

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H. E. MR J.K. SHINKAIYE, AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA TO ETHIOPIA AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE OAU AND ECA, ON BEHALF OF THE G77 ON AGENDA ITEM 100: GLOBALISATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE, IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 55TH UNGA

New York, 24 October 2000

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77, it is an honour for me to address the Second Committee on agenda item 100: Globalisation and Interdependence. I wish to thank the Secretary-General and the UNCTAD secretariat for the reports before us, focusing on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalisation and highlighting the outcome of the High-level Panel of Experts on Information Technology.

Mr. Chairman,

As humanity enters the twenty-first century, Globalisation has emerged as a process which for the foreseeable future will continue to have profound effect on the world. Its effects is universal in scope with impact on all facets of life, including the political, economic and social landscape. That realisation prompted previous sessions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to focus on the phenomenon. Certainly, the trends of events have since confirmed that the United Nations took the right step to address the broad theme of globalisation, right from the 53rd UNGA session. This is because in a space of two years, we have witnessed the continuing integration of the world economy, and indeed the evolution and emergence of our world into a truly global village.

As we enter a new century, on the wings of the various forces of globalisation, it is certain that the primary challenge before the international community is how to ensure that globalisation benefits humanity as a whole, and not just a few industrialised countries. Thus efforts should be focused on how the main instruments of globalisation, namely, international trade, international financial transactions, foreign direct investment and information and communication technology (ICT) can help integration of the world economy in such a way that developing countries can take advantage of the opportunities inherent in this phenomenon. That has been our clarion call at different fora and it will continue to be so until we achieve the desired goal.

In its evaluation of the development impact of globalisation, the Tenth UNCTAD Conference held in Bangkok noted that globalisation and interdependence have opened new opportunities through increased liberalisation and advancement in technology, for the growth of the world economy and development. However, majority of countries in the developing world, a substantial part of humanity have been left behind. That session of UNCTAD therefore concluded that the priority task was to ensure that appropriate global macro-economic policies are adopted to complement the efforts of developing countries to ensure equitable spread of benefits of globalisation.

The Havana Programme of Action adopted by the Group of 77 at the historic first-ever South Summit in Cuba drew attention to the impact of globalisation on all aspects of life through trade, investment, capital flow as well as information technology. The Group noted that globalisation can be a powerful and dynamic force for strengthening cooperation and accelerating growth and development; but that it also presents risks, opportunities and challenges. In this connection, they pointed to empirical evidence that shows the widening gap between developed and developing countries, in the wake of globalisation. The Group therefore submitted that the primary challenge was how to spread the benefits of globalisation to all countries and peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

Just a few weeks ago at the Annual meeting of the World Bank Group, the President of the World Bank also underscored the risks and opportunities of the phenomenon, indicating how globalisation could, on one hand, mean opportunities for workers in one part of the world, to develop their potentials; and how at the same time it might imply worry about decisions in far away land on the life and jobs of others. In other words, the World Bank did not lose sight of the risks, opportunities and challenges of globalisation. It is against this background that the Group welcomes the focus of the UN and other Bretton Woods Institutions on the issue of transfer of ICT, to developing countries and in particular the coordination of policies in the field of finance, trade, technology and development issues at the global level to optimise the benefits of globalisation.

Mr. Chairman,

The G77 shares the view that ICT should indeed play a decisive role in the new global economy. We recognise that it is also critical to the effective integration of the developing countries into a rapidly integrating world economy. That realisation informed the decision of the South Summit in Havana to call for effective international cooperation to bridge the ever widening digital divide. The report before this committee speak in similar vein, pointing out the importance of bridging the digital divide by enhancing the human and institutional capacity of developing countries; and encouraging the adoption of conducive policies accordingly.

We share the view that the UN is indeed uniquely placed to assume a role in facilitating the flow of technology, especially ICT and resources to developing countries. Indeed, the various activities of the organisations within the UN system enumerated in the Report reveal the commitment of the organisations of the UN system in pursuing the development approaches to the global knowledge based economy and society. Properly coordinated, these activities can help developing countries to leapfrog into the development process. In addition, they are equally indicative of the possibilities of the important role of the United Nations in the field of ICT.

Mr. Chairman,

The recommendations of the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC encapsulated in the Ministerial Declaration, provide a useful reference point for action. The programme for action include the following:

- providing Advisory services to developing countries in the field of Foreign Direct Investment with focus on ICT;
- assisting developing countries in overall investment codes and other legal and institutional framework that attract foreign investors into the sector;
- promoting capacity-building and innovative use of ICT as special opportunities to overcome development barriers in isolated and distant communities;
- helping to implement regional activities such as joint project seminars, workshops and training programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

With a growth rate of Internet users of about 15000 per day, and 220 million devices accessing the world wide web with 200,000 devices added each day, e-commerce or business conducted over the Internet totalled \$45billion as of 1998. Although the total volume of e-commerce transactions is projected to hit \$7 trillion by 2004, lamentably only 5% of the world's population which is concentrated in the developed world will benefit from this technological progress. These figures are illustrative of the lopsided nature and structure of the state

of ICT in the world today. Perhaps, more important, they demonstrate the difficult task facing developing countries as each day passes, to bridge this divide and connect the remainder of humanity to the ICT revolution.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community, especially the United Nations, has a special obligation to assist developing countries to be part of the digital revolution. In particular, it can provide the platform to other members of the international community to work in close concert with national governments, private global sector and civil society, to assist developing countries in this endeavour, as recommended by the panel of experts. In addition, the G77 is of the view that the following recommendations of the panel is worthy consideration and implementation accordingly:

- proclamation that the right to universal access to ICT services such as the Internet is an important new component part of the United Nations principles and conventions on human and development rights
- creation of a Task Force to bring together multilateral development institutions, private industry, foundations, and trusts to facilitate investment and the expansion of the market for ICT in developing countries
- establishment of a Fund which will be leverage and additional sources of resources to assist developing countries to implement their own ICT programme

Mr. Chairman,

In an era in which the developing countries are grappling with the problems of debt, poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS pandemic and other dreaded diseases, the G77 shares the view that the potential benefits of ICT revolution can help in finding solution to some of the above problems. We commend the Secretary-General for his specific initiatives such as the Health InterNetwork and the United Nations Information Technology Service(UNITes) whose objective is to train groups in developing countries in the opportunities of information technology. We look forward with keen interest for further information and elaboration on these initiatives. Furthermore, it is pertinent to recall that developing countries at the South Summit in Havana also took several initiatives to foster South-South cooperation in the area of information technology. We urge Agencies of the United Nations to assist in the implementation of South-South cooperation, particularly as envisioned in the Havana Programme of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community, at the dawn of a new millennium, stands at a unique point in the history of humanity to make a difference as the world goes through a revolution even greater than or of the same magnitude like the industrial revolution. The United Nations in particular stands at a vantage point to help the development of a strategic alliance between private sector international organisations and Governments in collaborative partnership, to rise up to demands of the ICT revolution.

I thank you.