



Remarks by H.E. Bob Rae

**Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, and President of ECOSOC
at its 2025 session**

Presentation of the Report of the Council to the General Assembly

13 November 2025

Thank you very much, Madam President.

I must say that your comments and your introduction make it much easier for me to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council for the 2025 session. The report, which is available to all of you—in addition to [the document](#) we distributed right after the conclusion of our collective term as a Bureau at the end of July—provides a very good overview of the Council's work, including a range of sustainable development issues.

If I may, Madam President, I'd like to take some time to extend my thanks to our excellent Bureau during this session: the Ambassador from Costa Rica (Maritza Chan), who I know is here, the Ambassador from Nepal (Lok Bahadur Thapa), the Ambassador from Poland (Krzysztof Szczerski), and the Ambassador from Equatorial Guinea (Anatolio Ndong Mba). We became good friends during this year, which was a very active one. We spent some time listening and learning from each other, and it was a completely enjoyable experience.

I'd also like to extend my personal thanks to the teams at the Secretariat, particularly at UN DESA and DGACM, for their invaluable support to me personally and to the Council at large, and to the members of the Bureau. It also—although the people who helped me prepare these notes did not mention it—would only be appropriate if I thank my own team at the Mission of Canada, some of whom are sitting in the group there. I want to express my strong thanks to them for the great work they did in allowing us to have such a fruitful and busy year.

Just to go over a bit of the rhythm of the year: as you know, ECOSOC is elected in July, but our real sessions don't get underway until the new year. This is the part of the calendar that

is taken over by the General Assembly, so we're a little less busy in the fall—but we really get busy in January, and it takes us right through to the end of July.

I know Ambassador Thapa is going to be looking forward to the full blast of that schedule, which is a fascinating one.

We had very important milestones such as the Summit of the Future, the Fourth Financing for Development Conference, and we marked ten years of SDG implementation. We hosted the most strongly attended Youth Forum held to date, and we launched UN Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Week very successfully around the STI Forum this year—and I know that's something that's going to continue into future years.

A few themes were particularly important to us. The first was the fundamental question that the UN's work on the economic and social issues of our time needs to be much more closely linked, in an integral way, with the work of the international financial institutions in Washington.

When the Bretton Woods institutions were established, they were created at a parallel moment to the establishment of the UN—1944 and 1945—and we need to understand that while we each have our jobs, it does not make any sense for us to be doing our jobs completely separately from each other. We have to connect.

We've made every effort to connect with the IFIs—with the World Bank, the IMF, and the regional development banks—and that continues to be a priority, and has to be a priority for all of us. We had a very successful biennial summit this year, which was, I think, an expression of the amount of work that went into building those relationships.

We also carried on the work started by my predecessor, the Ambassador from Chile, looking at AI as a permanent feature of the work of the Economic and Social Council—to build a discussion about AI and its implementation throughout the UN system as a key part of what we do.

That also meant advancing the SDGs, having very successful meetings at HLPF with the VNRs that have been positive and productive.

We also had a chance to address other important issues that you yourself, Madam President, mentioned in your helpful report—forced displacement and refugee issues. We have more people displaced from home than ever before: over 140 million people now displaced around the world. This puts tremendous strain on the humanitarian system, but it also puts strain on issues like migration and education—just to mention two that are key.

We continued our focus on Haiti. Canada has the honor of serving as Chair of the Advisory Committee on Haiti to ECOSOC, and we spent a great deal of time focusing on that question.

We also dedicated ourselves to engaging civil society. There is a view from some in this hall that the United Nations is only an organization of nation states, and that civil society has no right to a place in the discussions that go on here. That was false in 1945. We would not have had the kind of Charter that we have if it were not for the participation of civil society in the months leading up to San Francisco and in the San Francisco meeting. ECOSOC is the key door through which civil society can enter and engage with us—and it is exceptionally important that we continue to do that.

I notice, Madam President, that next year in January we will be celebrating our 80th anniversary, and I think we all need to take this opportunity to think about how we can strengthen ECOSOC further. There will be an upcoming review of both ECOSOC and the High-Level Political Forum, and we would like all Member States to be actively engaged.

If you will permit me, Madam President—and I'm not sure there's much you can do to stop me at this point—I'm going to conclude by making a few personal comments.

Some of you will know that I'm stepping down as the Ambassador of Canada in a few days—actually, in 48 hours—and this will be my last opportunity from the dais to say a few things I would like to say in connection with the work of ECOSOC.

The first one, Madam President, you yourself have said, and I want to say it again.

This is the Charter of the United Nations. I bring it to the meetings. Some of you will remember—those who have been around for a while—that I often talk about the Charter.

There is a lie going around that says the core issue for the UN is only peace and security, and that everything else is just extra, a frill, something that doesn't really belong in the work of the UN. That idea is completely false.

It's false as a matter of fact: economic and social issues have always been part and parcel of the work of the UN, completely integrated into the Charter. ECOSOC is a Charter body, created in 1945.

But it's also untrue for another reason that you, Madam President, have referred to—that you cannot get to peace and security if you ignore the economic, social, human rights, and rule of law issues that are critical for the work of the United Nations.

Human rights are not a frill. Social development is not a frill. Economic growth is not a frill. Tackling poverty and inequality—these are not frills. And most important in our current

era—climate change—while not mentioned in the Charter, remains a critical problem for the future of the world, and not just the future, but the present.

The second point I want to make is that UN80 is an opportunity, not just a crisis. In fact, you could argue that every crisis is an opportunity. Without crises, we wouldn't necessarily embrace change. But in embracing change, we need to understand that part of the fundamental problem we face is one created by Member States themselves—in failing to pay their dues to support the United Nations.

In Canada, we have a concept that we call *deadbeat dads*. What are deadbeat dads? Deadbeat dads are dads who don't pay support payments to their spouses and children. We have to spend a lot of time as governments in Canada tracking people down and saying: do you know how much money you owe to your family? Do you know how badly off your family is because you're not paying your dues?

When we all signed up for the Charter, we signed up to pay our dues. Not only to say these are nice words, but to say we will be there—to pay for the work of the United Nations, to pay our assessed contributions.

We can't ignore the importance of assessed contributions.

Thomas Paine wrote in *The Crisis* in 1776—he pointed out that in a time of crisis, the last thing we need are *summer soldiers* and *sunshine patriots*.

The UN is in a moment of crisis, and we don't need summer soldiers and sunshine patriots. We need countries that are all in. That doesn't mean we have to say everything's wonderful or agree with everything the UN is doing—it means that to make change, we all have to contribute.

We can't go on with a situation where we're not paying attention to the need for actual contributions and participation. The Secretary-General has pointed out, rightly, that the UN is not a cafeteria—you don't walk in and say "I like this, but not that; I'll pay for this peacekeeping mission, but not that one."

These are core values of citizenship. We don't pay our taxes and say "I don't agree with this program, so I won't pay for it." No—you pay your taxes, you pay your dues.

We have to create a culture in this organization where paying up, paying in, and contributing are core to what we do. That's what allows us to make the reforms that will really matter.

Yes, there are too many resolutions that go on and on. Yes, there is duplication in the UN. Yes, there is even waste. But we can't create the framework to make changes unless we're all in—unless we're contributing every step of the way.

The third point I want to make, Madam Chair, is this: the truth matters.

Truth is real. Some things are true and some things are not. Some things are information, some are misinformation. Some things are facts, some are lies.

I've tried to make a point from this podium—and in other statements and actions—to say we should not be afraid to tell things as they are, and to express our differences respectfully, in a mode of civility, but with courage.

Climate change is real. Human rights are important. Getting away with things with impunity is a bad thing. Corruption is a bad thing. Criminal gangs are bad things. Terrorism is a bad thing. There are good things and there are bad things—and that's why we need structures of law and enforcement to make things better.

My last point is about courage.

Courage is such an important virtue because it's the one that makes the others possible. Courage can be difficult. It means stepping out, standing up, trying to persuade people who don't agree with you.

But the thing we know about courage is that it is infectious. If some stand up, then others will stand up. And that's why it's so critical for us to truly appreciate the importance and the value of courage.

Finally, Madam President, just to say this by way of conclusion:

I have so deeply appreciated the opportunity to work with everyone in this hall, with all members of the Secretariat and others. It's been a great honor for me to do this over the last five and a half years. I have deeply appreciated it.

My life has been one of exits and entrances, of coming and going—I've had difficulty keeping a job, and so it's been a feature of my life! Upon leaving both the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the House of Commons in Canada, I ended those speeches with a quotation from William Shakespeare.

I checked with my spouse if it was OK to do it again—she said, “Yeah, I think they'll let you get away with it one more time.”

So I'm going to read to you Sonnet 25, which is one of my favorites:

*Let those who are in favor with their stars
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlooked for joy in that I honour most.*

*Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread,
But as the marigold at the sun's eye;
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.*

*The painful warrior, famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honour razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled.*

*Then happy I, that love and am beloved,
Where I may not remove, nor be removed.*

Thank you all very much, and thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity.