

Statement by Ms. Donnette Critchlow, Representative of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on agenda items:

99 (a): Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalisation of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade

(b): Preparations for the Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

(d): Human resources development

(e): International migration and development, including the question of the convening of a United Nations Conference on International Migration and Development to address migration issues

(g): Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership

New York, 19 October 1999

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to speak on sub-items a, b, d, e, and g of agenda item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation.

Let me begin by thanking the Secretariat for the reports prepared on these items, which provide useful insights into the issues requiring attention by the world community in order to advance international cooperation in the areas covered. In view of the limited time available, I will address brief remarks on each of the items in turn.

In respect of item 99 (a), the Group of 77 and China considers that the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalisation of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Decade, remain valid and deserve continuing attention by the international community.

Throughout the Decade the Assembly has reaffirmed the need to strengthen the Declaration and Strategy, recognising that successful implementation would contribute to the fulfilment of the goals of the United Nations Charter. However, efforts to that end have encountered many setbacks, not least of which have been the shocks suffered by the global economy over the last decade, with particularly adverse economic and social consequences for developing countries. Reinforced by the negative ramifications of globalisation and a manifest decline in official commitment to international cooperation, it is not surprising that the aims of the Declaration and Strategy have yet to materialise. The promise of the 1990s as the decade of "accelerated development in the developing countries and strengthened international cooperation" has thus largely evaporated, leaving in its wake many countries afflicted by increasing poverty and economic marginalisation, not to mention internecine warfare, conflicts and the effects of natural disasters.

Mr. Chairman,

These realities impose on us the need to reassess our goals and the timetables for their achievement. The

consensus on development reached during the United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s has reaffirmed the necessity for an international environment supportive of sustained economic growth in developing countries, one that enables them to effectively address the challenges of poverty eradication, employment generation, capacity-building and human resources development among other imperatives. Developing countries cannot keep pace with the industrialised, knowledge-based societies of the developed North unless real progress is made towards an equitable integration of all countries in the international economy. Only then can international cooperation for development yield the results envisaged in the fourth Development Decade.

Turning now to item 99 (b), Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat 11), the Group of 77 and China notes that limited progress has been made with respect to human settlement development since the convening of the 1997 Habitat Conference. This is by no means reflective of a failure on the part of the Conference or the concerned parties to implement appropriate measures. Rather it is indicative of the rapidly increasing demand for adequate shelter and basic services, particularly in urban centres and the inadequacy of the means to effectively deal with this demand. According to statistics available, at the start of this century 1 out of every 10 persons lived in the city. Today, it is estimated that approximately 3 billion people, that is, half of the population of the world, is now living in cities.

Developing countries, lacking the resources to cope, have been particularly hardput to respond to the pressures occasioned by rapid urbanisation. For many the problem has been exacerbated by poor economic performance and the negative effects of globalisation and trade liberalisation. The resources deficit at the national level has been compounded by the steep reduction of ODA, and generally unfulfilled conference commitments with regard to the means of implementation. With urban poverty projected to increase at an even faster rate, the prognosis for the next century is hardly encouraging.

Against this background, the Group of 77 and China calls for immediate and intensified action, particularly with respect to increased funding for programmes related to human settlement development. However, even as we resolve to tackle the problems associated with rapid urbanisation and to strengthen campaigns for secure tenure and urban governance, the Group wishes to underscore that the rural dimension of the Habitat programme should not be neglected.

Mr. Chairman,

Looking ahead to the Special Session of the General Assembly aimed at an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Group welcomes the progress made so far in preparations. The Session would provide an opportunity for the international community to examine its achievements and determine future action in this area. To that end the Group considers that it would benefit significantly from the presentation of a comprehensive report on the state of the world's cities.

Let me say finally on this item that the Group of 77 and China has noted the reforms proposed within the context of the UN system with regard to enhancing the roles of UNEP and UNCHS. We are happy to note that the Habitat Center is now fully organised to implement the programmes necessary to ensure that people are provided with adequate shelter and safe and healthy living conditions in this increasingly urbanised world, in as short a time as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

On item 99 (d) the Group of 77 and China considers that human resources development is of critical importance to the promotion of economic and social development. This is especially so in the current context

of globalisation, where knowledge-based enterprise assumes ever greater importance in the global economy.

It is the view of the Group of 77 and China, therefore, that more focused attention needs to be given to this issue in the context of the United Nations. In that spirit, we welcome the focus of the Secretary-General's report on information and communications technology as it relates to human resources development. The Group would be ready to explore the possibility of a more thematic approach to the consideration of human resources development, while preserving guiding principles as well as attention to operational support by the UN system in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

In regard to item 99 (e), International Migration and Development, including the question of the convening of a United Nations Conference on international migration and development to address migration issues, this is an issue to which the Group of 77 and China attaches much importance. We believe that population and development concerns are inextricably linked and should be treated in an integrated fashion in any dialogue on development. The Group recognises that international migration is having a profound effect on all concerned - the countries of origin, countries of destination and those in transit. This situation is hardly likely to improve in light of the challenges posed to developing countries by globalisation and trade liberalisation as well as the increased incidence of national and regional conflicts. The need to assess the impacts of this phenomenon, share experiences and to explore ways and means of making international migration work for the benefit of all concerned, particularly developing countries, has gained added urgency in recent times. The Group of 77 and China believes that various modalities for addressing this issues will need to be explored.

In this context, we commend the initiative of the Government of Thailand, which in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration hosted last April the International Symposium to promote international awareness and foster political will among Asian countries to effectively address this issue. Similar action should be encouraged in other regions. The sharing of experiences between countries as well as the availability of data on migration are critical elements in the development of long term strategies aimed at making international migration work for developing countries.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to address some remarks to item 99 (g), renewal of the dialogue for the strengthening of international economic cooperation through partnership. The need for a more results-oriented dialogue has become all the more evident in the current era of globalisation. The first such dialogue, held last year, addressed the important theme of the economic and social consequences of globalisation and their policy implications, has contributed to a heightened engagement within the UN with the profound implications of this phenomenon. The Group of 77 and China is of the view that the dialogue on international economic cooperation, to be credible, should enable the international community, in particular developing countries, to deal in an effective manner with this phenomenon, both with its promise as well as its perils. We are convinced that the United Nations, given its broad mandate to promote solutions to problems in the economic, social and related fields, has a key role to play in international efforts to harness the process of globalisation for long term development. Our Group will therefore be considering how the Organisation might best contribute to strengthening international economic cooperation towards this end.

We look forward to working constructively with all our partners on the issues I have outlined.

I thank you.