

**STATEMENT BY MR. MUSTAPHA BETERA ALIYU, DELEGATION OF NIGERIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, ON AGENDA ITEM 3(b): REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT UNITED NATIONS PLANS AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION PERTAINING TO THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL GROUPS, AT THE 38TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**New York, 10 February 2000**

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Mr. Chairman,

It is my honour and privilege to address you on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 3(b), Review of the relevant United Nations plan of action pertaining to the situation of social groups. May I also express the Group's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the International Year of Older Persons and his note on the activities of the Commission's Special Rapporteur on Disability. The report which dealt with possible options for the review and appraisal of International Plan of Action on Ageing and events leading to the proposed follow-up to the World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, provides a solid basis for the Commission's work. It is our hope that the global meeting envisaged for the year 2002 to review the outcome of the first World Assembly will contribute to the formulation of a new strategy to mainstream ageing into the global agenda in the context of a society for all ages.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year was observed as the International Year of Older Persons. That occasion provided the international community the opportunity to raise awareness of the rapid demographic change, stimulate debate and promote action strategies to face the challenges posed by the global increase in the ageing population. This was an important occasion for us in developing countries because in spite of the correlation between economic advantages and lengthened life span, demographic data suggests that by 2050, percentage increase of the aged in developing countries will equal that in the developed countries. The implication for us in G77 are far reaching especially considering the health needs as well as retraining required to reengage this important segment of our societies in productive employment. It is for us an imperative to stress the need for policy initiatives which focus on investment on human development which will equip individuals to cope with all phases of life without the fear or trauma of dependence in old age.

Mr. Chairman,

Age-integrated societies which we all seek to achieve will not be attainable without the improvement in the economic conditions in our countries. We, the Group of 77, call for a concerted international action to remove all obstacles to economic development, which continue to hamper our economic progress. In this regard, we reiterate our call to address the worsening terms of external trade, structural adjustment programmes, the uneven gains of globalization among others so that resources gained from these constraints can be used to meet social development needs including those of the aged.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the report of the Commission's Special Rapporteur on Disability. The report provides relevant information which will help the Commission in its work on disabled persons. Society owes a special responsibility to disabled persons. We are, therefore, duty bound to ensure that policies take into account the peculiar needs of the disabled in a manner as to protect their fundamental human rights and to ensure that they are neither excluded nor isolated. People with disabilities are and must be equal with other individuals, and the necessary conditions should be created for them to participate in the development of society. In the light of this, we welcome the activities of the Special Rapporteur which encourage dialogue with relevant actors to strengthen the rights of people with disabilities. We believe this will not only increase international public awareness but also achieve the desired goal of equal opportunities for all, irrespective of functional limitations.

Mr. Chairman,

An all-inclusive society requires the complete integration of all its component units. We must therefore invest in society's vulnerable groups so that their disabilities notwithstanding they can be transformed into society's valuable assets.

I thank you.