



**Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Bob Rae (Canada)  
President of the Economic and Social Council**

Advancing Health, Gender, Decent Work and Partnerships: From HLPF 2025 to the  
Second World Social Summit

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Let me first of all say that it's a real honor to be with all of you today, and I particularly want to thank the Government of Qatar for the great leadership that you have shown. Your ambassador is a brilliant participant in all of our discussions and a great leader for us, and we really appreciate the leadership that you are showing at such a difficult and challenging time in the life of the world. We appreciate it a great deal.

I just wanted to say a couple of things by way of trying to provide the link, if you like, between where we have been and where we're going. I



won't take very long, but I think there are a few critical things that we need to recognize.

The first one is that when we all think about what's the way forward, what's the path, I always remind people that it's about creating prosperity. When we look at the successful development processes that we've seen around the world, they have helped to transform the prosperity and the social quality of life in their countries. And I say in their countries because sometimes I also think we overlook the fact that the development of successful policies is a national enterprise. It's a national enterprise that international institutions should try and support. But international institutions can't do these things on their own. It has to come from within countries and, frankly, within businesses, who are the creators of most of the jobs that are created in the world. And that, I think, has to continue to be our focus.



The question then becomes: what kind of work? What's the work?

What are the jobs that are being created? Are they good jobs? Are

they well-paying jobs? Are they jobs that allow families to be

sustained? We need to understand that in our economic systems,

work is not just a commodity. We like to think that these things are all

just economic factors in an equation, but actually, work is a reflection

of a very important part of the human personality—the sense of

success, the sense of achievement we get from doing good work.

Somebody says, “good work,” you feel good because you've done

something well. You've produced something that's good.

And so these things are really critical. It means that labor standards,

labor rights, looking at how we approach that, and how we deal with

the challenge of precarious work—the work that doesn't provide great

security, that is hard to get and hard to hold onto—these are features



of the relationship between the economy and society that are so critically important.

We also need to deal with the fact that so much of the work that people do is sometimes undervalued in their societies. It's not given the recognition that it deserves. So I think when we look at the policies that we're going to need to come to grips with this, it has to do with lifelong learning. It has to do with appreciating that our jobs are going to change.

In my own career, I don't think I've held any job for more than five or six years. That's a product of the fact that I chose a very precarious life as a political leader to make much of my living. But seriously, I think we have to understand that the pattern where you would join the labor market when you were 18, and you would leave when you were



65, and you would only have worked in one job that would have a secure pension and a secure situation—that's not the pattern of the present, and it will not likely be the pattern of the future. It will be one in which people are forced to change in the workforce, and in which, therefore, the importance of education and the importance of lifelong education is critically appreciated.

The last couple of things I want to say: I just had a very powerful meeting this morning chairing the meeting on equality. I think that it is critically important that we recognize that the equality between women and men, and treating all members of the community with dignity and with a sense of their equal right to participate and to be engaged, has been a critical transformation that we cannot allow to slow down and to stop. We need to understand that there are still some people who are uncomfortable with that world, and therefore they will fight to stop it from happening.



But as I just said this morning, in my view, the equality—while we say that all the SDGs are equal—there's one that's actually, I think, a little more than equal. And it is the gender equality provision. Why do I say that? Not to cater favor from one part of the audience or another, but because I actually believe that, scientifically speaking, the best way to improve the condition of the economy is to improve the condition of women. And once that starts to happen, a whole lot of other things happen. And I think this is it.

The next thing I want to just say is that we've just come—I just was in Spain two weeks ago for the Seville Conference. And there is an interesting linguistic challenge that we face because the document that came from Seville is called Compromiso de Sevilla. And people say, why are we celebrating a compromise? And I said, well, actually, compromiso in Spanish means commitment, engagement in French.



So we need to understand, we're not off the hook because we say it's a compromise, we can all live with a compromise. No, it's a commitment.

And who's making the commitment? The commitment is being made by the member states who have agreed to it. And the member states have agreed to get on with financing for development, to get on with broadening the level of support from the entire UN system and from the entire economic system and the private sector for the work of equality. This is the work that needs to go on. This is the work that needs to happen. There is enough money in the world to deal with this and to finance it properly. It's just a matter of harnessing that.

So I really think it's important for us to understand that the road from Sevilla to Doha is not so far as we might think. It's a short time. It's a



short space. But people need to understand—the one thing I've learned about the UN is that we need these events and we need these benchmarks. People say, why do you keep having these different events and places and declarations from this place, declarations from that place? I said, because we need—if we don't keep pushing, if we don't keep moving in that direction—we will not take it seriously enough. And there are ways in which we have to do it. So we all look forward to the Doha meeting, and we attach an enormous amount of importance to it. I am very proud of having been able this last year to be the President of the Economic and Social Council.

Economy and society go together. Business and labor go together. Women and men go together. Children and adults go together. We go together intergenerationally, culturally, linguistically, in every way. We work in solidarity with one another to create stronger economies, better societies, and a better world.





And that's what we're trying to do. And we look forward to working with you on the Doha Conference and with my colleagues who are the co-facilitators of this great, great process.

Thank you so much. Thank you.