

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY MR. OSITADINMA ANAEDU, DELEGATION OF NIGERIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 ON AGENDA ITEM 92(D): SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT, IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 55TH UNGA

New York, 6 October 2000

Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 92(d) on Science and Technology for Development. I wish to express our appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General, which provides useful overview on the subject matter.

Mr. Chairman,

The rapid advancement in scientific and technological development, especially in areas of biotechnology, micro-electronics as well as information and communication technology have played a critical role in the economic and social development of contemporary times. Opportunities provided by these technologies are enormous. Access to and capacity to harness these technologies have lasting impact on the way nations and peoples of the global community compete among themselves for the control of the earth's resources. They are equally very crucial, as indicated in the report before us, for the effective integration of developing countries into the global economy. It is evident that the rapid pace and impact of these technologies have fundamentally altered the nature of challenges facing all countries, particularly the developing countries.

The Group is concerned that, in most part, developing countries have been left far behind in knowledge generation and its application to new areas of industry. For most of our people, the profound advancement in science and technology has not brought the much-anticipated benefits to their lives. They still lack basic facilities, like clean water, telephone, electricity, and housing. Majorities still lack basic education and health facilities. This is compounded by unsustainable debt burden. In the main, limited capacity for investment in research makes it most difficult for developing countries to keep up with rapid development in the field of science and technology. As a result, the disparity between developing and developed countries, in generation of income and national wealth has widened.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group is also concerned that the role of the United Nations and its agencies, including the Commission on Science and Technology and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, has been progressively diminished over the years. In spite of the provisions of the General Assembly in its Resolution 52/182 on Science and Technology, the United Nations system still lacks the financial resources to pursue its mandate. At present, the United Nations appears ill equipped to handle the current challenges in the development in science and technologies. The Organisation should, therefore, be restored to its pre-eminent position in the promotion of international cooperation in science and technology. In that regard, the Group commends the outcome of the recent ECOSOC High-level segment on Information and Communication Technology. Certainly, the recommendation from that session of ECOSOC provides an important reference point for the United Nations and relevant stakeholders to pursue activities in that area.

Mr. Chairman,

With increasing integration of the world today, international cooperation in the field of science and technology is an important component part of concerted effort for our developmental aspirations. Such cooperation, our Group envisages, should be in the area of research and development, capacity building,

transfer of environmentally sound technologies on concessional and preferential terms as well as access to financial resources. Also important is the need to eliminate barriers that have prevented the developing countries from acquiring the necessary facilities that will enable them to exploit the potentials and opportunities presented by science and technology, including in traditional knowledge. Other constraints, such as, lack of infrastructure, prohibitive cost of acquiring knowledge, and small size of economies of developing countries, will remain impediments towards achieving this goal, unless conscious efforts are made to address these problems. The Group urges international support to regional and sub-regional initiatives of developing countries in this area, particularly through support for activities of Economic/Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

The Group of 77 is of the view that the international community should acknowledge the rights of patent of peoples of developing countries, in the use and application of their traditional knowledge in any form, including industrial production, within and outside their communities and countries. It is also important that the provisions of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, relating to transfer of technology, should be fully implemented to the mutual benefits of both producers and users of technical knowledge.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 also recognizes that advances in science and technology carry with it certain risks that are potentially destructive to the environment. Today, more than ever, we are all concerned at the impact of mankind's activities on the environment and the use of earth's resources. The challenge before this Committee, therefore, is how to develop a strategy at promoting appropriate use of science and technology for sustainable development and in particular implementation of Agenda 21.

The Group believes that science and technology, being the driving force of modern global economy can provide the basis for generation of wealth that will enable developing countries to address the problems of external debt burden, recurrent natural disasters, conflicts and health challenges, including HIV/AIDS pandemic. Science and technology seems to be the most realistic option to facilitate the closing of economy gap between world's rich and poor nations and also digital divide.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let us resolve at this critical period in the history of mankind, to come up with and implement practical measures, aimed at assisting developing countries to tackle old and new challenges of science and technology. And in achieving that goal, I am sure we all agree that the issue of steady and predictable financial resources is of prime importance. I trust that we shall address these problems at this Millennium Assembly.

I thank you.