



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY NADIA M. OSMAN
MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND
CHINA DURING THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING
OF THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
New York, 24 February 2009**

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the theme of "Rural Development". Let me first express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on this particular theme, which provides useful policy perspectives on rural development.

2. We would also like to express our appreciations to the panellists for their rich and insightful presentations.

3. The majority of the over one billion people who live in rural areas are poor and most of them in developing countries. Hence, to achieve the millennium development goals, in particular poverty eradication, special and concerted efforts need to be directed towards rural development. It is therefore imperative that this Preparatory Meeting and the forthcoming seventeenth session of the Commission comes up with viable, realistic and implementable policy options that can effectively address the situation of the rural populations.

Madam Chair,

4. The current global crises have serious implications for rural development. The rural poor are among the first to suffer the consequences of the economic and financial crisis as they depend mainly on subsistence farming and small agricultural-based industries.

Madam Chair,

5. In most developing countries agriculture is the main source of livelihood and subsistence for the rural poor, who are mostly the landless, smallholders, pastoralists and rural women. That is why improved agricultural productivity and growth are central to any strategy for reducing rural poverty.

6. Availability and access to efficient, reliable and affordable energy is an important impediment to rural development. Whereas some progress has been made towards the goal in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on (JPOI), improving access to reliable and affordable energy services, some 1.6 billion people, mostly in rural areas, still lack access to electricity. Efforts have also been made in reducing the use of traditional biomass, especially in Latin America and parts of Asia. Lack of modern energy services still impedes poverty eradication and sustainable development in many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and some small island developing States.

7. Water is becoming a scarce commodity while its availability and quality cannot be underestimated in strategies and policies for rural development. Investment priorities for rural development must ensure the integrity of water infrastructure such as repairing leaks in irrigation canals; addressing adverse environmental impacts; providing demand-driven irrigation to improve the livelihoods of poor people; and improving its management and cost-effectiveness. Increasing the efficiency and sustainability of water use in agriculture and improving irrigation system performance should be key strategic conservation goals.

Madam Chair,

8. Despite the enormous merits of information and communication technologies for coherent and coordinated development in rural areas, most of the rural areas in developing countries have no access to these technologies, and hence are unable to take advantage of the benefits of globalisation and related developments. Integration of rural communities into global information and communication networks would go a long way to enhance rural development and the integration of rural populations into the global economy. Rural development strategies and policies should endeavour to bridge the digital divide at the local, national regional and international levels. This can be done through developing relevant ICT infrastructure

9. Diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis have been threatening the progress made in rural development, particularly in developing countries where 95 percent of the infected population live. Combating these diseases must therefore be a core element of global development support and assistance to developing countries. Global efforts must also give high priority to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and helping communities cope with its impacts. Further, to improve social well-being and minimize the vulnerability of the rural poor, there is need to improve access to nutrition and health services, in order to help mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

10. Education and health facilities and services are important components of human capital development. But most rural areas lack education and health infrastructure, which in turn contribute to high illiteracy rates and poor health among the populations. Addressing this will require promoting literacy and training opportunities for unschooled rural youth and adults and ensuring that investments in vocational training programmes are comprehensive and implemented in an integrated manner to meet the priority needs of the people.

Madam Chair,

11. Many rural areas in the developing countries have poor levels of infrastructure development in roads, railways, waterways and air transport, which open up areas for prospective investors; provide access to markets and raw materials. The underdevelopment of these forms of infrastructures in rural areas is symptomatic of underdevelopment, and rural development policies must seriously address challenges in a broader sense.

12. In most of the developing world, women do most of the agricultural work. Women constitute a large share of rural populations and are usually in charge of household food security, yet in many areas they are constrained in their access to, and ownership and control of productive resources such as land and finances. Rural development strategies and policies should therefore include women empowerment and gender equity.

Madam Chair,

13. Policies for rural development must aim at helping countries accelerate economic growth and respond to the plight of the rural populations. Such policies must ensure the enhancement of the productive, social and environmental assets that are important for the improvements of their well-being. It is in this view that the Group of 77 and China will enumerate and submit a set of policy options and means of implementation that we believe can spur development in rural areas, particularly in developing countries.

I thank you.