

**Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran), at the Third Committee of the General Assembly on Agenda Item 27: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly**

**New York, 8 October 2001**

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Mr. Chairman,

It is a great honour for the Chairman of the Group of 77 to address the Third Committee at the very beginning of its work this 56th Session of the General assembly, particularly on such an important agenda item – in whose process I have been personally involved since early 1995, prior to Copenhagen, and more intimately after that in the process leading to the Special Session side by side with Cristian Maquieira, other members of the Bureau and the Secretariat colleagues.

Allow me at the outset to extend, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our most sincere and heartfelt felicitations to you and other distinguished members of the Bureau for your assumption of this important office. Our thanks and appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for its excellent work and preparation of the documents for the consideration of this Committee. We are confident that your able leadership and self-dedication would bring a successful conclusion to the work of the Third Committee. And you and your colleagues can rest assured of the full cooperation of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, attended by the highest number of Heads of State and Government, firmly placed the question of social development at the center of the international policy debate. At that historical Summit, the international community in its entirety embarked upon identifying some of the major challenges facing us all in this area. The Copenhagen Declaration laid out the fundamental concepts, principles and goals of social development and agreed on a number of commitments. The Programme of Action, premised on the spirit of consensus and international cooperation, addressed the all important enabling environment for social development and focused on three core issues of poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration. The momentum and dynamism created by the Summit at both national and international levels was further pursued by the twenty-fourth Special Session of the General Assembly, entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a global zing world.” where further initiatives were adopted by the international community. It is worth noting that the Social Summit clearly identified Governments as bearing the prime responsibility for ensuring social development and human well being, while recognizing the important role actors of civil society and the private sector have to play in this regard. The Special Session reaffirmed the Summit’s outlook.

Before turning to the substance of the matter at hand, let me express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/56/140. It presents a rather concise picture of the follow-up activities undertaken since the Special Session in Geneva in intergovernmental bodies as well as within the United Nations system. It is important to note, as also indicated in the report, that this report should be read in conjunction with the Secretary-General’s report on the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, and hence, the focus in the report on this area and the necessity of its particular highlight in this statement and consideration of the present item.

Mr. Chairman,

Social development, in all its new and contemporary dimensions, underpins human development and constitutes the mainstream for the creation of an enabling environment, at both national and international levels, for the overall progress and welfare of all human beings worldwide. For us on the lower side of the development divide it should be of more particular and urgent significance. At this point of time in this rather turbulent world of ours – to whose recent manifestations Dr. Langmore just alluded and I fully share those sentiments - and with an eye to past developments in our shared human history, it is quite safe to assert that social justice and equity are among the fundamental principles for founding and, more importantly, maintaining just societies. They should be seen as central, pivotal threads correlating all the components and complex set of features of a modern model society. These two fundamental concepts, once broadly conceived, should not fall victim to partisan, ideological or political acrimony and controversy. As we all know fully well, they have received due attention in the final outcome of both the Copenhagen Summit and the Special Session. Let me underline right here that we in the developing world remain very much attached to these concepts and cherish them. From our point of view, the ultimate goal of social development, and in fact, the ultimate test for the success of any social policy, should be judged from the vantage point of achieving social justice and equity.

Having laid out this broad perspective, albeit very briefly and in the most skeletal form, the first specific issue I turn to concerns poverty eradication. Given its centrality to social development and human well being in general, and in particular its status in the final outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the Special Session, poverty eradication should, as a matter of fact, be placed at the center of national socio-economic strategies and international cooperation for development. Establishment in the Millennium Declaration of the clear target for cutting by half of the level of extreme poverty by the year 2015 is a further reaffirmation of the critical importance of fighting poverty to the process of development and social development of all societies, needless to say, particularly in the developing world. Moreover, the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty calls for launching a global campaign to this end. What is needed in this regard is for both national governments and the international community to undertake respectively and in a mutually supportive manner concerted policies in order to ensure making concrete progress towards the realization of the established international goals. At the international level, the United Nations system in its entirety, and its agencies, funds and programmes, carry a special responsibility in this regard – which has been rightly emphasized in the report before us.

As alluded earlier, the role of national governments in promoting social development, and within that broad context, the imperative of fighting poverty, is well recognized. It is also known that many governments across the developing world have been trying in earnest to fight poverty at the national level, which, as we all know, and quite ruefully at that, is very much negatively impacted and practically constrained by a not so conducive external environment. It is rather axiomatic that a favourable, enabling international environment and effective international cooperation for development are of critical importance in assisting national governments to devise and implement effectively their respective programmes on poverty eradication. In addition to domestic financial resources, Official Development Assistance (ODA), debt relief and better market access, among others, play a significant part in enabling governments in the developing world to pursue and implement the necessary policies and measures in this domain. While commending the approach of the Secretary-General's report in this regard, let me add that our Group also supports the on-going efforts and consultations on the proposal to establish a World Solidarity Fund for Poverty Eradication. We believe that the proposed Fund would help to compliment other existing funds and arrangements in this area.

Within the broad framework of cooperation, mention should also be made of the crucial role of sharing of experiences and best practices in social development. This line of activity, which requires the active engagement and support of the relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, can provide further substantial input into the overall process and help advance our collective efforts. The imperative of extension and expansion of technical cooperation, capacity-building and networking as well as strengthening of national structures to cope with the varied challenges in social development hardly needs to

be emphasized.

Mr. Chairman,

For the Group of 77 and China the concepts of social protection, provision of safety nets and reducing vulnerability are indivisible parts and parcel of social development. It has become more so because of the debilitating impact of the process of globalization on all aspects of life in developing societies, and particularly the devastating repercussions of increasing marginalization on a large number of these countries. In so far as the question of vulnerabilities is concerned, I deem it necessary to draw attention to the necessity of addressing the negative impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on social development, particularly in the highly-affected countries. We found the debate on social protection in the thirty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development along with expert panel discussions very useful and illuminating. However, given the diversity in different national contexts and the need for further analyses, research and sharing of views, continuation of the debate will certainly contribute to its enrichment and help the intergovernmental body achieve consensus at a later stage. The relevant bodies within the United Nations system can and should play their due role in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

As we all remember, the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-ninth session adopted the multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006. Based on a number of core themes of the final outcome of the Social Summit and the Special Session, the adopted programme of work is a good road map and should help our global campaign towards promoting social development on a global scale. The Group of 77 takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment and readiness to actively participate in the discussions and deliberations of the Commission in its prospective sessions on the various components of the programme of work. A brief word on the theme for the year 2002 - integration of social and economic policy - is in order. It is granted that economic policies, including macroeconomic policies, at both national and international levels have decisive impact on the life of people in all societies, whether developed or developing, although much more pronounced in developing societies. This relationship has gained prominence due to the increasingly rapid pace and also complicating nature of on-going changes at all levels, not to mention the still unfolding globalization process. From this vantage point, overall macroeconomic policies, whether at national or international levels, and their impact on social situation need to be constantly assessed and reviewed. Moreover, in order to ensure effective pursual of social development due consideration should be accorded to poverty eradication strategies, social sector expenditures and social protection programmes in the overall economic policies of national governments and international institutions, including agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system. We expect – and hope – that a thorough and careful consideration of the Commission's theme for the year 2002 - and of course, effective follow-up and implementation of its outcome – would help our collective drive for the promotion of social development.

Mr. Chairman,

While the Commission has successfully decided on its five-year programme of work, the modalities for the ten-year review of the implementation of the respective outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the Special Session are yet to be determined. And as all the colleagues are aware, the matter is now closely related with the review of the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. In this context, I would like to draw attention to operative paragraph 4 of the resolution adopted by the 2001 substantive session of ECOSOC on the same subject, whereby the Council “recommends that the General Assembly examine how best to address the reviews of the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s, including their format and periodicity”. While addressing the question of integration and coordination,

mention should also be made of the necessity of active and effective interaction and cooperation between and among all key and instrumental actors in this domain, inclusive of governments, United Nation agencies, funds and programme and international financial institutions. Equally important is also the complementarity between the on-going international cooperation for social development and other multilateral processes. In this particular connection, the Group of 77 and China attaches singular importance to the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in March 2002 in Monterey, Mexico.

Mr. Chairman,

Achievement of social development, in the final analysis, becomes a matter of will and resources. It can be taken for granted that for altruistic reasons – if not enlightened self-interest - governments across the globe, including in the developing world, seem to be committed to the pursual of social development. The commitment of actors of civil society to the same objective can also be considered given. What is yet to materialize is an effective system of international cooperation for development to ensure that national efforts for social development are supported in a meaningful and sustainable manner. It may somehow seem and sound redundant to state that capacity-building, which is so critical to social development at national level, is itself directly related to and hinges in large measure on the availability of resources, which are generally scarce in most developing countries and practically non-existent in the less fortunate among them. All of us in the international community, both developed and developing, and also the United Nations system and other relevant international institutions, should undertake to explore and find new and innovative sources of funding for social development. The proposed advocacy campaign can also help in this respect.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, allow me to reiterate, once again, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our solemn commitment to the full cooperation with you and the Bureau and also our negotiating partners. Social development can be pursued and achieved only on the basis of consensus and cooperation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.