.

Three - Deepening engagement between the Council and the international financial institutions to address the opportunities and challenges of financing for development will be key. The IFIs are critical and strategic partners given their ability to leverage funds. They provide much-needed financing to emerging economies and developing countries to support economic growth, climate resilience and social development. You can count on me to help ensure better linkages between what



we are doing here in New York and what all the other financial institutions are doing in the UN family. I was told today that there is still some resistance to this idea. I was told by someone today that some regard this as mission creep by the UN, as pushing beyond the limits and boundaries of what the UN General Assembly should be doing. I want you to know that on your behalf I will be stressing the fact that we are in exactly the lane we need to be in. We are on the lane that leads to prosperity, sustainability and greater cooperation to achieve the SDGs. And if the UN cannot do this effectively, then the people of the world will be worse off for it. And looking at it positively, the people of the world will be better off if we can cooperate more effectively at every level.

Finally, Gender equality, the active participation of civil society, and representation of diverse voices, including youth, will be cross-cutting themes across all ECOSOC segments and forums this year.

Excellencies,

Our year begins with the Partnership Forum on 5 February back-to-back with the Council's Coordination Segment (6 and 7 February). For me, it is a key message for the Economic and Social Council starts with something called the Partnership Forum. The Charter makes it clear that civil society organizations play a key role in global development and in the mandate of ECOSOC. So, it's important to recognize at our first meeting that we work in partnership, not only with Member States but with civil society, trade unions, business, and with all the other partners in the UN system.

The ECOSOC Youth Forum, which continues to break participation records, is taking place from 15 to 17 April. Last year was the most attended ever, and this year will be even bigger. For those of you who have not been to this Forum before, this is where the UN comes alive for 3 days.



We then turn to the Development Cooperation Forum (12-13 March), the Special Meeting on International Cooperation on Tax Matters (28 March), and the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum (28-29 April). All of which be focused on building momentum for the 4th FfD Conference to be held in Seville in June.

At the annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum), on the 7th and 8th May, there will then be opportunities for Member States and all stakeholders to share technological innovations and solutions, including AI, to help achieve the SDGs.

This year's Operational Activities for Development Segment (20-22 May), chaired by my colleague from Poland, will engage Member States on the UN development system's implementation of the recently adopted General Assembly on the new quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (QCPR) for the 2024-2028 cycle. This is really a critical heart of what we do. We are asked and required by the Charter to work and coordinate the efforts of all the UN Agencies that are engaged in serving the people.

Then we turn to some meetings in Geneva, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Council, which will be chaired by my colleague from Costa Rica. We think is critically important, because the humanitarian crisis is the gravest we have faced since the Second World War, and we need to understand its full dimensions and what it means.

So, we will have two segments, the Humanitarian Affairs Segment and the Meeting on the transition from relief to development. Both the Humanitarian Affairs Segment and the Transition meeting will be held in Geneva from 18-20 June and 17 June respectively this year.



And then we come to the 2025 HLPF in July will focus on the in-depth reviews of SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). We will also ask 39 of our fellow members to present voluntary national reviews (VNRs), with most countries presenting their third VNR, while several are presenting a fourth review. We need to realize and recognize that the key tests and assessments are made by nation states, and we are asking them to tell us what works and what doesn't work.

And we will have a negotiated a negotiated ministerial declaration co-facilitated by our colleagues Ambassador Kulháněk, of Czechia, and Ambassador King, of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Excellencies,

I would like to take this opportunity to remind delegations that the next review of the Economic and Social Council will take place at the eightieth session of the General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 78/285. The implementation of the recommendations adopted during the review of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies in 2022 will also be considered by the Council at its 2026 session, in accordance with the ECOSOC mandate.

It is very important to ensure coherence between all these processes, which naturally have a technical aspect but also a political component. So, it's important not only for the experts to be present, but also for the permanent representatives to take part - and I'm personally committed to this. It must be recognized that the Economic and Social Council is as important a body of the Charter as other bodies such as the Security Council.



In addition to the regular Council work program I have just outlined, I will be convening special meetings on my priorities.

The first meeting, in the spring, will focus on the displacement crisis. More than 120 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations. Many countries have shown leadership by generously welcoming large numbers of refugees despite resource constraints. But we must do more to support them.

The second meeting in May will focus on artificial intelligence and its impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. We need to focus on how to ensure that AI can serve sustainable development, particularly for developing countries.

Finally, on the calendar, a joint meeting of the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission is also envisaged.

And of course there will be others.

I would like to thank you for joining the special ECOSOC meeting on Haiti on December 2, 2024, which focused on Haitian youth and children.

I issued a call to action to address the urgent need to provide education, including school meals, protect children and young people from violence and threats of gang recruitment, provide healthcare and create economic opportunities for Haiti's youth.

Excellencies,

The adoption of the Pact for the Future document demonstrated our commitment to strengthening multilateralism and international solidarity. These are fundamental values for the United Nations, and I will continue my efforts to promote them.



We have already identified opportunities for the Council to take forward the implementation of actions on sustainable development, financing for development and strengthening the Council. We have also identified other areas where the Council, through its various forums, segments and extensive subsidiary mechanisms, can provide both political guidance and inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms for further debate to foster a common understanding of key issues.

Last month, I appointed the Permanent Representatives of Botswana, Ms Gladys Mokhawa, and Ireland, Ambassador Fergal Mythen, to co-facilitate a process to explore options for revitalizing the Commission on the Status of Women, as called for in the Compact for the Future.

Dear friends,

We know very well that ECOSOC provides a unique and inclusive platform within the United Nations to bring together world leaders, the UN system and civil society to build solutions for sustainable development. Action 43 of the Compact for the Future also commits to strengthening the participation of ECOSOC-accredited NGOs in ECOSOC activities through structured and inclusive engagement, as well as supporting the Youth Forum to stimulate meaningful youth participation and dialogue with member states.

I am pleased to continue to organize monthly meetings between the President of ECOSOC and representatives of civil society to exchange views on the work of ECOSOC and strengthen our efforts to address the global challenges we face today.

Excellencies,



We have a busy session ahead of us. As an organ of the United Nations Charter, the Economic and Social Council is at the heart of the United Nations development system's support for the promotion of collective action for sustainable development.

I myself am counting on your commitment and active participation throughout the many forums, segments and special meetings to strengthen the Council's contribution to accelerating the realization of the 2030 Agenda and monitoring the implementation of the sustainable development strategy.

If I may conclude. Today, is not only the day of the inauguration of a new US President, it also the day that is attached to the memory of the great Martin Luther King Jr. It was Mr King who said in his last speech in Tennessee before he was assassinated that he had been to mountaintop and that while he was still a young man, he was ready to go when God called him. He pointed out that the reason he was ready was that he had played his part in promoting social justice, full economic participation and the need to move to an approach that included partnership, equity, equality, and dignity. He said that he could go at any time because he knew he had made that contribution. We have a common commitment not only to advance the interests of our countries but also of humanity. That is our task, that is our job. We do so not by diminishing our commitments to our own countries but by recognizing that we cannot only put our countries first, we must put the world first, together with our countries. No country is above and beyond the rule of law and multilateralism. We have a commitment to fight for that in this Assembly, in this council, and in these meetings.

I thank you.