

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, HAJIA A.S. ISMAIL OF THE NIGERIAN DELEGATION, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA AT THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN ON AGENDA ITEMS: 3B: EMERGING ISSUES, TRENDS AND NEW APPROACHES TO ISSUES AFFECTING THE SITUATION OF WOMEN OR EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, AND 4: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

New York, 28 February 2000

Madam Chairperson,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to congratulate you and other Members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of the Group's support as you lead the Commission during this session. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for the useful reports before us today, as well as Ms Angela KING, Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women for her introductory remarks made earlier this morning.

Madam Chairperson,

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, developing countries have made efforts towards its implementation. Some progress was achieved in attracting worldwide attention to poverty and also reduction in the level of illiteracy amongst women. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women in many of our member states have equally been strengthened. Further progress needs to be made in order to fully achieve the realization of the goals and objectives agreed upon during the Fourth World Conference on Women.

However, there still exist some obstacles encountered in translating, into reality the objectives and commitments adopted at Beijing. These obstacles include lack of human and financial resources. The Group of 77 and China is of the belief that national efforts must be complemented by those of the international community which has a share of commitments to fulfil in order to create an enabling international environment for the full implementation of the Platform for Action. International cooperation is, therefore, vital for the achievement of these objectives.

Madam Chairperson,

Developing countries are now facing more challenges aside their traditional ones, such as globalization, new all encompassing and expanding communication technology as well as the human tragedy of HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Globalization, a multifaceted phenomenon carries with it benefits and risks which are unequally shared between developed and developing countries. The recent international financial crises have brought to fore the vulnerability of the economies of the developing countries and their tendency to be negatively exposed to the process itself. Our participation

in most cases could be marred by unfavorable terms of trade, limited market access for national products and very high debt servicing bills, the consequences of which would reduce further, investment for the already dilapidated social sector, aggravate poverty, particularly in the rural areas and further negatively affect the situation of women.

The Group of 77 and China is of the opinion that it is essential for developing countries to have, among other things, access to the new and improved communication technology to enable them compete effectively in an increasingly globalized economy. Our focus, therefore, should be on how developing countries can benefit from the opportunities created by the new communication technology for substantial improvement on the economies of the developing world and more especially on the status of women.

The Group of 77 and China is also concerned about the fundamental challenge posed by the spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic. The fact that women are twice as likely to be infected as men are, by the HIV/AIDS virus remains a source of deep concern. Indeed the developing countries, particularly Africa, are worse hit by this pandemic which has been best described as the “greatest catastrophe in modern history”. Only partnership and cooperation can effectively manage and control this tragedy afflicting humanity.

Madam Chairperson,

Undoubtedly, political will and commitment at both the national and international levels are necessary prerequisites for the full realization of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action. Developing and developed countries must work together to create an enabling environment for the advancement and empowerment of women.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, while it is lamentable that the twelve critical areas of concern have not been fully implemented, the Group of 77 and China upholds the Beijing Platform for Action as an essential instrument for the achievement of gender equality. The Group, therefore, believes that positive and concrete results from our deliberations would ultimately lead to the full realization of the objectives of the forthcoming Special Session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century. We, therefore, remain fully committed to a thorough assessment and realistic review of the Beijing Platform for Action. In this regard, we wish to reiterate our call for the provision of adequate resources to facilitate the translation of the commitments into concrete actions at both the national and international levels.

I thank you.