

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. OLUSEGUN APATA, AMBASSADOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE 38<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 3 (a): CONTRIBUTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE OVERALL REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE SUMMIT**

**New York, 8 February 2000**

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Mr. Chairman,

I take the floor on behalf of the Group 77 and China, to address the Commission for Social Development on the priority theme "Contribution of the Commission to the overall review of the implementation of the Summit". May I first of all on behalf of the Group, congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Commission for Social Development. I have no doubt that you will steer the deliberations of the Commission to a fruitful conclusion. I also wish to express the gratitude of the Group of 77 and China to the Secretary-General for his incisive report, which provides us with far-reaching observations and recommendations. It is our belief that the report would provide the basis for concrete action in achieving the objectives of Copenhagen.

Mr. Chairman,

In March, 1995, an unprecedented 117 Heads of State and Government came together to commit themselves to the improvement of human conditions the world over by setting target goals to eradicate poverty, achieve full employment and promote secure, stable and just societies at both national and international levels. Five years later, these laudable objectives remain a pipe dream for us in the developing countries. Since Copenhagen, the goal of poverty eradication has been at the centre of the national policy agenda of all developing countries. Governments have demonstrated their commitments by adopting several national poverty alleviation programmes, policies and strategies. In spite of these actions, poverty has been on the increase and its eradication remains the most formidable challenge for G77 governments. Some of the constraints militating against the Copenhagen objective are worsening terms of international trade, increasing external debts, structural adjustment programmes, armed conflicts, ethnic strife, globalization and natural disasters. Unless the next special session of the General Assembly addresses these problems, the target of reducing poverty by half in 2015 will be a mirage.

Mr. Chairman,

Full employment is central to poverty reduction. In developing countries, employment in the formal sector has stagnated and in some cases regressed. The goal of full employment is often hampered by policies aimed at stabilization, fiscal austerity and budgetary balance. Governments are therefore handicapped in their efforts at creating an environment that will facilitate the creation of jobs.

In addition to strengthening governments' role in creating enabling environment for job creation, there is the need to encourage the growth of the informal sector as well as the provision of micro credit schemes to enable a large segment of society to move out of

poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

The huge debt burden facing many G77 countries remains one of the principal obstacles to the achievement of the laudable objectives of Copenhagen. The percentage of debt service ratio is so high, in some cases up to 35 percent, that under those circumstances eradication of poverty becomes impossible. As a first step towards truly eradicating poverty and as a mark of genuine concern and commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the developed countries, especially the creditor nations should consider the year 2000 as a land-mark year to commit themselves to a definitive time frame of five years for debt cancellation for developing countries. This, we believe, would provide the basis for economic renewal and giant strides in social development.

Mr. Chairman,

In our world of today, which is increasingly globalised, governments are not in a position to control the factors of social development. The major financial crisis that occurred in Asia and their reverberating social consequences around the world, especially in developing countries, aptly validate this point. The need for a holistic approach to social development therefore becomes imperative. In this regard, national policies should be complemented by international efforts, particularly in such areas as reversing the declining levels of ODA and addressing in a fundamental manner, external debt burden, deteriorating terms of international trade and the marginalizing effects of globalization.

Mr. Chairman,

The goals of Copenhagen are achievable. What is however, lacking is the will to implement them. We therefore agree with the Secretary General's report that if the same urgency and political will as are demonstrated in conflicts and humanitarian disasters are applied to social development, the goals Copenhagen will certainly be realized.

I thank you.