



Closing Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment

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Excellencies,
Madame Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate our distinguished Chair, Ambassador Krzysztof Szczerski and his team, for delivering a successful meeting of the Operational Activities Segment of ECOSOC. It was a very productive meeting.

I also thank the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Heads, Resident Coordinators, and Member States for their valuable insights and participation, for taking the time to come.

This year's Operational Activities Segment takes place against the background of uncertainty and continued challenges. Rising conflict – we heard from Robert Piper – with the consequence of displacement internally and externally. Continuing socioeconomic inequalities – made worse by tariffs and the climate crisis. And now, the UN's simultaneous liquidity and funding crises.

It is important to remember the distinction between the two simple concepts. Liquidity because of the failure to pay assessed contributions, which creates an immediate crisis for the United Nations and all of its funding agencies because the United Nations and its agencies cannot borrow money. If you run out of money for the week, you may have a credit card or a line of credit. You may or may not have any of those things, but if not, you're in trouble. We have no other sources of revenue apart from the revenue received from the membership. We're not allowed to take out loans or borrow money, not allowed to float bonds in significant ways. So, we're faced with this challenge.

But, during these past three days of deliberations, it has been clear that the UN system and Member States remain strongly committed to addressing these challenges – they're real challenges – and to accelerate delivery of actions towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



The SDGs are not technical – they’re what I call the common decency of humanity. They’re an expression of the decent things we want for ourselves and the things we also want for others. We take part in the struggles of the life of the world precisely because we know how fundamental and foundational these goals are. They have nothing to do with ideology, unless you consider ending hunger and providing healthcare and education to be somehow a product of some kind of ideology, which is nonsensical.

We have done a lot over the several years in what we call an ongoing, never-ending process of reform and improvement. We heard from the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General about stronger country leadership – I would say, stronger country ownership, of countries taking ownership for their own prosperity and recognizing that one step itself can be quite transformational in the lives of citizens in the world – improved coordination, and a system that is more aligned and more efficient in delivering results on the ground.

We spent a lot of time talking about the RC system. I have to pay tribute to Krzysztof. He’s the one person in our group at the Bureau who said we have got to get the RCs here. We have got to allow them to speak. We have to give them voice to tell us what is going on in the field.

I think we have seen that while there is much more that needs to be done to ensure that the Resident Coordinators are well-resourced and have predictable funding, which is a constant challenge in the UN – we want to make sure they’re able to support the coordination, delivery, accountability and sustainability of the UN system – we have to recognize that we have today is much better than what we had five years ago. And it’s because of the consistent efforts that everyone has made to establish and pay for this system, to allow one UN to become a reality on the ground. I dare say that it is part of the necessary reforms which we will have to continue to make in the months ahead. This principle of making the “one UN” real will become even more of an issue, just as the question of how to make good on the nexus which, to remind everybody who has forgot what it is – peace and security, human development, and human rights – seeing how to pull these three together. We need to deepen the reforms.

This is echoed by the Executive Heads UN leadership, at the regional and country level. We have to capitalize on AI and digitization. We have to make this an organization that is forward leaning when it comes to the application of the latest technologies. We have to continue the efforts we made against sexual exploitation and abuse as well as to ensure robust policies on gender equality, disability, equity, inclusion and access.



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These must continue. Let me repeat the words. Gender quality, disability, equity, inclusion, and access. As your President of ECOSOC, I am proud to repeat those words wherever I go. They are a foundation, again, of what is the common decency. We have to ensure that people are included and how to ensure people have access. If you think there is something radical about those ideas or wrong-headed about the ideas, think about what the opposite of each of these things is. So instead of inclusion, we say exclusion. Who is going to stand around here and say I'm in favor of excluding people from being able to benefit from all the good things in life? I want to make sure people who are in a wheelchair have no access to a building so they can't come in, they can't be in here. I want to make sure we have gender inequality so that men go way ahead of women and stay there for the rest of all time. What kind of nonsensical ideas are these? There is nothing woke about these ideas. They're simple, simply common sense and common decency.

What I like is we hear from ourselves and hear from people in the field. We have heard from Member States. We all, I think, have come together in a remarkable way with common sense ideas and common feelings about country needs, about enhancing cooperation with the IFIs, about improving reporting and increasing accountability and transparency, and trying to find savings and efficiencies in the UN system. These are common threads that have come forward from people working in the field.

Can you see waste? Yes. Is there duplication? Yes. Let's deal with it. There are huge challenges. Gaps in financing are real and will create more problems. We have hurdles still in coordination. We have the need for stronger data and evaluation systems. But we're up to it. We know that differential stages of development require different responses. Above all, we have to ensure that we will have equal and valid ways of concluding and getting to some of the issues as best as we possibly can.

Let me just turn to one last thought that is that it is important for us to overcome our differences in looking at the reform of the international financial architecture, looking at innovative ways to address the debt burden, and looking at how we deal with the cycle of poverty for those people who are struggling. We have to be clear-eyed about the challenges, and while we count on the Secretary-General and the DSG to provide us with vision, we have to accept our responsibilities as Member States in that process. We have to understand that what we do or don't do has consequences not only for this generation, but for future generations.



So let me once again thank the Secretariat, all of the people who are here. Thank our Chair for doing such a great job. Thank the interpreter for the work they're doing and continue to do. And thank all of those panelists, moderators, and Member States for participating.

We certainly have work to do as we go forward. We have challenging times as we deal with the realities of UN80, as well as the challenges of financing for development. I think we have to show ourselves and everyone else that we're up to the challenge.

Thank you so much.