STATEMENT

by

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On behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

on Agenda Item 27 (a-d) – Social Development

in the Third Committee

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We first wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election, as we begin the work of the Third Committee for this session. We remain confident that your expertise and skill will steer the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion, and we assure you of our full support during your chairmanship.

Social development continues to be a significant issue to the Governments and peoples of the Caribbean Community. We therefore welcome the opportunity to address the subject and express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the numerous reports produced under this agenda item for this session.

Mr. Chairman,

According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the “Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly”, the most significant social challenges identified by Heads of State and Government in Copenhagen in 1995, namely: poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, remain today and have even intensified. Such challenges also persist in our region as we continue to be affected by the adverse impact of the global economic and financial crisis, including by “high and volatile food and fuel prices and menacing environmental risks” which are mentioned in the Secretary-General’s report. These, compounded by new, multifaceted and interconnected global challenges impede progress in achieving social development goals in our region.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, the 2013 World Economic Situation and Prospects Report indicates that following the greater weakening of the world economy in 2012, “the economic woes of the developed countries are spilling over to developing countries and economies in transition through weaker demand for their exports and heightened volatility in capital flows and commodity prices”. It is further projected that “prospects for the next two years continue to be challenging, fraught with major uncertainties and risks slanted towards the downside”. The report also reveals a continued fall in official development assistance (ODA), which remains a concern as ODA constitutes a major source of external finance for some small island developing States and contributes to funding their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In the light of the above, Mr. Chairman, it is evident that social development cannot be considered in a vacuum but must be duly incorporated and taken into account in the wider sustainable development agenda, alongside the economic and environmental pillars, in order to accelerate our achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including those specifically related to social development. Requirements to achieve these social development goals must also be adequately factored into the post 2015 development agenda.
Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM has long adopted a people-centered approach to development, which focuses on the empowerment of its citizens and addressing inequalities in efforts to enhance human development and by extension social and economic development. Recognising their needs, as well as their potential to make invaluable contributions to the sustainable development of our region, we continue to undertake initiatives to attend to the vulnerable groups in our societies including women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, youth and older persons. We also strive to ensure that citizens have equal access to education, health care, transport and other necessary services, which form an integral part of the social development framework.

Furthermore, we support the view of the Secretary-General that meaningful participation is one of the most prominent features of empowerment. Consequently, efforts are increasingly made to ensure that all citizens are fully integrated into society, and that all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in decision-making and other processes which influence public policy as it relates to our overall development. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Caribbean Human Development Report 2012, produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), confirms positive trends in human development in many countries in the region in various areas used to measure human development, such as education, health and income.

In addition, the significant strides made by CARICOM in the area of Human and Social Development over the past four decades since its establishment were highlighted at the 24th meeting of the regional Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), the main body responsible for the promotion of human and social development within CARICOM, held in May. The meeting, for which the theme this year was “fostering innovation through education and culture”, focused on addressing issues of fundamental importance to the sustainable development of the region. It was recalled that this forum has provided regional policy-makers over the years with the space and opportunities “to debate and discuss and to shape a vision for the Region”, as well as “to focus attention on particular sectors such as education, health, youth, children, gender, sport and culture”. The need for creative solutions to challenges faced by the region, the importance of innovation, information and communication technology and digital literacy were also among the issues discussed at the meeting, in the context of their possible contributions to human and social development in our region.

Mr. Chairman,

Another means of creating an enabling environment to facilitate the empowerment of our people involves steps towards the diversification of our economies. In one such initiative in the area of agriculture, among other benefits, citizens in rural areas which are largely dependent on agriculture, can engage in agricultural activities which will be used to contribute to enterprise development, in addition to being used as a means of subsistence livelihood. In this regard, Guyana is currently hosting the 12th Caribbean Week of Agriculture from October 4 to 12, for which the theme is “Linking the Caribbean for Regional Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Development”. One of the aims of the initiative is to promote the agriculture industry and trade in the region which in turn would positively impact the achievement of our social development goals.
Mr. Chairman,

Within CARICOM we recognise the importance and contributions of families to the development of our societies. As a result, we continue to implement a number of policies and initiatives which support their roles and will remain engaged in the preparatory process leading up to the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family to be convened in 2014 here in New York.

CARICOM is also fully supportive of the thrust towards a disability inclusive development agenda which seeks to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are adequately addressed. In this connection, many of our Member States have either signed or ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol. Additionally, recognising that the differently-abled are usually among the most marginalized in our societies, CARICOM Heads of Government took the decisions at their last meeting held in July 2013 in Trinidad and Tobago to begin a regional dialogue “to highlight and address the issues being faced” by persons with disabilities, and to convene a regional High-level meeting on persons with disabilities and special needs.

Cognisant of the significant role of youth as partners in development and in order to facilitate their continued empowerment, Mr. Chairman, CARICOM has developed a Regional Strategy for Youth Development. In 2010 in Suriname, at the first Special Regional Summit on Youth Development held in advance of the UN High-level meeting on Youth convened here in New York in 2011, CARICOM declared its intention to “explicitly recognise and clearly articulate the role of youth in Caribbean development” and to “ensure that this role is enshrined in national and regional development strategies”, as well as to support the full implementation and further strengthening of the Regional Strategy for Youth Development. CARICOM remains seized of the matters affecting our region’s youth, and will continue to engage our young people in decision-making and other processes which affect the development of our societies, such as through the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme.

Mr. Chairman,

For CARICOM, the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons has been a priority. Regional action has been guided by the Caribbean Charter on Health and Ageing established since 1999, and Member States continue to work towards the implementation of polices and programmes in health, social security and welfare systems, among others, in an effort to respond to the challenges faced by older persons. Member States also continue to take relevant measures at the national levels to ensure the further integration of the older persons in the economic and social life of the community, and have been working to enhance national statistical capacities to integrate the evolving demographic realities into economic and social planning.

Mr. Chairman, in relation to health in particular and due to its impact on our social and economic development, CARICOM wishes to underscore the need for concerted action to address the developmental impacts on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). We therefore look forward to collaborating with all partners to determine the partnership mechanism to be established for strengthening and facilitating multisectoral action for the prevention and control of NCDs, as
well as to preparing for the 2014 review and assessment of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, while CARICOM has made progress in the implementation of a number of policies and programmes to improve social development, more still needs to be done. We will therefore continue to work at the national and regional levels, as well as with development partners and all relevant stakeholders to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to define and work towards the post 2015 development agenda.

I thank you.