



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. SULTAN AL-MAHMOUD, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, UNDER AGENDA ITEMS 13 (ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS) AND 14 (SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS), ON THE CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE FUNCTIONAL COMMISSIONS OF ECOSOC IN 2004 (New York, 20 July 2004)

Mr. Vice-President,

I have the privilege to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda items 13 and 14. I would like to thank the Secretary General for the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 contained in document E/2004/81. The report is insightful and offers an interesting approach to strengthen linkages between the work of the commissions and the Council and among the commissions themselves.

The Group of 77 and China believe that there is no piecemeal solution to the realization of the development goals. We cannot achieve major progress in achieving the development goals through selective implementation. For this reason, we support and integrated and coordinated implementation of the goals contained in the outcomes of the conferences and summits. The Group believes that this will greatly facilitate the realization of the MDGs. In this context, the report of the Secretary-General provides a useful analysis of major policy issues addressed by the commissions in 2004, using the Millennium Development Goals as a guide. We believe that this report provides useful input to the Council's work over the coming months in guiding the commission's contribution to the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be held at the commencement of its sixtieth session.

We would like to acknowledge that for the successful implementation of the conference outcomes the various parts of the intergovernmental machinery dealing with social and economic issues have to synchronize their work and develop stronger synergies. In this effort, ECOSOC has to play a central role.

The Group, however, recognizes that the functional commissions possess great expertise in their own particular areas of competence. While the commissions should retain their own identities and remain the key forum for reviewing and encouraging the implementation of the outcome of a conference, they also have an important role in addressing the interaction between common conference goals and follow-up of individual conferences. While the work of functional commissions should be as focused and specialized as possible, it is important to ensure that they contribute to the work of the Council on any given theme. The commissions should also clearly identify issues requiring speedy attention and action by ECOSOC, so that the Council can effectively discharge its functions in guiding the system-wide implementation of conference follow-up.

We believe that the Council can also facilitate commission's contributions to its work by taking a timely decision on its themes for the high-level and coordination segment. The Group is very actively engaged in the process of finalizing a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of ECOSOC, as such a programme would give lead time to the subsidiary bodies to make substantive contributions to the work of the Council. We, however, strongly believe that this exercise should not turn into defining new categories of cross-cutting themes. It should focus on the generally acceptable cross-cutting thematic issues that are common to the outcomes of the conferences and summits. The Group would like to finalize the multi-year programme as soon as possible and would hope that its partners are also constructively engaged in this effort.

The Group strongly believes that the implementation of conference outcomes can only be achieved through strengthened linkages between normative and operational work of the United Nations. While the commissions are taking steps to enhance linkages with the UN funds and programmes, there is a need for further improvement to fill the gaps that still exist between their normative and UN system-wide operational work. With this in view, the commissions and their secretariats should clearly identify the operational implications of their work and bring them to the attention of the governing bodies of the funds and programmes for their consideration and guidance on operational activities. Ways of more effectively mainstreaming policy guidance from the commissions to the operational work of the funds and programmes should also be examined. In turn, the executive boards of the funds and programmes should bring to the attention of the functional commissions approaches from their work which are of relevance, linking the activities of the funds and programmes to the policy dialogue in the functional commissions. This should contribute to a system-wide approach on strengthening linkages between normative and operational work.

On the issue of regional cooperation, there is a need for further improvement. First, there should be a clear division between the functions of the regional commissions and those of the functional commissions on the implementation of the conference outcomes. Greater cooperation between the functional commission and the regional commissions, including consultations at the regional level should also be strengthened. In this regard, emulating the example of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) could be considered more widely to reinforce implementation at the regional level.

We would also like to take this opportunity to address the proposal of giving greater visibility to the work of the regional commissions during the substantive session of ECOSOC. The Group has studied with interest the proposal to bring the consideration of this item immediately after the High-level Segment. While there is a need to make the work of the regional commission more visible, the pros and cons of this proposal need to be further examined. The Council may consider addressing this question as part of its organizational session next year.

Mr. Vice-President,

We would like to welcome the efforts that have been undertaken by various commissions, in pursuance of resolution 57/270 B to review their working methods in order to shift to the implementation mode. In this context, the Group found CRPs 5 and 6 of great value, as these provide a comprehensive view of the work of the commissions so far. The Group would like these reviews to be completed by next year and looks forward to a more detailed report.

The Group supports the recommendation to submit to the Council a consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions in 2005 as part of the report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits.

The Group is also of the view that reporting by the subsidiary bodies of the Council needs to be streamlined. But we would like to caution that substances should not be lost at the expense of brevity. A measure of balance has to be maintained in making these reports succinct yet covering all the necessary details of the discussions that are relevant to the work of the Council.

While we believe that the Council has started to more effectively guide the work of its functional commissions, improve the overall coherence of their work and stimulate substantive interaction among them, it is still a long way from realizing its full potential in system-wide integration of the United Nations activities within economic and social fields. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the consideration of the consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions should be aimed at strengthening the role of the Council in ensuring well integrated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Thank you Mr. Vice-President.