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**Opening Statement by
H.E. Mr. Miloš Koterec, Permanent Representative of Slovakia,
President of the Economic and Social Council
at the 50th session
of the Commission for Social Development**

1 February 2012

Mr. Chair,
Deputy Secretary-General,
Under-Secretary-General Mr. Sha,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to address the opening of this important session of the Commission for Social Development, marking the fiftieth session of the Commission. For half a century, the Commission has had a central role in defining and contributing to the international debate on social development issues. The Commission continues to follow up on the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development, and has supported the Economic and Social Council on social development issues, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication, employment and social integration.

As you are all well aware, the Economic and Social Council has been the principal forum in the United Nations for discussing international economic and social development issues. Since 2007, ECOSOC has convened Annual Ministerial Reviews to assess progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as well as other international commitments made in major UN conferences and summits.

This year there will be particularly strong synergies between the work of the Commission for Social Development and the ECOSOC high-level segment. This year's Annual Ministerial Review focuses on "Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving MDGs." This is directly linked to the Commission's priority theme on poverty eradication.

Distinguished delegates,

Since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, poverty eradication has continued to remain the overarching objective of national and international development efforts. The Millennium Declaration further underlined the commitment to this goal by setting a target to halve the number of people living on less than one dollar a day between 1990 and 2015. Despite the current global financial crisis, this target is expected to be met at the global level but there are unfortunately some regions behind. Furthermore, vulnerable and marginalized social groups, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous people, and people living in rural areas, continue to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty.

One cannot talk about poverty eradication without highlighting social and economic inequalities and the need for people's empowerment and participation. The international community has expressed deep concern over persistent inequalities between and within countries, and has recognized that combating inequality at all levels is essential for creating a more prosperous and sustainable future for all. We need to redirect our focus towards socially-inclusive policies that promote social integration and public participation, paying special attention to vulnerable social groups. I am particularly looking forward to the Commission's contributions to ECOSOC in this regard.

Distinguished delegates,

The 2012 AMR provides an important opportunity for ECOSOC to turn a spotlight on models for economic growth that promote poverty eradication, job creation and decent work, and that are sustainable, inclusive and equitable. Decent and productive employment has long been recognized as the most effective measure for poverty reduction. However, the downturn in the world economy has only served to exacerbate the rise in unemployment in many areas of the globe. There is therefore a greater urgency to place a renewed focus on

the creation of jobs and in particular place emphasis on the quality and decency of these jobs. In this time of crisis, social protection measures have become instrumental in protecting the poor from economic hardship and building human resources for future growth.

Furthermore, I would like to commend the Commission for choosing the theme of youth poverty and unemployment as its emerging issue. With almost one in four young workers unemployed in developed countries, and the majority of young people from developing countries working in the informal economy, the world is experiencing a youth unemployment crisis, which further propagates social unrest and instability. Hence, the youth will play a central role in the various social movements calling for democracy, equal opportunities and better employment. I am looking forward to the Commission's debate on this emerging issue and the policy recommendations that will provide input into ECOSOC.

Distinguished delegates,

As attention is turned towards the Rio+20 conference and sustainable development issues, it is imperative that there is continued emphasis on the importance of the eradication of poverty and inequality, job creation and social inclusion to ensure the future sustainability of our world. These core issues must also remain a focus when defining a development framework beyond 2015.

Therefore, I encourage you to further strengthen your efforts in finding resolutions for these issues as you craft a policy outcome on poverty eradication in the days ahead. This Commission has an important role to play in making poverty eradication the centerpiece of economic, social and environmental policies. As the outcome documents from this Commission will be submitted to ECOSOC, you now have an opportunity to influence the development debate, including the upcoming Rio+20 conference and the preparation for the post-2015 development agenda.

I am also certain that the Commission will play an even greater role and provide an important forum for debate on sustainable development and on the international development agenda beyond 2015.

Given the mutually reinforcing messages of poverty eradication, decent work, and inclusive, sustainable and equitable growth, I can assure you that the policy outcomes from this Commission will be given full consideration during the discussions at the ECOSOC high-level segment.

I look forward to the productive outcome of the fiftieth session of the Commission, and look forward to further building upon the recommendations within ECOSOC. I also wish you great success as you engage in the tasks ahead.

Thank you.