

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SIMEON.A.ADEKANYE, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ABUJA, NIGERIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA ON AGENDA ITEMS 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN; AND 108: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENTITLED “WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE FOR THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY”, AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 55TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 9 October 2000

Madam Chairperson,

I am pleased to address this Committee on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on the agenda items 107: Advancement of Women and item 108: Implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the Special Session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century”. We note the introductory statements on these items. We believe they have provided member States a deeper appreciation of the progress achieved and the challenges which confront us as we pursue the shared goal of gender equality, development and peace.

Madam Chairperson,

The Special Session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century” which took place here in New York in June this year, was a major step for full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It provided member States the opportunity to share experiences and identify areas of progress and the continuing challenges for gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as to elaborate further actions and initiatives. Governments reaffirmed their commitment to overcome obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. We also resolved to strengthen all human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and promote women’s full participation and empowerment.

Madam Chairperson,

The Special Session was a demonstration of our shared belief that effective international cooperation can contribute towards achieving the goal of gender equality and advancement of women. The fact is that since the Beijing Conference significant progress has been recorded in some of the critical areas of concern to developing countries within the Beijing Platform of Action. Greater attention is now being devoted to the issue of women and poverty whilst policies and programmes with a special focus on the needs of women in our various countries have been initiated.

Concerted efforts have also been made to address all forms of violence against women through policy, legal and institutional reforms, particularly on the horrendous crime of trafficking in women and children, which is universally acknowledged as a crime against humanity.

We commend the Secretary-General in his report on Trafficking in Women and Girls which provides us a renewed focus on this problem. It is essential that we do not relent in our efforts. We also wish to underscore the importance of international cooperation for an effective response to trafficking in human beings, particularly women and children.

Notwithstanding these positive developments in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, some old obstacles persist. The impoverishment of women remains, primarily because the debt burden constraints development efforts of many developing countries, with women bearing the brunt of the hardships caused by attendant economic restructuring. Regrettably, efforts at debt relief through such programmes as the 'Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' initiative have not yielded the desired result. We believe that an urgent and definitive resolution of the debt problem, including outright debt cancellation, would free resources for development in developing countries. This will, in turn, strengthen the capacity of developing countries to pursue development oriented policies that will positively impinge on the lives of women.

Madam Chairperson,

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, the world has witnessed some new challenges particularly, resulting from globalization. We note that while globalization offers great opportunities to countries, it has marginalized others, with its negative impacts falling disproportionately on women. The combined effects of globalization and structural adjustment programmes have, inter alia, been increased feminization of poverty. They have also undermined efforts to achieve gender equality. This situation is further compounded by the decrease in the amount of funding available for development through international cooperation. There is an urgent need therefore, to devise innovative approaches, including empowerment of women through gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes, education, skills training and increased awareness of their rights to address this problem.

Madam Chairperson,

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues its devastating effect on developing countries. The modest gains made by many developing countries in the field of human resources is being threatened by this crisis. It has worsened the state of under-development in developing countries particularly of Africa, with severe impact of the disease on women and children. It is therefore a welcome development that the Millennium Declaration recently adopted by world leaders, focused on the issue, by setting a target date to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic and other dreaded diseases including malaria and tuberculosis. In pursuit of the goal set by the Millennium Declaration the Group expresses the hope that this will complement the initiatives spelt out in the outcome document of the Special Session on Women.

Madam Chairperson,

The Group appreciates the contribution of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups, towards the goal of promoting the empowerment of women. We consider their efforts complementary in maintaining the momentum generated at various world conferences on women, particularly the Fourth World Conference on Women. We look forward to continuing fruitful collaboration between national governments on the one hand and non-governmental organizations and civil society groups on the other.

Madam Chairperson,

The activities of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) are of primary interest to the Group. The Group therefore is deeply concerned at the threat of the closure of INSTRAW. If the Institute were to be closed, that would be the first time in the history of the Organization that a United Nations Institute, only one of the three UN bodies located in a developing country, would be so affected before achieving its objective. In addition, closing the Institute is certainly not in line with the spirit of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which was reaffirmed at the Review Conference in June. We note the report before the Committee regarding the financial situation of INSTRAW.

We are committed to the revitalization of INSTRAW. We must therefore exert every effort to ensure its survival.

Madam Chairperson,

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The Special Session on Women in June 2000, remains a watershed in meeting the goals and objectives outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This Millennium Assembly must build upon the conclusions that emerged from that conference to ensure a full and effective implementation of all initiatives in the Beijing Platform for Action. Madam Chairperson,

In the pursuit of that objective the Group reaffirms its commitment to the creation in our respective countries of an environment supportive of the empowerment of women. We reiterate our call for the provision of adequate resources at the national, regional and international levels to ensure translation of the various commitments made by member States, especially during the Special Session on Women, into concrete actions.

I thank you.

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