



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY HE AMBASSADOR DUMISANI S KUMALO, SOUTH AFRICAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 60: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AT THE 61ST SESSION OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 2 October 2006)

Chairperson,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Allow me first to express my congratulations to you and the Bureau on your election. We trust that your leadership and guidance will successfully steer the work of the Third Committee in this 61st session of the General Assembly. The Group of 77 and China wishes to assure you of our support and co-operation during this session. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General.

Chairperson

In 1995, the World Summit for Social Development adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. This was a firm expression of our resolve to not only identify the obstacles to social development but to effectively address them in a comprehensive manner, driven by a people-centered approach to development.

More than ten years on, poverty and underdevelopment still remain the biggest threats to achieving equality amongst nations big and small and to ensuring a better quality of life for all. For this reason the core priorities of eradication of poverty, promotion of social integration and the attainment of full employment as set out in the Copenhagen Declaration must remain high on the agenda of the United Nations and the international community.

The uneven and slow progress made in achieving the outcomes of the Copenhagen Summit and other internationally agreed development goals, especially the goal of reducing hunger and poverty is a major cause of concern for the Group. We therefore express deep regret and disappointment that the 44th session of the Commission for Social Development held in February 2006 did not achieve a negotiated outcome on the Priority Theme "The Review of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of poverty". We hope that this very important issue of poverty eradication could be addressed effectively during this session. We thus look forward to the adoption of the annual resolution on the Follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly by consensus.

Chairperson,

The acceleration of the achievement of the goals of social development requires a comprehensive, integrated, coordinated and balanced approach which should not only ensure greater policy and co-ordination at a global level but also ensure that countries have adequate national policy space, for adopting nationally owned and developed socio-economic policies and strategies. It also requires a multi-sectoral approach because there is both an economic dimension as well as a social dimension to achieving development that is sustainable.

An enabling environment is required for the achievement of social goals in areas related to poverty, hunger, education, literacy, health, infant mortality and gender equality. We have a responsibility as the international community to ensure an effective international enabling environment that is supportive of national policies and programmes for social development. This should encompass a reformed international financial and trade architecture, a comprehensive solution to the external debt problem, an increase in market access for products from developing countries and an equitable multilateral trading system.

International co-operation is critical for the achievement of the goals of social development. Fundamental to this is the issue of adequate resources and to this end we continue to call upon our developed partners to be faithful to their ODA commitments. It is appreciated however that ODA cannot be the main source of funding for social development and therefore international cooperation should be geared towards supporting countries to develop national social and development policies suited to their national situations and to assist developing countries in overcoming the legacies of the past.

Chairperson,

The Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development clearly stipulates that productive

work and employment are central elements of development and essential for upholding human dignity. For this reason full employment and decent work for all should be an integral part of enhancing economic growth and poverty eradication strategies.

Chairperson,

The Group of 77 and China also supports the continued focus on social groups such as women, youth, older persons, the family, and persons with disabilities in both national and international development agendas. It is important that these issues and perspectives be mainstreamed into poverty reduction policies and social development programmes.

In this regard, the Secretary-General's report refers to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as a model international framework which promotes the full participation of older persons in development processes and encourages research on ageing in all countries. It further promotes self representation and active participation in decision making, recognizing ageing as a normal phase of life.

Chairperson,

The Group welcomes the recent conclusion of the text of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Convention marks a major shift in the way the world's 650 million people with disabilities are treated. This much-awaited instrument acknowledges that persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, particularly those of direct concern to them. Since the majority of persons with disabilities live in conditions of poverty, the Group also views the Convention as a crucial tool to uplift the lives of a significant population among the poor and hence an instrument to eradicate poverty.

Successful implementation of these international frameworks requires political and financial commitment at the national level, as well as through international cooperation. Greater attention should be paid to national capacity building and raising the profile of social groups such as the aged and persons with disabilities, which still remain relatively low in both national and international development agendas.

Linked to people-centred development is the importance of education. Addressing literacy challenges and achieving the goals of the international plan of action for the UN literacy decade requires increased political and financial commitment by Member States and adoption of explicit literacy policies to expand quality primary and lower secondary education, as well as scaling up of youth and adult literacy programmes. Strengthening partnerships with all domestic and international Literacy Decade stakeholders and increased financial and technical support by the international community, is further needed to enable Member States to successfully implement the International Plan of Action and attain the goals of the Literacy Decade.

In conclusion Chairperson,

The Group of 77 and China hopes that this session will focus on accelerating the achievement of the social goals set out in the Copenhagen Declaration as well as other internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium development goals and a renewed commitment to improving the status of all social groups. The Group of 77 and China will play its part in ensuring that we take meaningful decisions to achieve progress in strengthening social development.