

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY A.P. ETANOMARE OSIO, MINISTER, PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE ANNUAL SESSION 2000 OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNDP/UNFPA

Geneva, 19 June 2000

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, we congratulate you and members of the Executive Board for convening this annual session of the Board, holding here in Geneva. Under your able leadership, we are optimistic that the changeover of the venue will bring about remarkable change and added value to the deliberations and outcome. Let me also add how highly the Group of 77 and China welcomes this opportunity to join you again in your deliberations of the challenges of poverty eradication, environmental management and gender mainstreaming, all of which constitute the core needs of all developing countries on which UNDP's capacity-building mandate for the General Assembly is anchored. We acknowledge the hard work of the Administrator of the UNDP and his team towards the realization of that mandate.

Mr. President,

The Secretariat deserves commendation for the much more prompt production of the relevant documentation for this year's annual session. The comparatively delayed release of the Administrator's very comprehensive and highly analytical Report for 1999, including the results-oriented annual report (ROAR), has however not enabled us to give our fullest appreciation which the Report richly deserves. While we thank the Administrator for his statement and the comprehensive report, our Group has some thoughts to share with the Board and some clarifications to seek.

Mr. President,

As the UN Secretary-General told the Resident Representatives early this year the "work" of the United Nations "in development is central to the very idea of the United Nations". And that aptly tallies with the views expressed by members of the Group of 77 and China to the Administrator during the course of his briefing on the Transition Team and Business Plans 2000-2003 last year, when the Administrator was reminded that, in the eyes of the townsfolk, or villagefolk, in the developing countries, the UNDP and the development programmes which it executes are synonymous with the United Nations itself; as they know of no other entities which best represent the United Nations organization to them, especially in the rural areas.

It is against this background that the Administrator's Report for 1999 holds great significance to the aspirations of developing countries, especially when one considers the very elements of the Business plans, i.e., policy and focus; profile; partnerships; people and performance. In our view, that significance requires careful and balanced comprehension of the ROAR aspect which we are receiving for the very first time ever, especially as it relates to the three sub-goals (i) promote poverty-focused development and reduce vulnerability, (ii) strengthen capacity governance institutions and (iii) provide effective and integrated follow-up to the UN conferences within the context of sustainable human development.

Mr. President,

As this Group has earlier opined, a shift to upstream activities, i.e. in the areas of governance issues by UNDP is a political shift from its General Assembly mandate. It is an area of activity or capacity-building which, if not avoidable, should involve the express and prior invitation of any particular programme country and transparent modalities of assistance in order to enable the UNDP retain the trust and confidence, which it

ought to enjoy from all countries. For the value-added to be felt, such involvement in governance issues should also provide an explanation as to how such shift to the political realm would contribute to the original mandate of UNDP.

Mr. President,

The issue of core resources is a nagging one. It has become the most crucial of the problems incapacitating the performance of the UNDP. The need to arrest the decline of the resources, i.e. core resources, and strengthen the capacity of the UNDP to deliver has been a long-standing concern. It has, therefore, become urgently necessary to bring up core resources to the same level, if not higher than that, of non-core resources.

While an increased political commitment can help to bring about such improvement in resource contributions, it is also true that dwindling core resources can also be better deployed to greater results if the UNDP could restrict its operations to areas of its primary competence and comparative advantage. For instance, if core resources are getting more and more inadequate one would wonder why go into new areas such as Information Technology in which other specialized agencies like the ITU and UNESCO have primary competence? Official Development Assistance (ODA) is one other vital source of resource for development. Its decline from the set 0.7% GNP target has had severe adverse impact on the capability of the UNDP, which, again, renewed political will can redress. While those donor countries, which have attained or surpassed the set target will continue to deserve commendation, we call on others, which have not, to do so.

Mr. President,

The Administrator's Report for 1999 has also dwelt to a great length on its need to reduce headquarters staff by 25%. This would be welcome if such measures would guarantee automatic better performance or achievement of greater results. However, considering the fact that there are other personnel afield, two questions may need to be asked. Is this a form of decentralization or mere strengthening of the capacity building at the national level? Whichever it is, how much more power is being devolved to the field in order to make such Headquarters reduction not only cost-effective but enhancing productivity?

Mr. President,

This brings to mind the Special Unit of TCDC/ECDC of the UNDP and the unique role it has been playing in fostering South-South cooperation through technical economic cooperation among developing countries. The crucial role of the Special Unit within the UNDP was well affirmed by the leaders of developing countries within their Declaration and Programme of Work during the first South Summit held in Havana in April. As will be recalled, that Summit invited "the Administrator of UNDP to strengthen the TCDC Unit as the UN focal point for South-South cooperation through the preservation of its separate identity and the provision of adequate resources to ensure the full implementation of decisions of the South Summit under its sphere of competence and to enable it to carry out its relevant mandates and responsibilities". How much stronger and better equipped will the Special TCDC Unit become by such Headquarters staff reduction?

Mr. President,

The need for partnership and the involvement of civil societies is another point advocated in the Report. We welcome participation of the civil societies in the capacity-building mechanisms. However, we would advise that any partnership between UNDP and any civil society would be best done in consultation with host governments.

Mr. President,

Finally, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the report and all initiatives being proposed by the

Administrator, cognizant of the fact that all reforms or new initiatives must not only aim at but also attain higher and better results. We welcome the efforts of the Administrator and his team, more so if such efforts could show how they will help to build capacity to manage changes in the international financial flows, environment and vulnerability index, economic integration and containment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic while halving poverty by year 2015. In any event, there ought to be a tangible value added.

I thank you.

