

**Keynote address by
His Excellency Martin Sajdik
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Side event organized by CoNGO:
Honouring the United Nations on its 70th
anniversary**

**Thursday, May 7 2015
10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Conference room 11**

Mr. Cyril Ritchie, President of CoNGO,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I take part in this very timely event and I wish to thank Mr. Ritchie for organizing it.

The year 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. In commemorating the achievements of the UN we must also remember the opening words of the Charter – ‘We the peoples of the United Nations ...’ – which have been attributed to the presence of non-governmental organizations at the founding conference in San Francisco, as has been the inclusion of Article 71 which enabled the Economic and Social Council to engage with NGOs.

Civil society organizations should be proud of their role thus far in ensuring that the promise of the MDGs is met through a wide range of citizen action and engagement. The last decade has witnessed the emergence and flourishing of a growing number of civil society organizations to become effective advocates and champions for the MDGs. Civil society organizations have become increasingly represented in international, regional and national fora, demonstrating their

capacity to engage in policy debates and in holding national governments and international agencies to account.

The level of engagement of civil society organizations in the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda is remarkable. Your participation is a key element to making this a people-centered agenda.

As the 70th President of the Council, my vision for ECOSOC has been to show how debate at global level can translate into effective sharing of knowledge, mutual learning and delivering on promises that stimulate specific actions and lasting results for people. I believe that the work modalities of the Council should be guided by the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and flexibility.

As the gateway to the UN for all non-state stakeholders, the Council has provided an enabling environment where all relevant stakeholders can come together for advancing an integrated approach to a unified and universal agenda.

Throughout my Presidency I have been heartened by the level of commitment and dedication of the civil society. And as President of the ECOSOC I am delighted to tell you that each year around 400 NGOs apply for consultative status with the

Council. Last year 383 NGOs were granted this special status. As of April 2015 the total number of NGOs in consultative status is 4167.

This month the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda will focus on the framework for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the agenda. This discussion is of fundamental importance to civil society.

As I have said previously, the main emphasis of the follow-up and review of development results will need to be at the national level. This is where Governments are accountable to their own citizens. This is where the agenda will be implemented, observed, measured and evaluated by each country. This is also where civil society is most active. Furthermore, these national efforts will have to be linked to global and regional frameworks.

There is broad consensus that the whole strengthened ECOSOC architecture --- including the high-level political forum, the Integration Segment, the biennial Development Cooperation Forum, the QCPR process and the financing for development process --- is uniquely placed to offer substantive guidance for an integrated approach to the follow-up and implementation of the post-2015 agenda.

The Council's 2015 theme to support the transition from the MDGs to the sustainable development goals was carefully chosen to allow the ECOSOC system to advance the reflection on the legacy of the MDGs and the transition towards a new development agenda centered on sustainable development.

Similarly, the aligned theme of the HLPF on strengthening integration, implementation and review after 2015 is aimed to discuss the forum's role and ways to implement its function in following up on and reviewing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

I encourage you to closely follow the discussions in the Council and the HLPF and to actively participate in the deliberations.

Moving towards the post-2015 era, the Council will remain committed to fostering the engagement and dialogue of NGOs through a variety of means, including attendance to official meetings, access to all official information and documents, oral and written contributions to the segments and meetings of the Council, speaking roles in panel discussions, interventions during interactive sessions and general debates, organizing

side events, and contribution through e-discussion forums and social media platforms.

In addition, under the HLPF architecture, I will continue to engage with the Major Groups and other stakeholders through the morning dialogue sessions. This year, I intend to invite Member States to join these sessions. I welcome proposals from Major Groups and other stakeholders for civil society representatives to speak in the various panels and round tables to be held as part of the programme of the HLPF.

NGOs act as advocates, disseminating views and information and mobilizing public support for decisions and initiatives taken at the global level. NGOs will be critical in communicating the post-2015 development agenda and engaging more people. The Council will rely on your support to communicate the agenda to the public.

The Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group of the President is a useful venue through which concrete proposals and innovative approaches for greater engagement of stakeholders in the work of the Council could be identified.

Since 2008, the Council has convened an annual Partnership Forum where stakeholders are brought together to

jointly discuss how partnerships across a variety of sections such as global public health, education, science and technology, agriculture and food security, can help to advance an array of MDGs.

The 2015 Partnership Forum will look at ways to improve the outcomes and results in the post-2015 era building on lessons learned from MDG partnerships. The future Partnership Forums will have to look at new ways in which multi-stakeholder partnerships can support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda by disseminating its achievements, including best practices and lessons learned, promoting the replication of successful partnership models, and facilitating greater collaboration and coordination among different types of partnerships.

One of my personal priorities during my Presidency has been the ECOSOC Youth Forum. This year's Forum has once again shown that youth representatives and Member States can come together to engage in open dialogue and advance solutions for the challenges that young people and their societies face. The future Youth Forums will have to ensure that youth engagement is strengthened to enable young people to play a role in the implementation and review of the post-2015 agenda.

It is my view that the Council should increase its interaction with other groups such as parliamentarians and academics so as to add input and value to ECOSOC's work. One way could be to hold similar events as the Partnership Forum with each of these non-state actors on an annual basis so as to strengthen their engagement and involvement for added impact.

Let me conclude by repeating what a representative of Fiji said "In any economy the Government is the driver, the UN development system and the private sector are the engine, the civil society is the GPS and people are the passengers". If we are to meet our goals of ending poverty, reducing inequality and protecting the environment, then we will all have to work together to forge new partnerships and alliances. The role of civil society will be even more important for the next 15 years in guiding the work of governments, international institutions and the private sector.

I wish you a successful event and I look forward to an interesting exchange of views.

Thank you

