

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. OLUSEGUN APATA, AMBASSADOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD

New York, 24 January 2000

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to convey to you and members of the Bureau best wishes for a prosperous and peaceful new year. We congratulate you and members of the Bureau on your election. May I also convey the appreciation of the Group to your predecessor, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Thailand. Let me also express on behalf of the Group our appreciation to the Administrator of UNDP, the Associate Administrator, and the Executive Director of UNFPA for their efforts in promoting development in our various countries. We also wish to thank the Administrator of UNDP for the introductory remarks. It is our sincere hope that the deliberations of this first regular session of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA, the very first in the new millennium, would be very satisfactorily concluded under your able leadership.

Mr. President,

Towards the end of last year, our Group and the Administrator of the UNDP were engaged in serious and far-reaching contacts and consultations. These consultations were occasioned by the Transition Team's report. Following these contacts, our Group addressed a letter, in November 1999, to the Administrator, expressing our concerns and proffering suggestions that will enable UNDP to accomplish its mandate. As promised by the Administrator during these consultations, he has now submitted the Business Plans, 2000 - 2003 to the Board. I shall now, on behalf of Group of 77 and China, say a few words about the Business Plans.

We welcome the new cabinet-style leadership approach which the Administrator has designed to strengthen the effectiveness of UNDP's decision-making and accountability on key corporate functions. As the Administrator has stated, it is also our hope that real transformation at the UNDP will be achieved primarily through changes in leadership style, accountability, culture, performance, and innovative partnerships rather than through changes in structures. Furthermore, our Group wishes to underscore the fact that we fully recognize the right of the Administrator to make appropriate organizational changes within the UNDP. However, such changes should not fail to recognize, or to safeguard, the essential characteristics of the Programme. Such changes must, in the absence of contrary legislative directive, faithfully conform to the relevant General Assembly resolution which established the mandate and overall structure of the UNDP. This is the basis of our consistent view that any reform of the organization should be guided by two key objectives, namely, an increase in the resources, core resources, available to the UNDP and an improved delivery of services to the developing countries in accordance with their national development objectives and priorities.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China attaches high value to UNDP as partner in the development process. Indeed, both in the urban and rural areas of developing countries, the UNDP with

its developmental activities is synonymous to the United Nations itself. In this regard, the partnership and trust between the UNDP and programme countries must therefore continue to recognize and strengthen the country-driven principle, which underlies the packaging and delivery of programmes and projects.

The upstream involvement of the UNDP in national policy making process, which the Business Plan now advocates, will only succeed in making countries to be driven by the programmes and projects. Undoubtedly, this will generate distrust and will certainly jeopardize the partnership that has been carefully nurtured over the years between the UNDP and programme countries. This view is without prejudice to UNDP's involvement in the policy-making process of such developing countries which expressly invite it to do so. Even in such situations, the UNDP and the Business Plans should not convey the impression that policy is deliverable and development is not deliverable. This is one of the crucial points the Executive Board should consider.

Mr. President,

Another important aspect of the crisis facing the UNDP is that of core resources, which have been declining over time, thereby heavily hampering its operational activities. That the core resources declined by about 42 per cent in a 7-year period from \$1.2 billion in 1992 to \$700 million in 1999 is a serious cause for concern. The Business Plans need to emphasize the importance of resource mobilization and also devise a workable plan whereby the traditional donor community would resume honouring their obligations towards the generation of resources. In this regard, the Business Plans should map out the anticipated outcomes which the Board wants to achieve. Bench marks need to be established for meaningful monitoring of the operationalization of the Plans. The Plans should be able to sign-post a definitive fallback mechanism, should the Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) continue to experience difficulties.

We welcome the personal commitment and the priority which the Administrator has publicly declared that he would assign to resources mobilization, in terms of sourcing increased resources. We wish him well in this endeavour. However, if the experience of the last few years is anything to go by, we are worried that the push for reform might not be matched with increase in resources. We believe that is why the Business Plans are being based on current resources and not on anticipated additional resources. The strategies for securing increase in resources should therefore be injected into the Business Plans. In this context, I wish to welcome, on behalf of the Group of 77, the pledge of the Government of Japan just announced in this meeting to increase its contribution to the core resources to \$100 million. We hope that other donor countries will follow this very laudable example.

Mr. President,

We would like to express the deep appreciation of the Group of 77 and China for this opportunity to share our views with the Executive Board on the Business Plans. We welcome the commitment of the Administrator to continue the promotion and the fostering of South-South cooperation. While appreciating all the other elements in the Plans as well as the good work of the UNDP in our various countries, we urge the Executive Board to give serious consideration to the salient points we have raised earlier in its consideration of the Business Plans. It is the belief of the Group of 77 that a multi-sectoral focus in the work of the UNDP is one of the greatest assets which has endeared it to the developing countries. Consequently, this approach should be preserved and fostered.

The assistance of the UNDP to governments' programmes and projects should therefore continue to be targeted at promoting economic growth and sustainable development in which poverty eradication, South-South cooperation and overall human development constitute high priorities. Finally, Mr. President, the Board should bear in mind that no amount of improvement or reform on the efficiency of the UNDP will amount to much achievement unless the delivery capacity of the UNDP is adequately equipped with resources, core resources, which the Programme is in dire need of.

I thank you.