

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ARIZAL EFFENDI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, TO THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 3(a)(ii)(iii): "ENHANCING SOCIAL PROTECTION, REDUCING VULNERABILITY AND ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS" AND "VIOLENCE, CRIME AND PROBLEM OF ILLICIT DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS FACTORS OF SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION"

New York, 17 February 1998

Madam Chairman,

I am pleased to address the members of the Commission on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, concerning agenda item 3a (ii), on enhancing social protection, reducing vulnerability and enhancing employment opportunities for groups with specific needs, and item 3a (iii) on violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse as factors of social disintegration.

Madam Chairman,

The two sub-items now under our consideration are of particular concern to the Group of 77 and China. As developing countries, we are all too aware of the various concepts and definitions of vulnerability, having long been suffered by its consequences. We need to move beyond normative approaches and undertake effective action to reduce the risks and challenges faced by vulnerable and marginalized groups within our countries, in accordance with the commitments made at Copenhagen, and in the fulfillment of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Yet, we are also fully aware many of those obstacles cannot be removed without a concurrent effort to reduce the vulnerability of the developing countries in the global political and economic system, and to increase the participation of developing countries in the international macro-economic decision making process.

The Group of 77 does hold the view that if we are to attain the noble goals set forth in March 1995, then we must have a general agreement that social integration cannot be divorced from globalization and the dynamics of the global economic system. Trade deficits, mounting foreign debt payments and economic slowdown, compounded by drastic currency volatility, have had a serious and on occasion devastating impact on many developing countries, and undermined their efforts to alleviate the burdens of vulnerable and marginalized groups. In effect, these factors have greatly increased the vulnerability of entire nations and risks the permanent marginalization of some. External forces and the negative consequences of globalization present a very real and serious obstacle that require international cooperation and assistance if we are to meet the challenges ahead. A true partnership is needed among the international community, from multilateral development agencies and donor countries, to governments, civil society and grassroots and community organizations.

The Group of 77 and China agree that answers to reducing vulnerability must also be found at the national level, where it is incumbent on respective governments to strengthen social bonds and provide opportunities to contribute individual and family security as well as national development. The expert workshop on ways and means to enhance social protection and reduce vulnerability, submitted to the Commission for Social Development through a note by the Secretary-General, contains many relevant observations and pertinent suggestions for such action. We fully agree, in this regard, that accurate assessments of situations is a precondition for effective policy and programme interventions. National governments should work

vigorously to better identify those groups within society that are most at risk, and to make thoughtful determination on what actions are feasible and commensurate with the resources available.

We also hold the view that promoting empowerment of people and social groups is essential to reducing their vulnerability. The need to develop projects which create employment opportunities for such groups must be realized, as well as the need to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable and marginalized groups to interact with all sectors of society. This could include, for instance, the adoption of labour policies that are sensitive to their situation, as well as training programmes that match skills to current employment opportunities. Also, there is a need in many countries to support and strengthen the capacity of non-market mechanisms, which could contribute to forming a social safety net that would ensure the meeting of a minimum standard of living during periods of economic transition. In this context, we would like to bring to the attention of the Commission the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its 52nd session on the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty. It is important and relevant for us to benefit from the experiences of as many as 60 countries where microcredit programmes have contributed to the empowerment of particularly women as well as to the enhancement of employment opportunities for the poorest segment of their societies.

The idea of participatory planning could also be further explored as a means of adopting relevant and effective policies, particularly for countries undergoing structural adjustment or reform. The inclusion into the planning process of groups who are to benefit from programmes allows for more responsive government and ensures that such programmes are on target and relevant to the specific needs of the community. In similar fashion, it holds true that all countries should be consulted and participate in formulating those economic policies that affect their countries, but which are adopted outside of the country.

The Group of 77 and China recognize that among the groups in society that are particularly at risk are women, youth, the disabled and older persons and that specific policies and programmes must be adopted to address their concerns. We further underline the imperative need to facilitate the promotion of gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all areas. It should perhaps be recalled on this regard that the Fourth World Conference on Women did call for new and additional resources to developing countries from all available funding mechanisms.

Madam Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China recognize that all development activities and economic and social progress for all nations are threatened by violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse as factors of social disintegration. These are problems which afflict all nations alike, developed and developing, and are of such complexity and scale as to require a concerted international response.

The Group of 77 and China hold the view that violence and crime thrive in conditions of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and are sustained by ignorance, illiteracy and despair. Any effective response from the international community and at national levels must therefore address the root causing of criminal activity and be approached within the context of social and economic development. Moreover, international assistance is imperative for the developing countries which are at particular risk as they must also confront a wide range of socio-economic challenges and obstacles.

In adopting policies and programmes to end violence and combat crime and illicit drugs, the particular needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups in society must be addressed. Concerted action must be undertaken to bring an end to violence against women and children. In that regard, multidisciplinary approaches should be undertaken that not only seek to prevent violence, but also ensure fair treatment and effective assistance to the victims of violence, and increase awareness in society and within the criminal justice system of this

problem. Likewise, the situation of older persons and the disabled needs to be incorporated into national and international strategies on violence.

The recent advances in technology and forms of communication have facilitated the globalization of criminal enterprises and particularly the illicit trade in narcotics and psychotropic substances. Today, the national law enforcement of any nation is incapable of undertaking an affective response on its own and must act within the scope of international cooperation and coordination. We in the Group of 77 look forward to the convening of the special session of the general Assembly in a few months time, as an opportunity to further enhance cooperation within the international community to fight the scourge of illicit drugs.

In concluding, Madam Chairman, the Group of 77 and China would like to reaffirm that the protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups is an essential objective of economic development, and that problems of violence, crime, and illicit drugs are the by-products of poverty and neglect. International cooperation is the only effective means of achieving durable solutions to those problems which afflict all countries. The developing countries are committed to this course of action and will work towards comprehensive and effective action.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.