

STATEMENT BY MS. SONIA ELLIOTT, GUYANA DELEGATION, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, BEFORE THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 3(B): REVIEW OF RELEVANT UNITED NATIONS PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTIONS PERTAINING TO THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL GROUPS

New York, 11 February 1999

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 3 (b), Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups.

In doing so, I would wish, first of all to acknowledge the comprehensive report on the activities of the Consultative Group of Ageing which will undoubtedly inform our discussions on the accessibility of social services to all members of society.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the Note of the Secretary General and supports its forward-looking thrust of ensuring the mainstreaming of population ageing in national development policy. It is clear that the International Plan of Action on Ageing has indeed provided a useful framework not only for promoting awareness of the specific needs of older persons but also for highlighting the need for improved integration of this group in society. It is therefore hoped that activities this year to commemorate the International Year of Older Persons as well as follow-up action including the Research Agenda on Ageing for the twenty-first century and discussions during the plenary meetings of the fifty fourth session of the General Assembly, will further contribute to the proposed concept of a society for all ages as adumbrated by the Secretary General.

Mi. Chairman,

As pointed out in our presentation yesterday, the Group of 77 and China believes that with political will and an enabling environment for social development, the conditions of existence of all peoples can be improved. The achievement of such an environment for developing countries however, faces the formidable obstacles of straitened economies, limited FDI flows and declining resources, both financial and technical. These countries are increasingly asked to do more despite heavy debt burdens, volatile capital flows, insufficient markets for their exports which are also losing competitiveness in the global economy and the depletion of technical and managerial skills as a result of continued migration to more industrialised countries. I would therefore wish to reiterate our call for a genuine partnership between developed and developing countries in pursuing the objectives of the Copenhagen Plan of Action. In this regard, improved international economic conditions would support efforts to assist developing countries in moving towards age-integrated societies.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China would also like to take this opportunity to refer to the Interim Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. Disabled people, including children, have the right to be provided with the opportunities and tools to enable them to continue to make their useful contribution to national development. The supportive efforts of the United Nations Secretariat should therefore be commended. Of particular importance are the Secretariat's initiatives focussed on improving international public awareness, strengthening the legal framework for equal opportunity for persons with disabilities as well as increasing attention to socio-economic policies such as microcredit and microfinance.

Mr. Chairman,

We owe it to our peoples as well as to future generations to devise remedies that would lead to better lives, better societies and a better world. For this reason, the issues of a rapidly ageing global population and increased integration of vulnerable groups such as the disabled, must be addressed in a concrete and decisive manner. On the threshold of the new millennium, for which we have such great expectations, this is the only way that we can truly achieve our aim of an all-inclusive society as envisaged by global leaders in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.