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United Nations Economic and Social Council

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Excellencies,

Members of the Bureau,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honor for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and for me to serve as the President of the Economic and Social Council for 2018-2019. It promises to be a defining year, which could help set a new course for the work of the Council and the HLPF held under its auspices. I would like to thank the members of the Council for reposing their confidence in me and electing me to this important office. I will rely on all of you to help define the path forward so that the Council and the HLPF can live up to your expectations and those of the people we serve.

I thank the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for its endorsement and for the faith placed in me as the region's representative on the bureau as vice president during 2017-2018 and now as president of the Council for 2018-2019. I wish also to make special mention of my colleague, Her Excellency, the distinguished Ambassador Maria Emma Mejia Velez of Colombia, the founder of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity – I must express my sincere admiration and appreciation for her leadership and dedication to championing women like me, for encouraging us to step up and step into leadership roles. My friend and



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colleague, Maria Emma Mejia Velez, I thank you! I thank you for being instrumental in ensuring that the fourth female President of the ECOSOC is also now the first woman from our region to hold the post and the first from the Global South. As you approach the end of your tenure here at the UN, know that you will be missed but know too that you have left a real legacy that will be remembered for years to come.

I must also pay special tribute to my predecessor, Her Excellency, Ambassador Marie Chatardova, of the Czech Republic, whose leadership and vision I will continue to rely on over the next year, it was a privilege to work with you. I will endeavor to build on the work you have begun, including your emphasis on inclusion and participation. To my fellow bureau members, Ambassadors Jerry Matthews Matjila of South Africa, Marc Pecsteen of Belgium and Mahmad-amin Mahmad-aminov of Tajikistan, I have enjoyed the camaraderie and friendship that we shared over the past year and will continue to rely on your advice.

My **main priorities** as president will be **to deliver a successful HLPF and revive the ECOSOC**. Yes, you heard me correctly, with your committed participation, **we will revive the ECOSOC** using in full the hard-won innovations introduced by the General Assembly Resolution A/72/305 on the Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.



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Here, I would like to appeal to all of you, ECOSOC Member States. When we signed up to be Members of this Council, we also committed to participate in its work and to ensure that it delivers on its functions. There has been some dissatisfaction with the functioning of ECOSOC over the recent few years. But in the coming 12 months, let us work together to restore the “deliberative function” of ECOSOC, as clearly stated in Resolution A/72/305, and its policy guidance and coordination role. As we move forward in this new cycle, my aim is to bring the Council together to consider how best to make this a reality.

Let us not focus only on what does not work. Let us not criticize and skirt meetings we do not consider useful. Instead, let us focus on what does work well and why. Let us reflect on how we can make ECOSOC deliver fully.

In my view, we have an institutional framework and an outline of the areas where you would like the next Bureau to focus. You would like to see **a revitalized High-level Segment that is forward looking**. It should **stimulate our thinking** on how long-term and future trends, including new technologies, could impact the realization of the sustainable development goals. We should be **proactive in looking for ways to harness the opportunities and become more resilient to potential risks**. I intend to **convene periodic dialogues with thought leaders to catalyze our thinking** in preparation for the High-level Segment.



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You have also expressed the desire to have a **more impactful Integration Segment that leverages the Council's Functional and Regional Commissions and other expert bodies to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**. These bodies should also be more action and solutions-oriented in their work so as to strengthen the Council's own work. This requires us to have meaningful engagement with the subsidiary bodies and be prepared to give specific guidance. I am committed to engage with their bureaus on planning their contribution to the work of ECOSOC and the HLPF as well as to spearhead the review of their working methods just mandated by the GA.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates:

Let me move now to **the centerpiece of my priorities: The High Level Political Forum**.

The 2019 High-level Political Forum will complete the HLPF cycle under the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" while reviewing SDG 4 (education), SDG 8 (Growth and employment), SDG 10 (inequality), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 16 (peaceful societies and robust institutions) and SDG 17 (Means of Implementation). It would be important for us to think together about how the thematic and national voluntary reviews could be further improved, building on the enthusiasm and successes of the first



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three years. I intend to share some specific ideas with you in the not-too-distant future as I continue taking stock of lessons learned and suggestions made during the HLPF in the past two weeks. Your calls for a more integrated approach to thematic reviews of SDGs, given the interlinkages among them, is well taken.

Next year will be unique. The HLPF will not only meet under the auspices of ECOSOC in July, but also under the auspices of the General Assembly in September when our Heads of State and Government will review the entire 2030 Agenda. We will have to think of ways to strengthen the conduct of the next cycle of reviews while looking towards the 23 SDG targets that are set for 2020. We must also prepare for the reviews of the HLPF and ECOSOC during the 74th session.

I am also keen to **improve ECOSOC's contribution to the HLPF**. The work of its subsidiary bodies, in addition to its Segments and Forums, is extremely valuable and relevant for the 2030 Agenda. We must find ways to bring their analysis and policy proposals to the fore to enrich the work of the HLPF. And **we should do so with the full participation of young people**. No opportunity should be missed to give voice to their ideas and vision for the future they want. I also believe that we should continue to find ways to **mobilize civil society, including Non-Governmental Organizations, Academia, Scientists and the private sector** to push for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We are all in this together!



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I also count on your support to **deliver a “strengthened” operational activities for the development segment**, as envisioned in resolution A/72/305 on strengthening ECOSOC and General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the UN development system. Our guidance and overall coordination of the UN development system will be key in ensuring coherence, coordination and accountability for the UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an integrated approach to achieve policy coherence across sectors. This is true not only for Member States at the national level, but for us at the intergovernmental level. We need more effective engagement with other intergovernmental bodies, including the Peacebuilding Commission, to harness the interlinkages among the peace and security, human rights and development pillars of the United Nations.

Excellencies, Members of the Bureau, Distinguished Delegates:

One of the issues of existential concern to Member States, especially small island developing states, is climate change. It is a threat to development gains made so far as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. **During the Presidency of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I intend to highlight the transformative actions that can be taken to help**



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countries manage climate change and become more resilient. 2019 is an opportune moment for us to raise our ambition and galvanize action for our climate commitments. And ECOSOC has a key role in demonstrating the interlinkages between climate change and other SDGs. This would allow us to also contribute to the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019 and to the preparations for the review of SDG 13 on Climate Action. I believe ECOSOC's contribution would help Member States overcome the silo-approaches in the implementation of the commitments made in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the SDGs, in the lead up to the Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Summit.

Our agenda for this coming year is no doubt ambitious as is required by the scale of the 2030 Agenda and the challenges that we face. I believe that together we can advance, together we can strengthen the Council, and together we will harness the energy and enthusiasm of the HLPF to promote higher standards of living and conditions of economic and social progress and sustainable development. Needless to say, we will do so strictly within the boundaries of our mandates though we should remain open to convening special meetings, as appropriate.

With the support of the Under-Secretary-General and his team in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the support of the entire UN system, we can address these tasks that we have set for ourselves over the next year.



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I once again congratulate and warmly welcome the newly elected bureau members, H. E. Omar Hilale of the Kingdom of Morocco, H. E. Tore Hattrem of Norway, ... I really do look forward to working with you. Indeed, I am delighted!

Again, I want to express my special appreciation to my esteemed predecessor for the legacy that I can now build on. For the SDGs to keep progressing, **we must make sure the HLPF remains a visionary and action-oriented platform.** For the Council to make a positive difference, it must adapt to the rapidly changing environment that we are facing in the 21st century. I strongly believe that the Charter mandate makes this possible. A lot is at stake and we can deliver.

I will count on your support.

Thank you.



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