

**Opening Remarks  
H.E Ambassador Oh Joon  
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**“ECOSOC Special Meeting - Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon: Reducing risks and capturing opportunities”**

**May 6, 2016 (10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)  
ECOSOC Chamber**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this Special Meeting of the Council on the “Impacts of the 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon: Reducing risks and capturing opportunities”.

Since 2015, we have witnessed the largest El Niño occurrence to date. Many developing countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific are suffering under its devastating and far-reaching impacts.

Extreme weather conditions have become more frequent with climate change; bringing droughts, fire, destruction of agricultural production, poor health and diseases, and displacement of people all over the world.

These conditions also affect commodity prices and the prospects for sustainable development.

El Niño is a good example of climate change affecting the livelihood of people. Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau have all declared states of emergency due to drought conditions from the El Niño and Malawi has declared “a state of disaster”.

According to UNICEF, as of February 2016, almost one million children needed treatment for acute malnutrition in Eastern and Southern Africa from food shortages due to El Niño weather extremes.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Economic and Social Council convenes this meeting at the request of the General Assembly (RES 70/110), to put our efforts together to consider what we can do to mitigate risks, losses and suffering in future El Niño events.

This is also in line with previous special meetings of the Council addressing emergencies and current issues to make the work of ECOSOC more relevant to what is actually happening in the world.

These included the meetings on the African food crisis and Avian Flu in 2005, global food crisis in 2008 and 2013, the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013, Ebola in 2014 and the Zika Virus this year.

Today, distinguished speakers will provide insights into the health, socio-economic and environmental dimensions of El Niño and share effective steps taken to reduce its impact. We must remember that El Niño is not a one-off event but recurring global phenomena that we must address for future generations and to achieve the sustainable development goals.

All partners, the United Nations, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and the scientific community, need to take coordinated and fortified action to tackle El Niño risks.

We must build capacity for disaster risk management and readiness to prevent El Niño from causing humanitarian crises in affected countries.

I look forward to a fruitful dialogue and insightful proposals during this Special Meeting. //END//