

STATEMENT BY OLUSEGUN APATA, AMBASSADOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

New York, 26 April 2000

Mr. Chairman,

I wish on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to thank the Bureau for their outstanding work they have put into the preparation for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. I wish also to express our appreciation to the Secretariat for the detailed and excellent report of the Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Groups as well as the Secretary-General's reports and background documents on issues that are on the agenda of CSD-8.

The goals of sustainable development could only be achievable through a holistic approach. Consequently, all aspects of environment, be it economic, social or otherwise that have great impact on and shape development in developing countries have to be addressed. Our Group is of the view that such holistic approach requires that special attention be paid to:

- Identifying policies to address major constraints faced by developing countries in responding to environmental challenges like financial, technical, institutional and supply side capacities;
- Identifying specific capacity building needs of developing countries;
- Finding a comprehensive solution to external debt burden of developing countries;
- Bringing stability to and cushioning the impact of financial volatility in the rapidly globalizing world;
- Examining ways to promote market access for the exports of developing countries; and
- Transferring of environmentally sound technologies as well as their indigenous development.

These elements are critical because they have direct bearing on sustainable development of land and agriculture, trade, investment and economic growth.

The Group believes that a comprehensive and urgent solution has to be found to debt problem of all developing countries whether middle-income or highly indebted poor countries. The ultimate solution which comes to the fore very clearly at the South Summit is the write-off of the debt stock of all developing countries. This is absolutely essential for the sustainable use of its resources. In addition, the thorny issue of new and additional resources for sustainable development should also receive the urgent attention of this session. It should be emphasized that innovative financial mechanisms are not substitute to other sources of financial resources such as, Official Development Assistance (ODA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI). To meet the dire need for

financial requirements entered into under Agenda 21, particularly those in chapter 33 and the provisions of new and additional resources that are both adequate and predictable, governments, especially of developed countries, should fulfil the United Nations agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA. This is important given the fact that ODA largely remains the most likely and steady source of resources for the implementation of sustainable development. Much as Agenda 21 envisions that the implementation of sustainable development would come from mobilization of domestic resources, it clearly demands substantial input from the international community and organizations. This was in recognition of the limited financial resources of the domestic economies of most developing countries to achieve such meaningful resource mobilization internally.

Mr. Chairman,

In line with holistic approach to sustainable development, the Group reaffirms the need for balance in integrated planning to economic growth, trade and investment in relation to environment. It is necessary therefore for account to be taken of the levels of economic, environmental and social conditions of different countries and regions in the formulation and application of national and international trade and investment measures, in order not to undermine the open, equitable and non-discriminatory character of multilateral trading system and without creating any disguised barriers and conditionalities to developing countries.

Similarly, this session should focus on all interactive elements involved in integrated planning and management of land resources such as water (which will come before the Committee on Natural Resources in August), biological resources, landscape and human resources. The objectives of integrated planning and management of land resources should center on the protection of the environment (critical ecosystems and biodiversity), economic development, food security and poverty alleviation. These goals should also be at the epicenter of strategies for sustainable agriculture and rural development. The international community must show the political will, in concrete terms, required to achieve the target set in 1996 at the World Food Summit to reduce by half the number of undernourished by 2015. The continuing rise of the number of people living in poverty (estimated to reach 1.9 billion in 2015 from the present 1.5 billion), particularly in developing countries, demands that urgent action should be taken to support sustainable development in land and agriculture.

While the Group is not opposed to new studies, research and concepts, nevertheless it cannot accept any attempt to introduce new concepts or even the application of existing ones that have not received the acceptance of the intergovernmental process to establish its relevance as a mechanism to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, the Group wishes to express its difficulty with the concept of multi-functional character of agriculture. It is also concerned that the concept of sustainability impact assessment is still at the exploratory level. It is yet to be clearly defined by various interest groups or countries. The concept is still burdened by a menu of options that are as varied as many countries or groups that have been projecting them. It therefore requires that these concepts be further studied, discussed and clarified. Our position, therefore, is that these concepts should not yet be introduced in our negotiations as a means of addressing sustainable development or be linked to multilateral trade negotiations. It is worth mentioning that the work of the working groups has not reflected adequately the place of women in rural agriculture and sustainable development. Also, the issue of access to land by rural women is a reality that must be

redressed by this session.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 will resist any attempt to renegotiate Agenda 21, now or in Rio +10 in 2002. What we should focus on is how we can speed up the implementation of Agenda 21 and other decisions taken in Rio. The Group is firmly of the view that Rio +10 should be held at summit level and in a developing country. It is our view that CSD should be transformed into a preparatory committee, with equal and total participation of all member states, under the leadership of each succeeding bureau up to the year 2002. If this will create difficulties, the General Assembly should appropriately authorize a full-fledged preparatory committee. Whatever the case, a trust fund should be established to facilitate the participation of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries in the preparatory meetings as well as the Rio +10 conference in 2002.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Group commends the outcome of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process and congratulates the bureau of IFF and all those involved in that process for their hard work and admirable achievement, which led to the proposal to establish a new United Nations Forum on Forests. What should now engage our attention is the establishment of a financial mechanism to mobilize required resources to implement the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) for the sustainable development of all types of forests, especially in developing countries.

I thank you.

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