



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

Opening of the 2025 Development Cooperation Forum

12 March 2025

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2025 ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum.

International development remains indispensable to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We have made clear progress on a number of goals even as others remain off-track.

Since 2015, the international development landscape has shifted. Priorities have changed and a growing number of actors have emerged.

It is against this backdrop that we find ourselves in a moment of profound change. International development cooperation must be reformed to deliver effective results and ensure impact in areas where it is needed most.



As we all know, the Secretary General has just sent Member States a letter indicating that reform is the order of the day, as far as the UN is concerned.

In addition, country capacity and domestic resources must be strengthened so that national governments can support their economic development in a truly sustainable fashion. With new innovative financing models and technology, development cooperation offers new opportunities. And yet, in some cases the quantity, as well as quality of ODA must be increased. In addition, the full resources and capacity of the private sector must be harnessed.

The SDG financing gap stands at multiple trillion dollars per year. We know the gap between what is required and what is happening is huge. With limited fiscal space, many developing countries find themselves without the ability to alter their development trajectory. This is why, as President of ECOSOC, I have spoken repeatedly of IFI reform and the need to strengthen the relationship between ECOSOC, the UN System and the World Bank and the IMF. In fact, just last week we



concluded a successful meeting with those institutions. This is especially important as Member States will agree on a new outcome document at the financing for development conference in Seville.

Facing scarcity, we need to ensure that our collective dollars translate into high impact activities that are joined up and mutually reinforcing. Now more than ever there is no place for duplication, inefficiency and competition. For funding, a One UN approach that uses a holistic approach to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus is essential. A renewed look at the UN Development System is needed to create greater coherence.

And I must emphasize that that coherence must include all the multilateral finance institutions, and it has to include the private sector. The notion that is a sole UN project, or a UN and Member State project is false, it must include what the IFIs and private sector are doing at every level.

We must also protect development gains by addressing the drivers of conflict and social inequities as well as the climate



crisis. On the latter, climate finance should be made more accessible, since, despite growing commitments - climate finance remains beyond reach for those who need it most, including those that are disproportionately affected by climate changes' effects, including women and girls.

Its important to stress that development cooperation has to be country-led. We mean quite simply that it's up to nation states to tell us what their priorities are, and its up to us to respect those priorities – because the most successful examples of development have been those that have been led vigorously by states themselves; making difficult decisions about priorities, about internal resources, about savings, about corruption, and illicit financial flows. A top-down approach that is driven by the system won't work.

For many developing economies, especially those facing mounting burdens of debt, there can be no possibility of achieving the SDGs without meaningful changes. And this is hard. In our meetings that week, it was clear to me that there is a profound difference of opinion about the seriousness of



the debt crisis facing many countries and whether or not this a global issue. We have to continue to reinforce the importance of this discussion.

So, we have to discuss how development cooperation can balance immediate crisis response with long-term resilience. The separation between humanitarian crises and development is not as clear cut as it might have seemed. We are now facing humanitarian crises which have been ongoing for decades. In other situations, we are not transitioning from humanitarian needs to development quickly enough.

So, we must move beyond rhetoric, and we want to put country leadership at the heart of our discussions. We need to discuss what it means to support and reinforce country-led coordination, deepen engagement with development partners, and align international support with national strategies.

We have a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to ensure that our resources are allocated effectively, that financing reaches those most in need, and that development



cooperation delivers tangible and measurable results and impact at scale and creates a more sustainable and equitable development system where no one is left behind.

I now declare the 2025 Development Cooperation Forum officially open.

Thank you.