



**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bennouna, Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, on behalf of the  
Group of 77 and China, at the Forty-seventh Session of the Commission on  
the Status of Women (New York, 3 March 2003)**

Mr. Chairman

At the outset, allow me to express, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of our Commission and let me assure you of our full support.

I avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau as well.

I would also like to thank the Secretariat for the quality of documentation submitted to us, which undoubtedly will help enhance our reflection on the themes under consideration during the 47th session of the Commission on the status of Women.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China deem of particular relevance the choice of the two priority themes for this session, namely: participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women; and women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Addressing these two themes is very important in our quest for achieving gender equality and women empowerment.

Needless to recall that in the Beijing Declaration adopted in the 5th World Conference on Women, in 1995, Heads of State and Government declared to be "determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity".

Eight years after the Beijing Conference, and three years after the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, one can rightly ask whether the objectives, particularly those related to women's access to and participation in the media and information and communication technologies, were reached.

In this regard, the Group of 77 and China share the views expressed by the Secretary General in his report (E/CN.6/2003/6) that any objective and rational analysis in this field lacks reliable statistics and data and that most studies available on the use of information technologies are rarely disaggregated by sex.

Mr. Chairman,

Certainly, information and communication technologies constitute an essential tool of development that aims at enhancing the empowerment of women and promoting gender equality. Access to information and communication technologies offers considerable opportunities for economic, social and human development and contributes to the emergence of new societies based on knowledge and information dissemination.

However, a considerable part of the world population living in poverty, particularly women, cannot

benefit from the advantages offered by modern technological progress, which further deepens the “digital divide” between high tech societies and those lagging behind. Such a situation explains the legitimate concerns raised by developing countries.

Moreover, disparities in terms of illiteracy and the relatively limited access to education in some developing countries, along with the high costs of information technologies, reduce women chances to develop their basic knowledge and skills in information technologies and to benefit from the opportunities they offer. Consequently, a large number of women in developing countries are deprived from contributing more effectively to the economic and social development of their communities.

Mr. Chairman,

The digital divide is likely to become wider if no concrete and voluntary effort is urgently undertaken to facilitate and enhance the access of developing countries to information and communication technologies through, inter alia, international assistance in the fields of training and technology transfer.

Without such a solidarity and strengthened international cooperation, new information and communication technologies will only perpetuate existing inequalities rather than contribute to development. Increased efforts in this respect should also lead to and encourage a genuine technology transfer to developing countries. There lies one of the main challenges to be taken up by the world Summit on the Information society.

It should be noted that the development of new information and communication technologies in recent years has unfortunately witnessed a certain measure of abuse that impacted adversely on women’s image and dignity. In this regard, the specific interests and concerns of women have to be duly kept in mind, in particular issues related to violence against women and trafficking in women and girls.

Mr Chairman,

The 23rd Special session of the General Assembly has reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to “create an enabling environment and design and implement policies that promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights-civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the right to development- and fundamental freedoms, as part of the efforts to achieve gender equality, development and peace.”

With this commitment in mind, the Group of 77 and China hold the view that violence against women impairs their basic rights and fundamental freedoms and prevents them from enjoying fully those rights. The international Community has therefore spared no effort, for several years, in search for appropriate solutions that might lead to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Our group is of the view that, in spite of efforts made at national, regional and international levels to eliminate all forms of violence against women and its repercussions on development efforts, it is important that concerted, multidimensional and multisectoral approaches be adopted at all levels. The United Nations contribution to this end is highly significant.

It is worth noting that while the international community has been able to develop a considerable number of legal instruments aiming at the promotion and protection of the rights of women, many violations of these rights are still perpetrated, sometimes in the worst forms.

Mr. Chairman,

Trafficking in Women and girls is one of the worst forms of violence against women. Such criminal practice, which benefits organized crime, has unfortunately increased in an alarming manner. Such a horrid and degrading phenomenon has widely taken advantage of the economic opportunities offered by globalization, as well as from technology and communication advances, especially the Internet.

To face up to this problem, the Group of 77 and China believe that concrete actions should be taken or reinforced at the national and international levels.

In this regard, national legislations and policies should allow for a better protection of the rights of women and girls, in addition to the prevention and repressing of the trafficking in women and girls, the laying down of civil and criminal sanctions against the perpetrators of such crimes and the setting up of efficient support, training and reintegration programs for victims of trafficking. Furthermore, training of staff involved in the prevention of women and girls trafficking is necessary for preparing them to better address all issues relating to this phenomenon.

Participation of civil society, in particular NGO'S, in the efforts to fight trafficking in women and girls is very important.

The Group of 77 and China are of the view that international cooperation is decisive in the fight against trafficking in women and girls, which is essentially a form of transnational organized crime. The adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements should allow for a better exchange of information and cooperation in this field. The promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of migrant workers, particularly women, are key elements in the prevention and the combat against trafficking in women and girls.

Mr. Chairman,

The fight against poverty, hunger and diseases, as well as the promotion of a genuine sustainable development, require necessarily a continuing action in favor of gender equality and the promotion and empowerment of women.

In a world characterized by an ever-increasing reliance on technology, such objectives cannot be achieved without a larger participation and more significant access of women to the media and information technologies. Likewise, it is imperative to adopt stronger measures likely to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.