



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. KAREN LOCK, PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM: 117 (ENHANCING SUB-REGIONAL OFFICES OF ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA), IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 6 November 2006)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group 77 and China on agenda items 116 and 117, in particular on "Enhancing the role of the Sub-Regional Offices of the Economic Commission for Africa".

2. The Group of 77 and China wishes to thank Mr. Zaid, the Director Ad Interim, Office for Strategic Planning and Management at the Economic Commission for Africa for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/471). The Group also wishes to thank the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Rajat Saha, for introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/61/544).

Mr. Chairman,

3. The World Summit Outcome Document reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to address the special needs of Africa, which is the only continent not on track to meet any of the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015, in order to enable it to enter the mainstream of the world economy. In this context, our Heads of State and Government resolved to strengthen cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development by providing coherent support for the programmes drawn up by African leaders within that framework.

4. As a result, the Group of 77 and China in 2005 expected that the Secretariat would prepare concrete proposals, as it did in the other areas of reform, to strengthen the United Nations activities in support of the special needs for Africa. However, this commitment was regrettably not reflected in the revised estimates prepared last year by the Secretariat in response to the World Summit decisions when less than one per cent of the new resources sought was to be expended on the Development Agenda and United Nations programmes in support of the NEPAD.

5. The Economic Commission for Africa and its sub-regional offices play an important role in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level in support of NEPAD. The General Assembly consequently in resolution 60/235 expressed its concern with the finding of the OIOS that the ability of the Sub-Regional Offices to act as the operational arm of the Commission is constrained by a lack of resources for core functions. The Assembly further stressed the need to strengthen the Sub-Regional Offices and requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive action plan for this purpose and to ensure that adequate resources are provided to the Commission and its Sub-Regional Offices.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the efforts taken by the Economic Commission to implement the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. We appreciate the seriousness with which the ECA undertook this task, as illustrated by the comprehensive review conducted in early-2006 aimed at repositioning the Commission to better respond to the challenges facing Africa. The African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development endorsed the

reform measures in May 2006 and they invited the Secretary-General to support the efforts of the Commission by providing it and its Sub-Regional Offices with adequate resources in order to scale up their operations at the sub-regional and regional levels. We would have expected that this aspect would have been addressed more concretely in the report before us.

7. The Group of 77 and China also appreciates the initiatives taken by the ECA to reorganise the Commission and divert resources to the Sub-Regional Offices so as to address the OIOS recommendations in the short term. We, however, recognise that the successful implementation of the OIOS recommendations is not entirely dependant upon actions of the Commission alone and that the Secretariat and Member States will have to provide adequate resources for critical areas identified by the OIOS and the Commission. Whilst we appreciate the interim measures, the Group is not clear as to the rationale for postponing critical decisions on resources to next year when we will consider the proposed budget for the biennium 2008-2009. This is certainly not the approach that the Secretariat and the Assembly have followed with other critical reforms resulting from the World Summit.

8. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the efforts by the Commission to increase its extrabudgetary resources. We, however, wish to stress that mandated activities should be financed from assessed contributions and the Commission should not be expected to increase its reliance on voluntary financing for the implementation of reform measures and other core activities. We trust that the Secretary-General will take concrete action to meet the provisions of resolution 60/235 and the request by the African Ministers. This is in line with recent proposals of the Secretary-General and decision of the Assembly in other priority areas of the Organisation that depended heavily on extra-budgetary finding. We consequently expect that development activities will be given similar treatment.

9. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/7 was an important expression of international solidarity and partnership for the NEPAD. It outlined the steps that the United Nations are expected to take at international, regional and national level to align the activities of the United Nations system with the priorities of NEPAD and to work with the regional and sub-regional organisations to ensure the implementation of the Partnership. In this context, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and its Sub-Regional Offices play an important role in the efforts to advance the development agenda in Africa. Since 2004, we have unfortunately not seen any real growth in the regular budget for activities in support of NEPAD. The Group believes that it is imperative to ensure that the "development of Africa", as one of the eight main priorities of the Organisation, receives not only our political support but also more concrete and visible action from the Secretariat and the Assembly.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.