

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR S. A. ADEKANYE, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTORATE, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE, DURING THE 55TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON AGENDA ITEMS 103 & 104: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY, AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS

New York, 26 September 2000

Madam Chairperson,

I take the floor on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to address the Third Committee on agenda items 103 & 104: Social Development, including Questions relating to Youth, Ageing, Disabled Persons and the Family, and Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons. May I, first of all, on behalf of the Group, congratulate you and members of your Bureau on your election to conduct the affairs of our Committee for the 55th Session. I have no doubt that you will steer the deliberations of our Committee to a fruitful conclusion. I also wish to express the Group's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his reports on the issues before us, which provide a useful basis for our work.

Madam Chairperson,

Three months ago, we all converged in Geneva to review and assess the progress made five years after the World Social Summit in Copenhagen and pledged to make social development a central concern for all. At the meeting, it was concluded that although progress was made in certain areas, not much had been achieved in terms of alleviating the living conditions of the majority of humankind, most of whom reside in developing countries. In spite of the outstanding scientific and technological progress that had been witnessed during the same period, a large proportion of humanity still remains desperately poor. We in G-77 cannot but agree with the observation of the UN Secretary-General that extreme poverty is an affront to our common humanity.

In Geneva, therefore, we reaffirmed the will of Member States of the United Nations to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, including the agreed target of halving poverty by 2015, and stressed the need to overcome the obstacles militating against the integration of developing countries into the global economy to enable them share in the benefits of rapid technological advances and the unprecedented opportunities for social and economic development.

Madam Chairperson,

Realizing that the attainment of these objectives required a collective commitment and effort of the international community, it was agreed that a holistic approach be adopted and a call was made for the mobilization and allocation of additional resources, at both national and international levels towards that goal. Governments also agreed to strive to attain the yet to be fulfilled internationally agreed target of 0.7% of GNP of developed countries for the overall Official Development Assistance (ODA) as soon as possible. We took note of the constraint of debt servicing on developing countries and pledged to find effective, equitable, development-oriented and desirable solutions to the external debt and debt servicing burden of developing countries.

Madam Chairperson,

Poverty alleviation remains at the centre of the national policy agenda in most of our countries. We have

adopted programmes and strategies aimed at poverty reduction. Our efforts have not yielded the desired result not because we have not tried enough. We have been constrained by fiscal and budgetary austerity imposed on us by the international financial institutions which leaves us with hardly any resources to initiate job creation programmes. These efforts have been further compounded by the advent of globalization which, in many cases, wiped out some of the gains achieved as was witnessed in the Asian financial crisis and the reverberating effect it had. The call for a holistic approach to attain the objectives agreed to in Geneva as I have already mentioned, is not only timely but also pertinent.

Madam Chairperson,

To address, in a serious manner, the eradication of poverty and the provision of full employment and social integration in our countries would require finding a permanent solution to the issue of debt. Creditor nations must therefore commit themselves to debt remission for developing countries to allow for economic renewal in those countries. More open and accessible markets in developed countries to products from developing countries is also an essential component in the generation of resources and employment, that, in turn, would promote development.

Madam Chairperson,

The International Year of Older Persons observed last year provided the international community the opportunity to raise awareness of the rapid demographic change. With the world population surpassing six billion, we are in the midst of a demographic revolution. This development has grave consequences on economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications on both developed and developing countries. There is therefore the need to promote action strategies to face the challenges posed by the global increase in the ageing population. The impact of this revolution is felt more by the developing countries not only because the vast majority of older persons live there, but also that the tempo of ageing is rapidly on the increase. The correlation between economic advantages and lengthened lifespan notwithstanding demographic data suggests that by 2050, percentage increase of the aged in developing countries, will equal that in developed countries.

Madam Chairperson,

The financial implication of this development for us in the developing countries is obvious. Resources will be needed to meet health needs as well as retraining to re-engage our aged in productive employment. We need therefore to invest in human development which will prepare us all to face various stages of life without the fear of dependence in old age.

Ageing priorities compete with other policy priorities such as external debt servicing obligations, development, security, health, water, etc. There is the need to raise public awareness on the challenges of the ageing population so as to prepare ground for policy change. Our poverty alleviation strategies should incorporate the needs of older persons so as to make the aged both agents and beneficiaries of development.

Madam Chairperson,

We must also seek to address the gender dimensions of the ageing population as older women are more likely to experience poverty than older men. In this regard, efforts should be made to continue to examine the discrepancies which exist in the areas of status, opportunities, entitlements, among others.

Aware of the implications of ageing population for our countries and the genuine concern for its welfare, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the decision of the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly to convene a Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 as well as the decision to review the international plan of action. The Group lends its full support to the World Assembly and it is our hope that the outcome of the

