



BELARUS

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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer-Term Positioning of the UN Development System
in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Meeting on the Role of the UN Development System in Middle-Income Countries
New York, May 26, 2016**

Statement

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to the United Nations**

In my intervention I would like to share with you three reflections and a couple of suggestions.

First, **middle-income countries have to matter to the United Nations**, especially **at this particular historical juncture**. Why – because we are talking about more than a hundred countries that account for more than half of the UN membership, majority of the world's population, more than a third of global GDP, and a quarter of world's exports and imports and, at the same time, for **two thirds of the world's poor**. This is simple statistics that is often overlooked.

Although we speak a lot about our common basic principle of leaving no one behind, we still tend to forget that precisely **this category** of middle-income countries is very much **left – if not behind – then aside**. Regretfully, **specific problems** of these countries, **unique nature of challenges** they have to deal with **are still not a part of a mainstreamed and coordinated UN perspective on development**.

It is in the interest of success of the 2030 Agenda **not just to recognise** the difficulties and challenges of sustainable development in MICs, but also **to put to full and good use the underrated collective potential** of middle-income countries whose experience, by the way, shows that the problem of poverty and extreme poverty can be solved.

Secondly, I would like to contend that **middle-income countries' significance will continue to rise** in the near and more distant future and they will have be the inevitable focus of the UN activities in some 10-15 years.

Hopefully, with the current development agenda, we will see global improvements in poverty eradication which would mean that the average standard of living would steadily grow bringing the most vulnerable countries to a "middle level". Already today we should get ourselves prepared to this eventual **development shift** by adopting a forward-looking approach that would set the conditions for **inclusive, interested and mutually beneficial participation of all countries and groups of countries in the development process**.

In this context I would like to acknowledge the analysis prepared by our distinguished speaker Ms Adriana Abdenur. In my view, her paper speaks of concepts and proposals the ground-breaking value we yet have to fully appreciate. I refer particularly to the idea of **shifting from the concept of "middle-income" to "middle-development"** and rethinking the very understanding of the "middle-income countries" phenomenon.

My third point is a response to the possible question about **why Belarus would care more than most about this issue**.

I would argue that the case of Belarus proves there should be a strong middle-income countries agenda in the UN.

A middle-income country which at the same time falls out of the category of a developing country, Belarus has achieved considerable progress, including in achieving MDGs, relying on international assistance but at the same time on possibilities of sharing and exchanging experience. In a way, Belarus embodies the dual role of middle-income countries as recipients of foreign aid and providers of assistance and experience to the others. A programme country herself, Belarus undertakes joint projects in different parts of the world assisting sustainable development efforts of countries like, for instance, Turkmenistan or Venezuela.

The example of Belarus proves that the concept of “helping MICs so that they could help others” really works.

I believe that as a country we could have achieved more if **extra attention to the MICs as a category and more coordinated and systematic approach** had been adopted within the UN system. In the absence of such approach together with like-minded countries we have achieved a lot in facilitating exchange of experience and expertise.

At the regional conference in Minsk in 2013, long before the 2015 Summit, Belarus proposed the concept of **projecting a middle-income countries’ perspective to sustainable development** with the focus on their contribution to the global development efforts. Last year, we hosted a conference to explore the issue of **inclusive and sustainable industrialisation in middle-income countries** of the region with emphasis on infrastructure and innovation.

Belarus will continue this voluntary task of facilitating MICs dialogue. We will continue this mission as a faithful member of **the Like-Minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries**, a newly established informal group to promote greater visibility of MICs and to facilitate dialogue with the UN membership.

Without claiming to have the ready-made vision of the longer-term role of the United Nations in middle-income countries, I could nevertheless propose a few recommendations – or, probably, more appropriately, suggestions, – addressed to member states, UN Secretariat and UN development system.

Regarding the fellow **member states**, most importantly, I would wish to see the **change of a prevalent attitude** to middle-income countries that is dismissive at best and adverse at worst. Mind you, these countries are not beggars asking or competing for scarce development assistance resources. First and foremost, they are **indispensable partners** in advancing the cause of global development by making it truly sustainable.

Much more positive and engaging attention of the entire international community to MICs today is needed to nurture their valuable potential – not least because of **their very share in the world’s load of problems and treasury of solutions** – so that tomorrow it could provide the return on investment – in direct **economic** but also in not less important **human development** terms – by serving the rest of the world.

As for the role of **the UN Secretariat**, I would suggest that the onerous task of **thoughtful guardianship of the MICs agenda** be clearly assigned to a particular office or person at the appropriately visible level, preferably Under-Secretary-General. This simple step, which would not require additional resources, would ensure more focused attention to MICs in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It would also create a kind of a **“one-stop shop”** for middle-income countries, a **coordination centre** to facilitate access to and exchange of expert advice, finance, technology, means of implementation.

Finally, on the part of **the UN development system**, a simple form of coordination mechanism would seem advisable to address development challenges of middle-income countries. As the world will hopefully become more and more “middle-developed”, MICs will require better attention from the development system, including to such issues as categorisation, strengthened development assistance, facilitating partnerships with the participation of middle-income countries. An array of policy options could be envisaged to meet these requirements, from a simpler inter-agency coordination mechanism to an advanced goal of establishing **an action plan for sustainable development in middle-income countries**.

And as far as the middle-income countries are concerned, it is **high time to act** –

in concert,

in good faith

and in an enlightened belief that a zero-sum game, including in the matters of development, should not be the only prospect for this world.