



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MAHLATSI MMINELE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (New York, 4 February 2015)

Madam Chair,
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset, please allow me to extend our Group's warmest congratulations to you as the Chair of the 53rd session of the Commission on Social Development and to the members of your Bureau. The Group of 77 and China wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation during your tenure.

I would also like to express the Group's appreciation to the Secretary General for his informative reports under this agenda item, as they will certainly contribute to the enrichment of our discussions during this session.

Madam Chair,

This session is taking place at a critical juncture, when we are in the midst of crafting the Post 2015 Development Agenda set to supersede the Millennium Development Goals and we are also commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen. In our view, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action which was adopted in 1995 continues to be an integral point of reference in the field of social development for the international community as well as at country level.

Consequently, the Group of 77 and China reaffirms its commitment in fulfilling the goals agreed at Copenhagen, particularly poverty eradication, full employment and social integration. Two decades later, significant progress has been registered, however, we are not where we should be, as the progress has been unequal and fragmented particularly, in developing countries. Accordingly, this means a lot more still needs to be done. Notably, the theme "Rethinking and Strengthening Social Development in the Contemporary World" is therefore timely and crucial, as it enables us to creatively look at new ways to advance the progress on the commitments made twenty years ago in Copenhagen, whilst also maintaining the aspiration of placing people at the center of development.

Madam Chair,

The Group of 77 and China is deeply concerned by the lack of satisfactory progress of social development especially in the developing world. The Commitments made twenty years ago have not yielded the desired results. We however recognize that serious inroads have been made in the reduction of poverty particularly for those living in extreme poverty, as highlighted in the Secretary General's report. Efforts to significantly fight poverty have proven to be complex and have also largely been undermined by the global environment, such as the world financial and economic crises, food insecurity, climate change and in some countries volatile security situations due to conflicts.

We are of the firm view that for economic growth to positively contribute to poverty reduction, it is

essential that macro-economic and social policies focus on job creation, as this will reduce inequalities and aid in providing social protection. Furthermore, as a catalyst to economic growth there is a need to invest much more in infrastructure, basic services such as health care insurance and education whilst also ensuring that all the segments of society, including youth, elderly and persons with disabilities have access to resources and opportunities.

It is equally important that global cooperation is strengthened and scaled up for the eradication of poverty, based on the recognition of national leadership and ownership of development strategies. This cooperation should include the fulfillment of internationally agreed ODA, debt relief, market access, capacity building and technical support including technology transfer.

Madam Chair,

Our aspirations for the attainment of full employment and decent work in a bid to combat poverty and promote social integration are still far from reach. The Secretary General's report highlights some very dim assessments in this regard, particularly for developing countries. Globally, the report highlights that the number of unemployed persons has steadily grown from 157 million in 1995 to 202 million in 2013. These figures are disconcerting and reinforce the need to renew our efforts to curb this incline.

Social exclusion continues to be a challenge in many parts of the world, by virtue of growing inequalities, thus negatively affecting youth, older persons, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and migrants. It is crucial that national governments strengthen their efforts in creating policies to promote and protect the needs of the marginalized.

The Group of 77 and China continues to stress the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

The Group of 77 and China continues to stress the importance of removing obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular of peoples living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, with full respect to national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, which adversely affects their social and economic development.

In closing, Madam Chair, the work of this Commission on Social Development remains more relevant today than it was two decades ago. During this session we should reaffirm the work done in Copenhagen two decades ago and endeavor to have a robust approach, ensuring the implementations of these commitments are strengthened, as they are taken forward in the post 2015 Development Agenda.

I thank you for your kind attention.