

The delegation of Belize welcomes the decision by ECOSOC to focus this high level segment on human development, specifically health and education, for it helps us to keep our focus as we prepare for Johannesburg.

I do not believe that any of us doubt that our failure to emancipate our people who live in desperate poverty is neither due to a lack of understanding nor a lack of awareness of the situation. We have been able to articulate the problems and set goals that we believe can result in meaningful sustainable development, but action and implementation continues to stagnate, which is in fact a reflection that those of us with the capacity to effect the necessary changes often ignore the urgency of the situation. Could it be that those with the capacity to effect the necessary changes remain unconvinced that their continued prosperity is linked to the eradication of poverty?

Mr. Chairman

No country, no region, no sector can escape the consequences of the perpetuation of poverty. In fact, in terms of trade, the very emerging global markets that our developed partners are eager to access are comprised of the same poor people of whom we speak. The eradication of poverty is our shared responsibility and none of us is exempt from the burdens that come with such conditions. We in the developing world acknowledge the urgency of addressing this situation. At the same time, we are mindful of the fact that we lack the resources to address this global problem on our own.

Today free trade and participation in the global economy are offered as the solution to the eradication of poverty in our countries. Though this can be a part of the solution, we also know that in order to participate as equal partners in a globalized economy we must first build our economic capacities. Education and health are among the greatest weapons in combating poverty. So to build our economic capacities we must first improve on the quality of education and healthcare that we provide for our people.

Like many countries with a predominantly young population, Belize places its highest priority on education. Over the past four years, the Government of Belize has progressively increased its budget for education to the extent that it presently constitutes 33 percent of our national budget. Realizing that education empowers people with the ability to contribute to their own development and in turn to that of their communities, Belize is committed to employing available resources to address education of our people so as to catalyze the further development of our country. In this context, my delegation emphasizes that the attention of the international community should be on making development meaningful for our local communities.

As this high-level segment has sufficiently expounded, progress in education is not mutually exclusive of progress in health. During last year's Special Session on HIV/AIDS many of us spoke of the serious impact HIV/AIDS and other health related issues has had and will continue to have on development. In the Latin American and Caribbean Region our health systems are being strained by the ever increasing people living with and dying of HIV/AIDS. Yet availability of as well as accessibility to the

necessary medical treatment further compounds the Sisyphean struggle to combat this pandemic.

These issues Mr. Chairman are development issues and for us they are inextricably linked to our ability to trade. So as we prepare for Johannesburg we must continue to raise the urgency of addressing poverty issues in the context of trade and development. We will continue to advocate that developed countries meet their commitment made in Rio and provide 0.7% ODA.

For us, poverty alleviation is a global responsibility. We continue to assume our share of this responsibility and we pledge to continue to work responsibly with our partners in development in pursuit of a better life for all the people of the world.

Thank you.