

Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran), before the Third Committee of the 56th Session of the General Assembly, on Agenda Item 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

New York, 17 October 2001

Mr. Chairman,

The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly constituted an overall process that allowed the international community to address various challenges, trends and patterns affecting the status of women whose causes and consequences may vary from country to country. During the Fourth World Conference on Women and its review process the ways of further empowerment and development of women at all levels, including as concerns elimination of the abhorrent phenomenon of violence against women, were at the center of the collective endeavors of the international community in this domain.

The resolution adopted at the Fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third session of the General Assembly as well as the decisions and resolutions of the Commission of the Status of Women, in particular its multi-year programme of work and the Medium Term Plan, provide us with a comprehensive and well-targeted road map. If pursued and implemented with diligence and vigour, this road map can be expected to enable all relevant actors and stakeholders to sustain and broaden the existing momentum and dynamism for taking even more vigorous measures for further realization of the objectives of the Fourth World Conference.

Assessing and evaluating the achievements, the Group of 77 and China is of the view that despite the progress made thus far on the status of women, there exist serious challenges and obstacles that yet remain to be thoroughly addressed and effectively overcome in order to enable us to achieve full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of its review process. I deem it necessary to underline right here that a cross-cutting challenge in our global drive to bring about a desirable pace in the promotion of women’s rights is the imperative of adopting a just, fair, equitable and balanced approach to the wide range of global objectives in this area. It hardly needs to be reiterated that all components and programmes laid out by the World Conference and its review process are of particular significance and thus should be treated in a balanced and coordinated manner.

Among the crucial challenges facing the on-going process on women’s issues is the collective strive to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the policies, programmes and decision-making processes at national, regional and international levels. In the implementation of the outcomes of the major conferences and summits and their reviews, efforts should be made to ensure that the ensuing follow-up activities keep the entire process abreast of the compelling demand for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all policies and programmes. Moreover, the major processes underway, including the special session on children and the forthcoming follow-up activities on racism and racial discrimination, need to incorporate gender perspective into their substantive work programmes as well as in their overall activities.

Gender mainstreaming should also be deemed as an integral part of the activities initiated and undertaken by the United Nations system. Different mechanisms and procedures as well as projects and programmes should undertake evaluation of the impact of their activities on the empowerment of women. In this context, the

Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/56/319 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and on the numerous initiatives carried out by various parts of the United Nations system. The Group welcomes the cross-sector collaboration initiated in the system as part of the strategy to promote the advancement of women. Here, I would like to avail of the opportunity to express our deep appreciation to Ms. Angela King, her able colleagues, and in fact, the whole Division for the Advancement of Women, for their dedication and excellent work. It is of crucial importance also that governments and regional bodies pay adequate attention to the integration of gender aspects in all their plans and programmes geared to the further empowerment of women in their respective countries and regions.

Mr. Chairman,

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its five-year review, governments came to agree on a number of key areas and a set of specific goals and targets, which, if effectively pursued and implemented, can be expected to bring about an enabling environment and generate the necessary means for the ultimate realization of our collective aspirations for the advancement of women.

Poverty-eradication in general and all the related policies and programmes aimed at empowerment of women constitute a fundamental building block in our global campaign towards realizing the long-term vision of the international community in this domain. Within this framework, particular attention should be paid to the situation of women in rural areas, as rightly addressed in the report of the Secretary-General as on this subject as well as in the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the expert group meeting on "the situation of rural women within the context of globalization".

As we all know, many negative factors both at the national and international level are responsible for the perpetuation of the situations where women suffer inequalities, discrimination and are deprived of advancement. Widening economic inequality between men and women, including income inequality, unemployment and deepening of poverty among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups as well as situations arising from adverse external factors such as debt burden, low level of Official Development Assistance (ODA), unilateral coercive measures in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, armed conflict, foreign occupation and terrorism, are among obstacles that women face and which affect their empowerment and advancement worldwide.

Women's share and engagement in the actual management of societies through, among others, enhancing their participation in decision-making processes and also the recognition of the need to promote the role of women in the political and economic life of societies, are inextricably fundamental not only to the advancement of women but also to the further progress and development of societies at large. What matters most in this extremely important area is, however, the need to create a cultural, social, economic, political and structural ambiance, supported by commensurate legal framework and basis, where women's rights are protected and promoted and their abilities, potential and creativity can flourish. It is only on such a basis and within such an environment that women can compete with comparable skills and experiences. In this context, the importance of a gender perspective in the process of policy-making and coordination should be widely recognized. Awareness raising, education and training and no less important, effective combating of stereotypes - much more difficult as it may prove to be - are among the essential policies that need to be pursued in all societies. Equally imperative is the promotion and protection of women's rights and dignity, and I would like to reiterate, once more, the importance of legal basis and framework for the institutionalization of such promotion and protection. This is an area that calls for diligence and forceful action on a global scale; it needs to be pursued by all of us, and I mean all in a very inclusive manner, developed and developing, governmental and non-governmental. We have to be fully cognizant of the heavy responsibility we have to shoulder in order to make a real substantive difference towards promoting the social, economic and political status of women in all societies.

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women is an affront to their rights and dignity. This abhorrent phenomenon is detrimental to the human spirit and physical and mental health of women and girls in many societies. Well, it is fact that that no society, nation or community in this rather complex and difficult world of ours can claim to be free and immune from this evil phenomenon – old, deep-rooted and seemingly intractable as it appears to be, and I may add, on both sides of the development divide. Violence against women and girls takes different forms in different societies and with different justifications, whose ultimate aim is identical and of the same nature: subordination and exploitation of women. This phenomenon has expressed and manifested itself in many forms, including harmful traditional and customary practices, and in more modern times in the form of commercial exploitation, including of a sexual nature. While recognizing the fact that governments have an obligation to exercise their utmost to the best of their abilities to prevent violence against women and girls, The Group of 77 and China expresses its full readiness to cooperate with the United Nations system and its mechanisms to strengthen the on-going campaign for the elimination of violence against women in all societies.

Mr. Chairman,

I suppose we all agree that the responsibility for the implementation of the internationally established goals to promote women's empowerment rests primarily with governments, obviously, though, in the context of different circumstances and in the spirit of universality and enhanced international cooperation in a mutually supportive manner. Governments should indeed create, maintain and strengthen an enabling environment where women at the grass-root level, NGO's, especially women NGO's, and other relevant actors of civil society can have full and active participation in the implementation of the plans and programmes aimed at promoting women's empowerment and advancement.

It hardly needs to be stressed that the realization of gender equality, development and peace needs international cooperation. Promotion of international cooperation to support regional and national efforts in different ways and expanding sharing of expertise, experiences and knowledge of national machineries on women's empowerment, gender issues and gender mainstreaming methodologies and approaches on the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action are of critical importance for the collective international endeavours geared to the achievement of the Beijing goals and targets. Data collection and the development and use of gender-related analysis and statistics in the field of advancement of women and gender equality constitutes one of the important areas for intergovernmental cooperation. As in all other multilateral processes, existence and mobilization of adequate resources, both financial and human, at national and international levels, remains critical to the success of the follow-up activities and implementation of the Beijing platform for Action and the outcome of the review process. In this respect, mention should as well be made of the internationally agreed 0.7 per cent ODA target, that is yet to be realized.

Mr. Chairman,

Achieving real, meaningful and substantive improvement in the situation and status of women in all fields of social life, on a global scale and in all societies, depends, in the final analysis, on the resolute will and determination of the entire human community. It calls for forceful action at the national level and effective cooperation at the international level. Conflict resolution and promotion, establishment and maintenance of peace and stability and achievement of long-term, comprehensive, sustainable and humane development are among the overarching requisite conditions in this regard. While it is certainly true that effective empowerment of women in all societies depends on the achievement of development and poverty eradication, but, speaking here as the spokesman of the developing community at the United Nations, let me further underline the particular importance of genuine development and poverty eradication for the developing countries in general, and for the less fortunate among them in particular- the LDCs.

And I conclude with a plea to all of us, developed and developing, governmental and non-governmental. Let us resolve to rise to the challenge, collectively, and in a spirit of cooperation, solidarity and consensus, to make sure that we will make a difference in this critical area of our multilateral enterprise. Let us look to a future, hopefully not so distant, that all individuals, women and men, will have the chance to live a humane, fulfilling experience in all societies.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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