Statement of
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Before
the Third Committee
Item 27 (b): Social Development

Delivered by
Mr. Mohammad A. Al-Matrafi
Minister Plenipotentiary

Tuesday, 8 October 2013 – New York

Unofficial Translation
Please check against Delivery
In the name of God the Most Gracious, the Merciful

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Delegation of my Country would like to convey to His Excellency, Ambassador Stephan Tafroy, its sincere congratulations on his election as President of the Third Committee in the 68th session of the UN General Assembly, wishing H.E. every success in his forthcoming duties and responsibilities. Moreover, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would like to align itself with the statement given by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. President,

The Kingdom's keenness to address social development challenges stems from its belief that social development aims to advance and develop the human being who is originally honored by the Almighty Creator. The Quor'an states, "We have honored the sons of Adam". Accordingly, man is mandated to develop this earth socially, economically, and politically.

The key issues that hinder social development, such as poverty, ignorance, disease, and unemployment pose great challenges that require from all of us, states and organizations, to take effective measures to address these challenges, especially in least developed countries, to ensure the right of these peoples to decent life.
Mr. President,

The Government of my Country strives to achieve sustainable and balanced social development to all through the implementation of the requirements provided in the Kingdom's Constitution, which stipulates that it is the State's duty to guarantee the citizen and his family's social rights, such as coverage in emergencies, illness, disability, and aging; in addition to the provision of social security and encouraging institutions and individuals to contribute to charity projects. The Constitution also stipulates that it is the State's duty to provide adequate health care, public education and combating illiteracy, and to ensure citizens' right to work; in addition to the State's duty to enact fair laws that protect both the owner of business and the workers.

In the field of illiteracy and public education, the percentage of enrolled students reached (96.6%), and the percentage of literacy among young people reached (98.3%) in 2012. In the same year, an approval was issued to establish an independent body mandated to evaluate public education in order to improve its quality and goals, especially regarding the needs of the labor market and to achieve social development in general.

In the area of health, the Kingdom has made it a high priority in its national development plans. In 2013, the Kingdom has allocated about $14.4 billion in the State's budget for health care, an increase of 16% than 2012's allocation, to improve the adopted programs especially those aimed to improve motherhood and childhood health care, and reduce maternal mortality during pregnancy. It is worth noting that in accordance with the MDGs, by the end of 2011, immunization coverage for targeted diseases reached 98.2%, and mortality rates among children under five years old decreased by two thirds.
In the area of employment and job creation and reducing unemployment, although there are still some challenges associated with attracting young people to the labor market, within the past few years several programs and initiatives were adopted by governmental and non-governmental organizations which aim to create decent jobs for both sexes, such as Wage Subsidies Program through the Human Resources Fund, Remote-Work Program, Part-Time Work Program, Productive Families Support Program, Rehabilitation of National Labor Force Program which aims to increase their productivity to match the needs of the Labor Market.

In the area of disabilities, in implementation of the Kingdom’s commitments outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and its Optional Protocol, the Kingdom has taken several important steps in this regard such as, the establishment of "centers for prevention and early detection of disability", especially among children, the establishment of "rehabilitation centers for the disabled" which provide specialized programs to integrate the disabled in public education, in addition to many financial support programs offered by the state to improve disabled status. Moreover, the Saudi Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) monitor any violations endured by the disabled, receive their complaints, and follow-up with the competent authorities until these infractions are settled.

Furthermore, The Kingdom's participation in the high-level meeting held on September 23, 2013 and the high-level side event constitute an import step towards strengthening international cooperation in the field of disabilities.
Mr. President,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's concern with social development transcended its national borders and significantly contributed in addressing the negative effects of the issues of hunger, disease, and poverty in developing countries.

The total of the Kingdom's aid and assistance reached during the past thirty years $103 billion, which benefited more than 95 developing countries. In addition, through the Saudi Fund for Development since its inception until 2011, the Kingdom provided several soft loans in the amount of 35 billion riyals, dedicated to support social and economic sectors' priority projects on sustainable development in more than 80 developing countries in Africa, Asia and other regions of the world. Moreover, the Kingdom contributed an amount of $500 million and more than 4000 tons of dates annually to the World Food Program. In appreciation to the Kingdom's efforts in the field of social development, the WFP honored the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, with the Fund's highest award and granted him the title of "The hero of the battle against hunger.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

The Government of my Country would like to note that addressing the issues associated with social development in the least developed countries requires from all of us, especially the participating developed countries, more support to social development programs in these countries, keeping in mind that the success of these development programs and policies requires to take into account the basic needs of these countries, to enhance the involvement and participation of their people in determining the qualifications of these programs and policies, and to exchange best practices in this field with the intensification of awareness and educational activities to achieve the desired goals.

Thank you for your attention.