

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR (DR) HASSAN ADAMU, THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ON TRADE

New York, 27 April 2000

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to thank you and the members of the Bureau for the good work you have been doing at this Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Let me also express our appreciation to the Co-Chairmen and members of the Ad Hoc Inter-Sessional Working Group on Trade for working so hard to ensure that we have a good working document.

Trade is one of the best channels to achieve and promote sustainable development. But, this is only possible when the pursuit of trade and environmental policies complement each other in a manner where environmental measures do not act as unnecessary obstacles to trade or are protectionist in intent. The G-77 and China is concerned that certain environmental requirements may adversely affect access to the markets of developed countries since developing countries may lack the technical and financial ability to comply with the environmental regulations of the industrialised countries. In this regard, there is urgent need for full participation of developing countries in the decision-making process on issues relating to trade and environment, including the international standards-making process. It is our firm belief that this can be achieved without undermining the open, equitable and non-discriminatory character of the multilateral trading system.

Mr. Chairman,

Of particular interest to the G-77 is the current stringent market access conditions for agricultural and industrial products of export interest to developing countries. There is need, therefore, to improve, on a broad and liberal basis, access of these products to developed countries' markets. In addition, the developed countries should eliminate the undue subsidies on some agricultural products so as to allow for a fair level playing field and healthy competition for similar products and services originating from the developing countries.

It is clear that the ability of developing countries to respond to environmental challenges depends to a large extent on their access to environmentally sound technologies, promotion of improved market access, and capacity-building initiatives to increase export opportunities. It is our firm belief therefore that the transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries should go beyond acquisition of plants, equipment or consultancy services. It should involve the sharing of knowledge, expertise and experience required to manage technological changes, and the development of human resources to implement organizational changes and improve production efficiency. It must also be emphasized that such technologies should be adaptive and complement the local and indigenous technology of developing countries, rather than displacing or supplanting them.

While the Group is not opposed to the development and promotion of biotechnology,

it is however concerned about the possible long-term impacts, including the wider ethical, environmental and social issues of patenting life form. The effect of the products of biotechnology on environment and sustainable development must be fully established before they are introduced into the domestic market or be exported to developing countries, most of whom lack the capacity to control the negative consequences of such products.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group recognises that although Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been on the increase over the years, the spread of such increase is uneven and concentrated in only few countries in the developing countries, and largely to the developed countries. The Group is also concerned that there has been corresponding decrease of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries, leading to decrease in available resources for sustainable development.

There must be confidence-building measures to create the international economic environment, supportive of multilateral cooperation and favourable for all countries, particularly to the developing countries. Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) will only be meaningful in a situation where our developed partners fulfil their commitment and obvious obligations to developing countries. It is impossible for the developing countries, especially Africa, to be part of sustainable development when their participation in the World Market is less than 1%.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China will like to reiterate the need for the developed countries to eliminate trade distorting policies, protectionist practices and non-tariff barriers to trade in order to improve market access for products of export interest to the developing countries. The developed countries and the international community are called upon to assist and work closely with the developing countries to ensure that the developing countries benefit from investment, particularly FDI and ODA, especially those that promote environmentally sound technology and their diffusion in a manner that is consistent with the national goals and aspirations of the developing countries.

I thank you.

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