



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

**11th Africa Regional Sustainable Development Forum
(Kampala)**

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Mr. President,
President of Zimbabwe,
and other Ministers who are here,
Mr. Chairman,

Let me thank you for your very kind introduction.

I am very honoured to be able to join all of you. In particular, I want to thank my good friend, Claver Gatete, for organizing the Eleventh Congress which we're having and for the continual work he has done in raising the issues and the importance of what is happening in Africa and what more needs to happen.



We all need to be very clear that unless we can take some extraordinary additional measures, we will not make the progress on the SDGs that we need to make. I want to congratulate President Museveni and his team for not only this conference, but for the ongoing work on the SDGs, which is such an important path to development – not only for Uganda and for Africa, but for the whole world. I congratulate him very much for that.

And I think all of us at the United Nations also recognize that Africa is at the centre now of the ideas, of the initiatives, and of the actions that are going to make sure that the rescue of the SDGs in fact is something that happens. Of course, we have to look beyond 2030. We have to know that things don't



stop in 2030, but we need to know that the progress we are making now – sometimes as difficult as it is – is something that we need to continue to work on together.

First, let's have a reality check on the headwinds we are facing. The climate crisis which is ongoing – and which will be ongoing for the rest of my lifetime and for the lifetime of every single person in this room. Let me say, as the President of ECOSOC, climate change is not a theory. Climate change is not an ideology. Climate change is science. Climate change is a fact, and it is dealing with these facts and this science that we must come together in helping countries to adapt to the changes that are already taking place and in dealing with the



great emissions that continue to come from industrialized countries that continue to contribute to the climate crisis.

I have to say, as a representative of Canada, that the arbitrary cuts that have been made in development assistance by a number of countries, as well as the entirely unnecessary and painful tariff attacks, are having potentially such a disastrous effect on global growth and economic justice. We have to face these challenges together.

And as I say, as a representative from Canada, I can tell you directly, we know something about tariff attacks these days. Our territorial integrity as a country has been questioned. Our nationhood has been questioned, and we know as do all of



you, the right to sovereignty is built into the Charter of the United Nations and the right to economic and social justice and to freer trade is built into our Charter, and everything that we stand for and have been fighting for together.

I want to say to you, many Africans here, your struggle is not only your struggle. The struggle you are facing is a struggle faced by everyone in the world and above all, in difficult times, we must reaffirm the value of one simple thing, and that is solidarity, the solidarity we must show with each other and the solidarity we have to show in our work, in everything that we do.



We know the challenges are great. We know the gap between the finances that are necessary and the finances that are there is great. We know that gap will affect the ability to fight climate change, to deal with adaptation, to lift people out of poverty, to make sure that girls and boys can go to school, that we can find a way to social justice and to better services, and most importantly, to find a way to prosperity.

We know that gap exists, but we must also look to our own resources. Each and every one of us. We cannot take anything for granted. We cannot assume that others will solve our problems for us. And we all know that if we help ourselves, we're more likely to get help from others as we need to move forward.



We're coming up to some important meetings in the ECOSOC cycle and in the cycle of the United Nations. We have a great many meetings, and sometimes people wonder what actually happens at these meetings – do we advance the causes? Do we take the steps that are required?

The meeting that is going to take place in Spain in July is an important one because it is a meeting where we will be making some important decisions on how we go forward in this critical issue of finding the ways to finance development. Financing will come from donor countries. Yes, it must continue to do so. It will also come from private capital and



private investment and business, not only from outside Africa, but businesses inside Africa and inside every country.

It must come from the mobilization of domestic resources.

When we look at those countries that have succeeded in achieving such significant growth over the last 25 years, in each and every case it has come from governments themselves making difficult decisions and being able to mobilize the resources and the savings that are required to make progress.

I just want to say in close, Mr. President, in thanking you very much for this invitation, the importance that we attach in ECOSOC to the meetings that are upcoming, but not just to



the meetings that are upcoming, to the decisions that we must make.

It is not good enough for us alone to say that we would like to see something happen. It is not good enough for us alone to say we want something to happen. It is important for us to know that we need to make something happen.

If I may, let me close with a story, not a long one, about someone whose life has been very difficult and nothing is going right and he now feels he has no obligation, no other alternative, but to turn to the Almighty for assistance.



He says "God, please let me win the lottery. I need to win the lottery, and if I win the lottery, then everything will go well week after week after week after week." He repeats this prayer. One time after making the prayer, skies open up and a loud voice comes out and you can hear it clearly and it says, "dear sir, you have to buy a ticket."

You have to buy a ticket. And that is what we all need to do in our own lives. If you want to succeed, you have to buy the ticket.

At the school I visited yesterday, there was a slogan on the wall. The slogan was this one, which I thought was so great



for children, “the bridge between hope and achievement is disability.”

We know what we have to do. We just need to do.

Thank you so much for this opportunity.