

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JUNE PERSAUD OF THE GUYANA DELEGATION ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ON AGENDA ITEM 3(B): EMERGING ISSUES, TRENDS AND NEW APPROACHES TO ISSUES AFFECTING THE SITUATION OF WOMEN OR EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN AND ON AGENDA ITEM 4: INITIATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM OF ACTION AND PREPARATION FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN THE YEAR 2000

New York, 1 March 1999

Mme. Chair,

As the Commission begins its consideration of the Agenda before it in this forty-third session, in particular, its debate on Agenda Item 3(b): Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men, and Agenda Item 4: Initiation of the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action and preparation for the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000, I take the floor on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and wish, in the first instance to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election, and to wish you success in the tasks which lies ahead. I also wish to acknowledge the statements of the distinguished speakers who have just spoken. We believe their comments at this juncture have served an important launching pad for our deliberations.

Mme. Chair,

The entire Platform for Action is recognizably an agenda for the empowerment of women through the pursuit of gender equality over twelve critical areas of concern, as identified in Beijing. There can be no doubt that since then, there has been an increased international and national profile for the condition of women of all ages, particularly as compared with their male counterparts within their own countries, and also as compared with their gender equals across borders in both developing and developed countries alike. While the heightened sensitivity to major gender-determined discrepancies which exist worldwide has served the useful purpose of pinpointing the sources of discrimination, it has not always been as easy to plan and implement programs of change.

Political will and commitment at national and international levels play a critical role in creating the enabling environment necessary for equal treatment and gender mainstreaming. Additionally, the building of specific capacity for gender inclusiveness at individual and institutional levels remains crucial to the implementation of change. This is true across the board, in developed and developing countries alike. It must be noted, however, that where development is threatened, where there is poverty and scarcity of resources, and where technology, in particular information and communication technologies, are backward, women feel the brunt of the shortfall. There is therefore much which can be advanced through the promotion of more even levels of development between countries, through the minimization of the widening gap between rich and poor nations, and ultimately between rich and poor people.

The unevenness of treatment which still attends women within and without their national societies should not merely be a matter of academic concern, nor even just stick of our lack of full implementation of the decisions taken in Beijing. As pivotal links in families and wider communities, the denial of development and full participation in all aspects of local, national and international life to women, robs the collective of their

substantial contribution as human capital. The routine empowerment of women in political, economic, social and other fields, makes stronger, healthier societies in times of peace, and mitigates automatic gender abuse in times of civil disruption. The Group of 77 and China remains committed to the twelve critical areas of concern for achieving gender equality and intends to participate in the debate at this forty-third session with openness and purpose, in order to contribute to the establishment of a clear way forward in our pursuit of the balanced empowerment of women.

The Group of 77 and China is also fully committed to the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action which the Commission will initiate under Agenda Item 4 during this forty-third session of its work. We believe that this is a process which should be undertaken with realism and clarity, and with the fullest intergovernmental cooperation in order that we may arrive at an informed assessment of where we are vis-a-vis implementation of the Platform. This is a critical phase in our work and one which we can neither circumvent nor circumscribe. This is the time when we must identify and confront the obstacles which have stood in the way of a comprehensive implementation of the Platform, in order that we may chart an action oriented plan for advancing the goals to which we all committed in Beijing. We believe further that this must be more than an academic exercise. It must be a review in which we will analyze the success stories of those national governments which have been effective in implementing the Platform, and assess the reasons for the lack of substantive progress for others. Since the Platform cannot be considered successfully implemented if only some achieve its goals, it is imperative for us to decide how we can move the collective forward at an even pace. Our task is therefore multifaceted - to identify where we are, why we are there, and how we may advance more evenly and quickly to an holistic implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action. Cooperation and partnership must guide our efforts to move the process forward, and mutually reinforcing collaboration between all genders, groups, sectors and countries must become the modus operandi. The Group of 77 and China intends to engage fully in the discussion of this matter, and firmly believes that it is only through a thorough assessment, a realistic review and an informed plan of action that we can prepare adequately for a useful Special Session of the General Assembly in the year 2000.

Thank you.

