



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. AQEELAH AKBAR, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 55: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, TO THE THIRD COMMITTEE, 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 6 October 2008)

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau our congratulations on your election to guide the work of the Third Committee during this 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly. Let me assure you of our commitment to work cooperatively toward a successful conclusion of the Committee's proceedings.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under agenda item 55: Social development and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein.

In 1995, the World Summit recognized that people felt increasing insecurity as a result of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Not much has changed in the current environment of financial, food, climate and energy crises, all of which contribute to worsening economic and social conditions, especially for the most vulnerable members of society. The Group of 77 and China wishes to reaffirm support for and highlight the relevance of continued implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

This session marks the continuation of the 2007-2008 implementation cycle on the priority theme, "Promoting full employment and decent work for all". The World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly showed the significance of employment creation and decent work for poverty eradication and social integration. This important relationship was reiterated in the Millennium Declaration and at the 2005 World Summit when world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the goal of full and productive employment and decent work as an important element of the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular, eradicating poverty. This was followed by yet another commitment in July 2006 at the High Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council, to create an environment at the national and international levels, conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all.

The Group of 77 and China is of the view that it is essential to support an integrated approach to full employment and decent work, characterized by conditions of equity, equality, security and dignity. We welcome the continued focus on women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities as the contributions of these members of society are essential to social stability, economic growth and poverty eradication. It is indisputable that an educated workforce is crucial to meeting the needs of the labour market and in this regard, we support the conclusions in the Secretary-General's report that emphasize the need for investment in education, training and skills

development and we note with interest the proposals related to the development of national action plans on youth employment.

Mr. Chairman,

Employment generation needs to be at the center of macroeconomic policy and fully integrated into national development strategies including poverty reduction strategies. Most importantly, the Group concurs that full employment and decent work cannot be separated from the need for a more conducive international economic environment with fair trade practices and sound financial systems in place that will support favorable conditions for development.

The G77 and China supports an enabling environment for enterprise development in both rural and urban areas, including by pursuing policies that support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The increase in food prices has been a catalyst for prioritizing the need to enhance agricultural development in developing countries. However, such increased agricultural production must be accompanied by policies that support access to credit and markets.

Mr. Chairman, the conferences and summits that have taken place over the last two decades helped to identify the major social and economic challenges facing the international community. However, as my Prime Minister noted in his address to the General Assembly less than two weeks ago, the successive resolutions that we have passed, many with time-bound targets, have become more technically complicated with less rather than more, "political commitment to unified and mutually reinforcing implementation and action."

Enhanced international cooperation, including fulfillment of commitments for internationally agreed official development assistance, debt relief and technical support, including technology transfer are critical to our efforts to translate the numerous political promises of the last twenty years into concrete action. There can be no doubt that the pursuit of the MDGs is an opportunity for the kind of global partnership of which I speak. In our view, delivering on the specific targets under MDG 8 is critical to increasing the pace toward achieving all of our other goals.

The Group of 77 and China hopes that we will leave this session with a renewed commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

Thank you.