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(Translation)

Speech by the Head of the Chinese Delegation At the 2004 ECOSOC High-level Segment

Madam President,

The theme for the 2004 ECOSOC high-level segment is an extremely important one as it concerns 50 least developed countries (LDCs) and hundreds of millions of poverty-stricken people. These countries and people are making tireless efforts to eliminate poverty and achieve development. Following a detailed analysis of the challenges facing the LDCs in domestic and international resource mobilization and the constraints to their participation in the global economy, the Secretary-General has made some recommendations in his report. The Chinese delegation believes that the report of the Secretary General can serve as a good basis for our discussion at this high-level segment.

We learned from the Secretary-General's report that during 2000-2002, the growth rate in about half of the LDCs was less than half the target rate set in the Brussels Program of Action and that about one third of the LDCs actually experienced a decline in growth. This is truly a situation of great concern to us. On top of being handicapped by inadequate infrastructure, prevalence of diseases and geographical constraints, the LDCs today also have to contend with the twin challenges of a serious lack of investment and of skilled human resources. They have difficulties in mobilizing sufficient domestic resources, and they have not seen any tangible increases in external investment either. What is more, with a steady decline of ODA, the LDCs have been increasingly burdened by heavy debt and worsening terms of trade. The combination of internal and external factors has seriously hampered their economic and social development.

Under the circumstances, one simply cannot be optimistic about prospects for financing and resource mobilization in these countries, hence the deep concern of the Chinese delegation.

We note that most of the LDCs have formulated corresponding strategies and policies aimed at the implementation of the targets and the 7 critical commitments contained in the Brussels Program of Action. They have worked hard to this end and have achieved some results. But the LDCs, as a vulnerable group, are at a serious disadvantage in the global economy. They cannot be expected to rely solely on themselves to realize the development goals, for that they sorely need the support and help of the international community. The Chinese delegation is of the view that in poverty eradication, capacity building and economic development, the international community has the duty and obligation to provide effective support and assistance to the LDCs.

Madam President,

ODA has a special and important significance for the economic development of the LDCs. The Chinese delegation appeals to the developed donor countries to heed the call of the Brussels Program of Action for an increase in the share of ODA in their GNP, with a view to reaching the expected target as early as possible. In the meantime, developed states should

- ? further alleviate the debt burden of the LDCs, especially the HIPC countries among them, to allow the LDCs to concentrate their limited resources on development;
- ? encourage their enterprises to expand investment in the LDCs;
- ? improve, to the extent possible, the external trade environment of the LDCs by honoring their promises of “zero custom duty and no quota” and special care and arrangements for major export products of the LDCs, especially agricultural products; and
- ? provide better market access for the LDCs by helping them to integrate with the multilateral trade system and to benefit from the new round of multilateral trade negotiations.

Madam President,

The Chinese government has been a staunch supporter of the reasonable demands and propositions of the LDCs in their efforts to emerge

from poverty and to achieve economic and social development. As a developing country with its per capita GDP ranking behind more than 100 countries, China has managed to provide assistance to the LDCs to the best of its ability. For over 50 years, China has provided various forms of technical assistance and assistance in kind to help a great number of LDCs to complete over 800 projects in sectors such as agriculture, textiles, power generation, transport, hospitals and schools.

True to its commitment made at the 1st session of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in October 2000, the Chinese government has already cancelled the debt of 31 LDCs in Africa in the order of 1.3 billion dollars and reduced the matured debt of some Asian LDCs. My government attaches great importance to and actively engages in cooperation with the LDCs in human resources development and has trained a great number of managerial and technical personnel for the LDCs, boosting their efforts to enhance capacity-building.

In accordance with the commitment and arrangements made at the second session of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, the Chinese government has this year launched negotiations on duty-free treatment of some of the export commodities of the African LDCs, with a view to helping them in an active and effective way to develop and expand external trade and increase international income.

Madam President,

The Chinese delegation believes that with the deepening of the opening up and the continuous development of its economy, China will be able to provide more help and make a greater contribution to the economic and social development of the developing countries, especially the least developed among them.

Thank you, Madam President.