

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ARIZAL EFFENDI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, TO THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT ITS 36TH SESSION ON AGENDA ITEM 3(A): "PROMOTING SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND PARTICIPATION OF ALL PEOPLE INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED AND VULNERABLE GROUPS AND PERSONS"

New York, 11 February 1998

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I am pleased to address the Commission for Social Development on its agenda item 3, priority theme on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. Let me first express to you the Group's congratulations on your election as Chairman of the Commission for Social Development, and to assure you of our full cooperation during the deliberations on this important agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China remain fully committed to implementing the Copenhagen declaration and programme of action. The theme being deliberated on during this session of the Commission, dealing with the third of three core issues, namely social integration, reflects the determination of the international community to comprehensively address and resolve the disparities that exist within and among societies, and a continuing recognition of the dangers posed to all nations by social polarization and social exclusion.

It should be recalled that since the World Summit for Social Development, and in fact well before, the developing countries had taken vigorous and determined action to address, within their limited resources and capacities, their social development needs. And indeed, through the Group of 77 and in other fora, the developing countries did play a central role in crafting the Summit documents, and in enunciating its ideals and aspirations, including the promotion of greater participation and putting the needs of people at the centre of development and international cooperation.

The developing countries played such an active role both during the Summit meeting and in the follow-up activities because of their genuine desire to enhance the overall human condition and to alleviate the burden shouldered by the poor throughout the world. Nevertheless, there is a like recognition by the Group of 77 that the World Summit for Social Development was not held in order to draft a global blueprint that applies only to developing countries, but rather a framework for social development that is equally applicable to all countries. Therefore, as we deliberate on the core issue of social integration, our attention should be cast in all directions and not only towards the South.

The Group of 77 does recognize that social integration is contingent on greater participation for marginalized groups, on all levels. Greater participation in the political process within countries must be sought, along with participation in social and economic activities. Likewise, it must also be understood that little lasting success can be achieved in the absence of greater participation by the developing countries in the global political, economic and social decision-making process. The dynamics of market forces and the increased risks that accompany the opportunities of globalization continue to have severe impact on many countries which now have little or no voice in shaping an enabling environment in which to promote their social development. The Secretary-General was therefore most accurate in his report to the Commission in stating that ensuring fair and effective representation and progress of all the diverse interests requires the fullest participation at all levels, including to the macro level of the nation and beyond to the global level.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China consider it important to underline that there is no method universally applicable to promote social integration and fuller participation. Each country must pursue these goals within the context of their respective social, and economic condition, as well as cultural and historical background, and with due consideration to the religious beliefs of their people. The path to greater access to the process of government must be implemented in accordance with the constitutional framework of the respective country, with full respect to national sovereignty.

The Group of 77 and China agree that national governments must take the lead in initiating the strategy or social integration and greater participation. In that effort, governments should promote policies and programmes that enhance the capacities of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, disabled persons, older persons and other disadvantaged groups and to bring these groups into the mainstream of national development. In this connection, we emphasize the imperative need to mainstream a gender perspective into all aspects of national development policies and programmes, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, which hinders their full participation in society.

The Group of 77 and China support the notion that governments should adopt specific clearly defined and realistic time-bound goals and targets of priority concern, and that available resources should be channeled to achieving those goals. Poverty eradication programmes should be given priority as well as other programmes which empower the poor through access to education, training, credit, and technology. It is essential in that regard to improve human resources by constantly upgrading skills that are relevant to an ever changing labour market, and also putting in place social safety nets to meet basic needs during times of transition.

The empowerment of local communities and a decentralization of responsibility in some areas of activity is also an important step that could be undertaken by national governments, accompanied by adequate funding for local government agencies. Such a local development approach would be positioned to address the needs and concerns of the community, facilitate greater participation in the decision-making process, and opening vertical channels of communication.

Likewise, greater multi-sectoral collaboration between civil society, NGOs, development agencies and government could be strengthened as a means of encouraging grassroots participation in the development process and encouraging greater responsibility among individuals. The role of civil society and NGOs in social integration would not only facilitate communication among various groups, and to lead to greater efficiencies. At the same time, it must be recognized that social integration activities should always be considered within the national context and undertaken within the policies and guidelines established by respective governments in accordance with their constitution, laws and regulations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China perceive that economic growth is an essential component for social development. Also, what is clearly needed are a more accurate identification of vulnerable groups, a proactive monitoring and assessment of the impact of macroeconomic, microeconomic and sectoral policies, and programmes on social development targets. Only through such a course of action can governments, in an informed manner, assess the costs and benefits of their national development policies. In so doing, governments will be in a better position to build a stake in national development for vulnerable groups and truly embark on sustainable development.

It is perhaps appropriate that the final part of the report of the Secretary-General deals with resource issues, and the views he has expressed receive the most thoughtful deliberation by the Group of 77 and China. There are several redistributive policies that could be undertaken by central governments, along with reallocation in central government budgets. Likewise, the role of the private sector in resource mobilization could be used in empowerment efforts and in building a vested interest in society for marginalized groups. In discussing resources, however, it should also be mentioned that there remains a very real need to reverse the decline in financial flows for development, which has severely hampered the efforts of the developing countries and greatly contributed to a growing sense of disenfranchisement and exclusion. What is urgently needed at this time is a global consensus for development that will facilitate sustainable growth and social integration as well as to overcome the barriers of exclusion and polarization at all levels.

In concluding, I should like to assure you of the commitment of the Group of 77 and China to achieving fuller participation in their societies in all activities at all levels. We look forward to working in cooperation with our partners to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Social Development.

Thank you.