Statement
by
H.E. Tekeda Alemu,
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

At the
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General Assembly Third Committee
On
Behalf of African Group on Agenda Item 27:
Social Development

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New York
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on behalf of the Group on your election as Chair of the Third Committee for this 68th Session of the General Assembly. We are confident that with your great experience and your leadership the work of the Committee will be successful.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the delegation of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The African Group thanks the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item and takes note of the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group would like to seize this opportunity to highlight the gains that the African Union and its Member States have achieved regarding some of the Social Groups under discussion, namely; Persons with Disability, the youth, the Elderly and the Family in Africa; and in addressing the problem of inequality and social exclusion.

In relation with persons with Disability, we noted that in line with the UN World Programme of Action of 1982, the African Union adopted the “African Decade for People with Disabilities” which it had declared from 1999-2009. The Declaration helped to provide impetus to the implementation of the “UN World Programme of Action” concerning Disabled Persons. The focus of the Decade was to strengthen regional co-operation on issues affecting the achievement of the goals of the World Programme of Action, especially those concerning the full participation and equality of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the issues contained in the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities which relates to education, training and employment.
During the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session of the AU Conference of Ministers for Social Development held in Khartoum, Sudan, from 21-25 November 2010, evaluations on the implementation of the Declaration’s Plan of Action were conducted and accordingly, the Conference took decision with clear directives to focus on targets and indicators to measure the outcomes of the Plan. In recent years, there has been a progress in advancing the objectives of the Plan, but an insignificant proportion among the millions of Persons with Disabilities on the Continent has access to care, rehabilitation and education services in African Countries and that Disability is still a survival issue in Africa. Many persons with severe disabilities, particularly in rural areas do not survive because of lack of supportive services and resources.

Despite capacity challenges and resources constraints, the African Union has continued to undertake a number of activities and initiatives related to ensuring human rights of persons with disabilities. In November 2012, the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Session of the AU Conference of Ministers for Social Development, adopted the African Union Disability Architecture. This initiative has three major elements: a legal component consisting of a regional Protocol on the rights of persons with disabilities, an additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People rights; a programmatic component consisting of the Continental Plan of Action of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019); the Institutional component, consisting of the African Union Commission, the African Union Disability Agency, Member States, regional economic communities, disabled persons organizations and Development Partners.

The Continental Plan of Action of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019) identifies 16 areas for action, including access to justice and rights, self-representation, education, sport, recreation and culture, social protection, health and rehabilitation, prevention, women, youth and children, livelihoods, work and employment, peace and human security, organizational support, resource mobilization, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and advocacy and awareness-raising.
We have just concluded the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development and it is our belief that such ongoing preparatory processes towards the post-2015 development agenda could provide crucial entry points for ensuring that disability perspectives become an integral part of the development agenda, subsequently narrowing the gap between policy and practice and helping to realize the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development.

The economic empowerment and full participation of persons with disabilities can only be achieved through employment and livelihoods and through access, on an equal basis with others, to education, health care, housing and public infrastructure. There must be strong social protection mechanisms since persons with disabilities are more vulnerable and at a greater risk of poverty.

The Group therefore strongly supports the Outcome Document entitled "The way Forward, a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond" adopted during the High Level meeting on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities. We call on Member States and the international community to work together for disability inclusive development and to intensify efforts aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities toward 2015 and beyond.

Mr. Chairman,

On Youth development and their empowerment, we note that the African Population is estimated to be more than a billion people of whom over 60% are young men and women under the age of 35. The majority of African youth continue to face among other things: unemployment, underemployment, lack of skills, relevant education, access to capital, unmet need for health services, treatment and care. There is therefore a need to invest in youth and ensure that the large population of youth is mobilized and equipped to help drive Africa integration, peace and development agenda.
In January 2009 the African Union Heads of State and Government proclaimed 2009-2018 as the Decade for Youth Development and Empowerment and which stressed the urgent need to engage the youth in all development programs. The decade presents an opportunity to advance the agenda of youth development in all Member States across the African Union, to ensure effective and more ambitious investment in youth development programmes and increased support to the development and implementation of national youth policies and programmes.

In this regards, the African Group welcomes and supports the appointment by the Secretary General of the Special Envoy on Youth and look forward to work with him in order to strengthen the momentum on youth.

Mr. Chairman,

On the Elderly, the AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing in Africa was adopted during the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Durban, South Africa in 2002. This Policy Framework binds all AU Member States to develop policies on ageing and is being used as a guiding tool in the formulation of national policies to improve the lives of the Continent’s older people. The African Union realizes that advocacy efforts need to improve the adaptation and enactment of the policy at national levels and encourage appropriate consultations with older people in these processes. In this regard, there is a need for continuous advocacy to ensure the allocation of resources for the implementation of commitments.

The African Group wishes to give the assurance that it will continue to be actively engaged in all multilateral processes related to the promotion and the protection of the Rights of Older Persons.

Mr. Chairman,

On the family, the Group would like to reaffirm the centrality and the indispensability of the institution of the family in Africa and its critical role in the Continent’s political, cultural and socio-economic development. In July 2004 the African Union adopted the Plan of action on the Family in Africa in order to strengthen the family units, address their needs, improve their general welfare and enhance the life chances of family members, as well as to guide and strengthen Member States capacities in developing appropriate national structures, policies, programmes and capacities for addressing key priorities relating to family issues in Africa.

Despite this commitment, Africa is facing many challenges in the protection and support of the African Family due to widespread poverty, the work-family balance and the intergenerational solidarity which was for generations a key characteristic of families in Africa.

The forthcoming 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 is a key opportunity for Africa to renew its efforts towards a better implementation and evaluation of the Plan of action on the Family in Africa.

Mr. Chairman,

On Inequalities and Social inclusion, in most of the African countries development has not made a significant impact on the lives of the majority of the population, especially the marginalized and vulnerable groups. Many countries in Africa continue to face a social development difficulties as clearly portrayed in poor social development indicators.
Income and Non-income inequalities have increased in many countries over the past few decades and Africa remains among the regions with the highest levels of income inequality. Disparities also exist in the attainment of many of the Millennium Development Goals. There is still an educational gender gap, and Africa remains well behind the levels of parity achieved across the developing world. The number of out-of-school children in Africa is unacceptably high, and late enrolment is a persistent problem. Children living in rural areas are twice as likely to be underweight than their urban counterparts.

Despite these challenges, African countries have made notable efforts to address and improve socio-economic development. Some AU Member States have designed and implemented various social policies giving consideration to redistributive, protective and transformative or developmental roles.

The 1st Session of AU Conference of Ministers in Charge of Social Development held in Windhoek, Namibia, 27-31 October 2008, adopted the Social Policy Framework for Africa (SPF), as a framework for coordinating and harmonizing social development policies in Africa.

The SPF focuses, on key thematic social issues: population and development; labour and employment; Social Protection, health; HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria and other infectious diseases; migration; education; agriculture, food and nutrition; the family; children, adolescents and youth; ageing; disability; gender equality and women’s empowerment; culture; urban development, environmental sustainability, the impact of globalization and trade liberalization in Africa and good Governance, Anti-Corruption and Rule of Law. In addition drug and substance abuse and crime prevention; sport; civil strife and conflict situations; and foreign debt were identified as issues also deserving particular attention in Africa.

The Policy Framework urges Member States to scale up efforts towards social protection for all, with emphasis on the vulnerable through an integrated and multi-sectorial approach. In order for the Continent to achieve the MDG’s by 2015 and beyond, social protection requires the involvement and collaboration of other
social development sectorial Ministries and partners, with each playing a supplementary role in efforts to improve the welfare of all Africans.

Africa remains committed to and engaged in social development efforts within the framework of national development plans and policies. The Group agrees with many of the Secretary General’s recommendations. We wish particularly to stress addressing inequality requires broadening the scope of the global partnership for development and that the international trade agenda must support measures targeted towards equalizing opportunities for participation in global markets. We agree with the Secretary General that trade agreements should be harmonized with other multilateral agreements in social development so as to form a more coherent, integrated approach. We note that there is scope for further policy coordination across countries in the areas of migration and foreign direct investment.

The African Group strongly endorses the idea that advancing social integration, non-discrimination and equality should be an integral part of addressing inequality within the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you for your attention