



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

## Handover Statement

**Ambassador Rhonda King, President of ECOSOC**

25 July 2019

Deputy Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come for me to handover the presidency of ECOSOC to my successor, Ambassador Mona Juul.

I do it with great satisfaction because I know she has high ambitions for ECOSOC. I do it with a sense of achievement, as we got a lot done together over the year. But I also handover this presidency with humility and the conviction that much more can be done and needs to be done.

I had two priorities: to strengthen ECOSOC; and to have the best HLPF yet. Neither of these would have been possible without The Principle of Effective Collaboration—keeping an open mind always for different perspectives to be ventilated toward finding the common ground.

**First, I will touch briefly on the HLPF**—the jewel of the sustainable development agenda at the United Nations.



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This July, the session underscored that we are not on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. But the session was also clear that there is still time to change. I am confident that our discussions during the HLPF this July will reverberate in the SDGs summit in September.

It is important to ensure that the VNRs continue to top the agenda of the HLPF, while also improving them further and strengthening their discussion at the regional level. I was pleased that the Group of Friends of VNRs improved the quality of the discussions on the VNR presentations.

**My second message is about the need to continue to reinvigorate ECOSOC.** No small part of this is continuing with the efforts to restore the deliberative function of ECOSOC.

It is our mandate to fully use ECOSOC to guide and coordinate the work of the UN system. It may not always be the most glamorous work. But it is an essential responsibility of the UN Member States.

This year's Operational Activities Segment provided important directions for the repositioning of the UN Development System at the country level. The Humanitarian Affairs Segment launched new efforts to save lives and reach those in need. We should preserve the decision-making capacity of these segments. But we should also further strengthen the interaction of the Council with specialized agencies on the full gamut of their work.

I appeal to Member States to use and believe in ECOSOC – ECOSOC will be as effective as you are committed to making it, we should not campaign with such fervor for a seat in ECOSOC and then immediately vacate it once our term begins. ECOSOC is a formidable tool. Engage fully with it and make even more so. It has a unique role in addressing the 2030



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Development Agenda and rallying intergovernmental bodies and the UN system around it. It already delivers this function through its various forums and the high-level political forum under its auspices. It is our responsibility as UN Member States, and even more so as elected ECOSOC Members, to make the Council deliver on its critical functions. There is indeed much room for improvement. For instance, we should find new ways to guide and improve the work of subsidiary bodies. Perhaps, we **should ask the Secretariat to prepare documents to help us get an overview of the work of all bodies reporting to ECOSOC.**

**My third and final point is about effective collaboration,** without which we could not have achieved what we did this year.

In this vein, I urge the incoming bureau to continue engaging with other Charter bodies, especially the General Assembly and the Security Council. This year the level of cooperation between the 73<sup>rd</sup> President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC, for instance, was extremely useful—indeed it was probably unprecedented—showcasing and building on the synergies between the two organs. We endeavored to inject new ideas into the ongoing process of aligning the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC. I take this opportunity to thank the 73<sup>rd</sup> President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency Fernanda Espinosa Garces, for her unwavering support of this presidency and the work of ECOSOC.

Once a President of ECOSOC always a champion of ECOSOC.

As a newly elected Member of the Security Council for the term 2020-2021, I intend to explore ways to build stronger links between ECOSOC and the Security Council. This year, ECOSOC's Advisory Group on Haiti emphasized the importance of making these linkages and underscored the need for exploring integrated approaches.



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Let us also remember to keep the door open to civil society and the business sector. They anchor our work in the realities of the day and hold us accountable.

I would like, once again, to thank the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean for their faith in me and for the opportunity for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to have been the regional representative in the ECOSOC bureau over the last two years. I thank my own Mission Staff for their sterling support. We are a small team but the dedication of each and every member of our team was key to getting us through these past two years.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Bureau of this session for your unyielding support and guidance: Ambassador Omar Hilale, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, Ambassador Valentine Rybakov, the Permanent Representative of Belarus, Ambassador Mona Juul, our next president and Permanent Representative of Norway, and Ambassador Kira Azucena, the Charge d'Affaires of the Phillipines. Thank you for your commitment and outstanding work.

Effective cooperation with the Secretariat is also critical. Indeed it is the linchpin. I begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary General, Her Excellency Amina Mohammed, for her wisdom, her guidance and her friendship. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to UNDESA and DGACM for their impeccable professionalism, dedication and support. So touched and grateful am I that it was my intention to call by name each and every outstanding international civil servant of the United Nations Secretariat here in New York who assisted this presidency, but the list is too long and, alas, my time has run out. But please remember this, I will not soon forget your hard work and long hours of service.

As I hand over the Presidency, I take pride in having been only the fourth woman President of ECOSOC in the Council's 74 year history (1946-2019). The three women Presidents who



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came before me – all in the past 15 years – Marjatta Rasi of Finland (2004), Sylvie Lucas of Luxemburg (2009), and Marie Chartardova of the Czech Republic (2017), all made their mark on the work of ECOSOC.

Ambassadors Rasi and Lucas actively sought to engage the Security Council on areas of common interest. Ambassador Chatardova focused her presidency on participation of all, which is critical in both the development and peace and security areas. And now I am pleased to hand over to Ambassador Juul of Norway.

Ambassador Juul, you are embarking on an exciting adventure. Do not be afraid to take risks and innovate, while keeping Member States with you, to advance further the impact of ECOSOC on the United Nations and on people's lives. Your quiet gravitas and outsized reputation for getting difficult things done bode well for the future of ECOSOC. And, you also represent a country that is respected for being a dedicated development partner. I look forward to hearing your vision for the Council.

I thank you for your great enthusiasm and support throughout my presidency. And I wish much success during your tenure.

Our keynote speaker at the opening of the ECOSOC High Level Segment two weeks ago, Ms. Yolanda Joab, Founder and Executive Director of Island PRIDE, she was also our keynote at this year's Youth Forum, exhorted us thus, and I quote "What we need now is action, and to get there we need some courage". End of quote.

Ambassador Juul, I wish you courage, I wish you success and I wish you peace profound.

And I thank everyone for your kind attention.



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