



STATEMENT BY MR. HASSAN ABOUTAHIR, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY (MOROCCO) ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, ON REGIONAL COOPERATION IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (GENEVA, 18 JULY 2003)

Mr. President,

Let at the outset thank, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the regional Commissions for their respective and very useful reports.

The role of the regional commissions as "outposts of the United Nations" and as bodies for expression of regional challenges and concerns provides a comprehensive mandate and a crucial role for regional commissions in the whole spectrum of the activities of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields. Their activities cover a broad and diversified range of activities reflecting the regional dimension of the global issues addressed in the United Nations System.

Mr. President,

As globalisation and freer trade are increasingly evolving, their regional perspective is more than ever before crucial for development and growth, since globalisation and trade liberalization is encompassing opportunities but also risks of marginalisation.

There is a clear indication that the globalisation might lead to a widening gap between rich and poor in nearly all nations and between the least and most developed countries.

The regional commissions could contribute in process of globalisation, particularly through their role in bringing regional dimension and by reflecting specific concerns of each region in the international debate on globalisation.

There is a clear indication that number of poor people living in poverty in most developing countries as well as developing regions has increased; debt servicing is putting more burden on national budgets which should be allocated to health, education and other social services; and the share of a large number of developing countries, in particular LDCs in the global exports has declined.

Mr. President,

There are only a few sub-regions within the developing world that have benefited from rapid growth of international trade and foreign capital flows, for the growth and recovery of their economies. The institutional capacities in various sectors of the economy at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels are not yet commensurate with the existing needs to prevent or to address the risks and fragility which are different from region to region.

On the other hand, most of the developing world, particularly African countries and LDCs, do not have the capacity to tap the opportunities of globalisation and not even to address the adverse impact of such a process are being bypassed and further marginalized. There is no clear expectation for improvement of their economic situations, they are losing almost every edge for being competitive in the international markets even for those products that traditionally they had the comparative advantage and it seems that poverty has been institutionalised in those countries.

Mr. President,

Follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits should constitute one of the main tasks of regional commissions. Nonetheless, such a follow-up should be done in the context of regional priorities and needs and the work program of the commissions should continue to be adjusted in order to enable developing countries to achieve those objectives.

The Group of 77 and China would like to stress that, although there are some common challenges for regional commissions, to cope with the major issues and priorities in their respective regions should nevertheless constitute the work program and other arrangements within the regional commissions. This will allow Regional commissions to promote ownership of their programmes and functions and focus on issues that can contribute to development within their respective regions.

It also can assist them to better serve as a forum for articulating regional perspectives on major global and regional issues including preparing follow-up to global conferences and summits.

Mr. President,

Improved coordination and cooperation between the United Nations system and the regional commissions could contribute to better understanding of the UN agencies of the priorities in the respective regions and to better coordination among the agencies at the regional level. It could also improve the ownership of regional programs through more interaction with the regional commissions and their membership.

Mr. President

Finally, more collaboration and cooperation among regional commissions as well as with the United Nations development organisations and agencies in all economic and social fields could lead to a more realistic and result-based objectives.

Thank you.