

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MAHMOUD H. JABIR OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, IN THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA ITEM 108: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

New York, 20 October 1997

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 108: Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved election. The Group would like to assure you of our full support in the execution of your important responsibilities. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports before the Committee on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

In Beijing in 1995, the international community, individually and collectively, committed itself to the advancement of women in the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes at national and international levels. The implementation of the Platform of Action will enhance the social, economic and political empowerment of women, not as an end, but as a means to achieve people-centered development. Today, statistics indicate that 70% of the one billion poor people in the world are women. Their empowerment, therefore, would be an important contribution towards poverty eradication in the world.

Mr. Chairman,

The Beijing Conference, like other major conferences and summits, was an acknowledgement by the international community that the world is facing problems that cannot be resolved through national action alone. While national governments have the primary responsibility of implementation of such commitments, an enabling environment at the international level would complement national action. The Beijing Platform for Action should, therefore, be implemented in an integrated manner with other decisions of major international conferences and summits through national action and international cooperation.

At the national level, many governments in our Group have developed strategies and plans towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action despite limited capacities and a harsh international economic environment. We, therefore, welcome the various activities undertaken mainly by the United Nations and specialized agencies as reported in document A/52/218. For instance, we are anxious to see the intention expressed by the World Bank to integrate a gender perspective in all its programmes, country assistance strategies and projects translated into concrete action. This also applies to its intention to give more attention to a gender perspective in sections such as transport and energy. The establishment of gender as one of the four families in the World Bank's Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network is a welcome initiative and we hope that it will be further elaborated.

We welcome UNIDO's initiatives to promote women entrepreneurs in six African countries, as contained in the Secretary-General's report. We anticipate that the programme will be expanded to other developing countries, particularly to Africa and least developed countries. Several seminars, workshops and meetings have been conducted as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. Notably, the Commission on the Status of Women met and came up with decisions which will accelerate the implementation. It is vital, therefore, to take into account decisions taken at such fora into our programme and plans of implementation.

The recently concluded Summit on Micro-Credit is a welcome initiative. The Summit launched a global movement to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial services by the year 2005. We urge the international community to work towards attaining the goals of the Micro-Credit Summit.

Mr. Chairman,

Two years have elapsed since the World Conference on Women. Regrettably, it has become difficult for our countries to embark on full implementation despite the plans in place. This is due to, among other reasons, an adverse international economic environment. Our countries have to face the challenges posed by the negative effect of liberalization and globalization of the world economy, the debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes with the attendant consequences on social services. It is acknowledged that even with sound economic policies and the full appreciation of the debt-rescheduling arrangements in place, developing countries continue to face an unbearable debt-servicing burden. The debt burden, coupled with the adverse effects of the structural adjustment programme prescribed for our countries limit, the capacity to provide basic needs such as education, nutrition, health care, shelter, water and sanitation. In all cases it is the women and children who are affected the most.

Mr. Chairman,

Another bottleneck facing our countries in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is the decline in resources from external sources. Overall Official Development Assistance is on the decline while the agreed target of 0.7% of the GNP to developing countries has been fulfilled by only a few countries. There is an urgent need to reverse the overall decline of ODA by the developed countries to meet the agreed target of 0.7%. It is also important for us to emphasize on the implementation of the 20/20 compact, where 20% of ODA and 20% of our national budget would be devoted to social services. Access to and improvement of social services would be an important contribution to the empowerment of women.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been argued that the twin process of liberalization and globalization of the world economy are not benefiting our countries as envisaged. Women bear the brunt of this negative impact. They continue to be marginalized nationally and internationally. There is an urgent need to redress this trend. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and related international organizations should take specific measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements. These measures must include long-term financial and technical support, transfer of technology and equitable trade regimes with developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

We acknowledge the fact that development can be achieved through collective efforts. This was manifested with a series of international conferences and summits, including the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. It was amplified in Beijing that women's rights are human rights which include the right to development. If the international community is committed to promote and protect women's rights, efforts should not be spared to create an enabling international economic environment to allow our countries to meet their responsibility in advancing the empowerment of women. The empowerment of women means development for our countries and humankind would be the ultimate beneficiary.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China would like to reaffirm its commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme. Our countries acknowledge the primary responsibility of our governments to the implementation process. However, we urge the international

community to fulfill its commitments to complement national efforts.

I thank you.

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