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Women's empowerment set to top agenda at UN Economic and Social Council meeting



Economic and Social Council President for 2010, Ambassador Hamidon Ali (Malaysia)

25 June 2010 – Gender equality and the empowerment of women will be the main focus of attention when government ministers from across the world gather in New York for the annual high-level meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) next week.

“It goes without saying that the empowerment of women has one of the strongest multiplier effects on achieving all of the MDGs,” said Hamidon Ali, President of ECOSOC, referring to the eight human development and poverty eradication targets known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), which countries have pledged to try and achieve before the 2015 deadline.

He told journalists at UN Headquarters that this year's agenda had been selected to stress the importance of women as agents of social change. Empowering women has the potential to improve maternal and child health, reduce global hunger, contribute towards universal primary education, help in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and curb environmental degradation.

Mr. Ali said women did 66 per cent of the world's work and produced 50 per cent of the food, yet they earned 10 per cent of global income, owned one per cent of the property, and constituted 60 per cent of the world's poorest people.

Also on the agenda at the ECOSOC meeting are efforts to end gender-based violence, which remains a priority for the UN because of its potential to prevent women from participating fully in productive social activities.

The week of high-level meetings will include the Annual Ministerial Review, which will focus on implementing the international goals for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the Development Cooperation Forum, which will centre on development cooperation in times of crises.

Six developing countries – Brazil, Guatemala, Moldova, Mongolia, Namibia and the Republic of Congo – will make the national voluntary presentations on lessons they have learned when formulating and implementing their national development strategies. Seven developed countries – Australia, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Korea and the United States – will make presentations on how they have helped poorer nations meet their development priorities.

Keynote speakers include the former Chilean president, Michelle Bachelet; the British Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell; and Moushira Khattab, Egypt's Minister of State for Family and Population Affairs.

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