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Statement

By

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On behalf of the African Group

On

Agenda Items 23: Eradication of poverty and other development issues

At

The Second Committee of the 68th Session of the General Assembly

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New York
Mr. Chairman,

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

Our Group associates itself with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China and would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

Poverty has always remained at the center of the global development agenda. Since MDGs came into being, enormous efforts have been made and progress has been achieved, globally. As a result, poverty rate fell to 20.6 per cent in 2010 and the MDG target has been achieved at the global level, five years before the target date. This is something that we should commend and uphold.

We are nevertheless far from achieving the objective at regional and country levels. We are concerned by the fact that progress has been uneven with 1.2 billion people still living in extreme poverty, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in which the number of people living in extreme poverty rose steadily between 1990 and 2010, accounting for one-third of the world’s poor. That explains why the situation of Africa is special and why it merits very special attention during the remaining period of the MDGs and as well as when crafting the post 2015 development agenda.

The risk of climate change has also become more pronounced than ever in exacerbating poverty through its effects on agricultural productivity. Another reason for greater global attention to Africa.
Mr. Chairman,

The multifaceted nature of poverty can be effectively mitigated through strong global partnership. There is a need also to redouble efforts in other areas of the MDGs if we are to alleviate poverty in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

Looking at Africa more closely, agriculture which is the backbone of many economies in the continent happens also to employ huge size of the labor force. The development of the sector no doubt helps in the elimination of rural poverty. It is paramount therefore to increase investment in agriculture, particularly in infrastructure development, so as to increase the productivity of workers and their capacity to generate more income, thereby transforming the sector to contribute to the industrialization process of Africa's economies. It should be underlined most emphatically that historically, poverty has never been eliminated in any society without moving into manufacturing and laying a firm basis for industrialization. Africa cannot be an exception. Poverty cannot be defeated by running away from value addition.

Look at the problem of unemployment, particularly among the youth. This is a serious concern for our Group. We believe the challenge can best be addressed if investment in other social sectors, particularly education is increased to afford young people the opportunity to be employed, and manufacturing and agro-business is expanded. In addition, small and medium enterprises serve as a vehicle for dynamic source of employment and contribute to overall productivity.

The international community therefore should provide the necessary assistance to African countries to enable them attain the challenges surrounding unemployment in a sustainable and effective manner. It is also critical to support these countries to beef up their fiscal cushions so that they can continue to address the problem of unemployment without being seriously affected by the global economic crisis.

As the pace of global economic recovery remains sluggish, its effects on the most vulnerable are inevitable. In this regard, strengthening social protection and safety
net programmes help poor countries mitigate the effects of the global economic slowdown and make smooth transition during this difficult time.

Implementing a universal, comprehensive and gender-responsive social protection programmes is also paramount to address the pressing needs of women, particularly to enable them to have equal position in labor market and decrease their concentration in informal sectors as well as reduce the burden of unpaid care work on them.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Africa Group firmly believes that poverty should remain at the core of the post 2015 development agenda. We are of the view that equal recognition should also be given to the creation of employment opportunities. While the responsibility to address our socio-economic challenges rests on us, we nonetheless call on the international community to supplement our efforts and support us in overcoming the continent’s number one enemy – poverty.

I thank you.