

Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran), at the Second Committee of the General Assembly on Agenda item 104: Training and Research

New York, 21 November 2001

My Chairman,

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 104: Training and Research, let me, first of all, express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the report on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) we have before us. The report contained in document A/56/615 reviews consolidation of programmes, building of partnerships and the systematic utilization of UNITAR, and provides information on the financial basis, management and reclassification of its rental rates and maintenance costs.

Mr. Chairman,

Training and research are of central importance to the continued growth and development of all nations. In an era of knowledge-based growth and development, well-trained human capital has become a major factor in determining the destiny of nations. The rapid pace of globalization has made it imperative for all countries to undertake diversified and closely interrelated activities, for which their people require appropriate training. In this connection, the relevance of UNITAR and the value of its programmes, particularly for developing countries, hardly need to be emphasized. The Institute is an instrument with tremendous potentials that could help developing countries better understand issues and problems of the twenty-first century in their global context and to acquire necessary skills to address them. By providing training and research services to the United Nations system and to Member States, the Institute is, therefore, making a significant contribution to human resources development.

We welcome UNITAR's policy in designing its programmes in collaboration with beneficiary governments to ensure national ownership of the programmes. And it is a matter of satisfaction that UNITAR's activities are increasingly country-driven and country-executed. The Institute has been endeavoring to strengthen its presence in the field in order to better serve Member States. The fact that the majority of the UNITAR's programmes, covering quite a wide range of issues of global, multilateral character and import, are conducted in the field deserves to be commended and further supported. It is necessary to underline that it is indeed the efficiency, competence and imagination of the UNITAR staff that are the main ingredients for the successful implementation of these activities in a decentralized manner in the field, where needs are greatest and more pressing.

UNITAR has achieved a lot and continues to do so. The scope and magnitude of the needs, however, call for much more to be done to transmit knowledge, technical expertise and the accumulated experience commensurate with increasing needs of developing countries. Innovative ways and means of systematically utilizing the Institute in the execution of training and capacity-building programmes for the economic and social development of developing countries should be explored. Higher priority must be placed on enhancing the capacity of developing countries, not only to better understand and adequately deal with the process of globalization and its diverse consequences, but also to capture emerging issues, including ICT in order to harness them to serve the society.

We take note of the progress in carrying out the restructuring and revitalization of UNITAR, particularly that the Institute has made considerable advances in responding to the need for greater cooperation within the United Nations system in order to meet the increased demand for training in a cost-effective manner. Such a

cooperation is now becoming quite system-wide and is being further reinforced through cooperation with training and research institutions at regional and country levels. We appreciate the partnership approach of UNITAR in seeking the involvement and commitment of national and regional institutions in order to tailor the programmes according to their respective priorities.

Mr. Chairman,

The areas where UNITAR directs its efforts and resources to meet the needs of the developing countries deserves the support of the donor community. It is regrettable that voluntary contributions to the Institute's General Fund remains inadequate, reducing and inhibiting its capacity, even though the level of contributions to the Special Purpose Grants Fund is more satisfactory. Due to the sustained low level of non-earmarked voluntary contributions, the financial situation of UNITAR continues to be fragile. UNITAR will face increasing difficulties to answer specific requests from Member States to design and conduct programmes for which the costs are covered by the General Fund, should donor countries not respond positively to the numerous and recurrent calls from the General Assembly to resume or increase their contributions. These contributions are crucial if the Institute is to take action on many and often very urgent needs of developing countries. In this regard, we note with deep concern that the response of the donor community has been disappointing. The restructuring of UNITAR has been praised and the relevance of its programmes underlined, but the voluntary contributions to the General Fund continue to remain low.

The Group of 77 and China believes that UNITAR should be strengthened and provided with sufficient resources in order to enable it to fulfill its mandate in the most effective manner. It is an investment in the future. We, therefore, urge developed countries to increase their voluntary contributions to the Institute to place it on a solid financial base so that it could continue to be viable, autonomous, stable institution capable of providing its services in a sustainable manner. The contributions of developed countries to the General Fund have not increased along with their increased participation in the training programmes. This discrepancy needs to be addressed. The Second Committee should also give an in-depth consideration to the matter, since the future of the Institute may be at stake in the long-term. Simultaneously, it is quite reasonable to expect that UNITAR, on its part, would as well ensure greater efficiency in its work, including in financial matters.

To prevent further deterioration of current financial difficulties, the Group emphasizes the need to waive rental and maintenance costs for the premises occupied by UNITAR in Geneva and New York. Having in mind that other similar organizations affiliated with the United Nations enjoy such privileges, there is no plausible reason to deny the same exemption to UNITAR, an institution that is totally self-funded and is providing free training facilities to Member States. Accordingly, we are of the view that the Secretariat can extend flexibility to this case to relieve the financial situation of the Institute.

Mr. Chairman,

Here in New York, we follow and appreciate the courses organized for the diplomats and delegates to the United Nations. As far as the developing countries are concerned, we find these courses particularly useful. They strengthen the capacity of developing country delegations to participate more effectively in the work of the United Nations. Furthermore, enhanced coordination between UNITAR and the Secretariats of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, particularly the Second Committee, is also essential so that UNITAR training activities be included in the Committees' programme of work. And to conclude, let me reiterate, once again, our full support for the UNITAR and its activities and also call upon the international community to spare no effort in supporting the Institute.

I cannot end this statement without seizing the opportunity to express my personal appreciation to Ms. Nassrine Azimi, the distinguished Director of the UNITAR Office in New York, for the effective direction of

the Office and for her excellent work. We will be missing her.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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