

EGYPT



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Statement

By

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On the Priority Theme of the 47th session of the Commission for
Social Development

“Social Integration”

Madame Chair,

It is with pleasure that I'm given the chance to speak on one of the priority issues that Egypt considers of utmost importance to social development, the issues of "social integration" which is our priority theme to the current session of the Commission of the Social Development; but before doing so I would like to seize the opportunity to congratulate you Ambassador and your bureau members on your election for the chairmanship of the commission for this session and assure you of my delegation full support and cooperation. Egypt aligns its position with the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the Group off 77 and China and Namibia on behalf of the State members of the African Union.

Egypt believes in the integrity of social development and considers social integration as a backbone to the whole process and attaches a great importance to the welfare of its citizens as reflected in our national strategies and various programmes adopted by the government of Egypt, which we believe shall be achieved through a holistic integrated social policy.

In the human development report of Egypt 2005 the government of Egypt has committed itself to developing a new social contract linking citizens to the state through a process of confidence building, we decided that social policies are to concentrate on specific sectors that are considered the most vital and influential in citizens lives such as health, quality education, social care and social protection with the aim of realizing social justice and equal opportunities for all along with the re-distribution of resources, in short "a society for all" as stipulated in the Copenhagen declaration and program of action.

However, given the present situation, the achieved economic growth which has reached 7% has not been accompanied by a significant improvement in the living standard or a significant reduction in poverty rates, a gap between the rich and the poor on one hand and the urban and the rural areas on the other. Egypt has also witnessed over the last period certain demographic shifts that have affected the population structure considerably. As Egypt now embraces millions of youth in addition to a large number of elderly citizens, each of the two categories requires an appropriate social policy that can protect them and calls for re-structuring the security and protection systems to be able to keep up with such population changes.

It is worth mentioning that the whole process have taught us three main lessons: (1) That the economic growth does not necessarily lead to achieving the required comprehensive development and improving life quality moreover it may be accompanied by an ill income distribution or leading to a gap between the rich and the poor. (2) Human development is considered to be a crucial element in advancing the process of growth as well as improving income distribution. (3) Each human society encompasses marginalized groups that are not included in the development process, due to historical, cultural, or geographical circumstances. Such groups are eligible for protection either permanently like the disabled or the elderly, or temporarily like the unemployed or the

children, and in some specific and particular way affecting the family and the provider women as well as micro and small enterprises.

These groups are being targeted and protected all over the world. In this respect Egypt is in the course of reconsidering its packages of social safety, social protection and social welfare policies in light of the situation on the ground, which indicates that currently applied subsidization policy faces many challenges, despite the fact that it has helped in protecting the poor and relieving the burden of the low income. These challenges include the inefficiency of the provided subsidization, in terms of its sufficiency and in adequacy for the target groups, as well as providing such subsidization to other un-needing groups, which leads to increasing the burden on the state budget, prices distortion and profiting from markets duality. And in order to improve subsidization policies we have to focus on three aspects, targeting policies which identifies the eligible individuals and means of reaching them, subsidization management by establishing delivering mechanisms and identifying the personal in charge of the subsidization management, of efficiency standards and conditions, and resources allocation for subsidization its volume services and sectors.

Based on the facts, we came to an understanding that the improvement of the social situations in Egypt requires the adoption of new trends in social policies based on the principles that considers social policies as the corner stone of the economic policies which insures its success, acting as a safety valve for society. This orientation change represents an urgent need for the acceleration in the inter-action pattern between the pressing factors in the Egyptian community and the increasing sense of the growing social and economic gap. The new vision and application of social policies cannot be attained unless there is a political will of the leadership behind it as well as establishing coordination between the concern Ministries within a community, and a dialogue that mobilizes the advocacy of the all parties concerned.

In so doing a promising initiative in the ESCWA region was demonstrated in Egypt by the national conference on integrated social policy in February 2007, which was sponsored by the Egyptian Ministry of social solidarity in partnership with the ESCWA. Government and non-government participants confirmed state involvement in planning an implementation to enhance social equality. The Egyptian government's interest in covering this conference and engaging in a follow-up indicated its awareness that reactive poverty reduction approaches will no longer work without incorporating attention to social equality and justice. Several important recommendations emerged during the conference which has been implemented by Egypt: (1) Instituting a system of checks and balances to apply social equity analysis based on solid data collection. (2) Establishing a social observatory to access and analyze information and data. (3) Creating a sustainable partnership for development through the engagement of civil society organizations and private sector in all stages of policy development implementation. (4) Applying greater administrative and fiscal the centralization there by allowing local communities to identify challenges and develop opportunities and local solutions. (5) Providing capacity building and awareness raising at all levels of central and local government and for civil society and private sector.

In brief we have realized that the new social policies should be based on three main access (economic policies, service policies and social safety policies) the new perspective towards such policies relies on many basic principles, most important of which are: (1) That social policies has to target all citizens and should not be confined to a specific category, as they consider the needs and the rights of all citizens and social groups (women-youth-children-elderly-disabled). (2) That the integration and intersection of social policies maximize their benefits and achieve the desired efficiency, which cannot be done unless a corresponding intensive economic and social interventions are establish, taking into account the fact that structural policies and initiative have different impact on various community groups. (3) The central role that the state plays in ensuring the social rights of all citizens should not only be limited to fulfilling their basic needs. (4) That the importance of investing in the human element when developing and implementing the various policies are vital.

In the age of Global Crises, three main social safety net programs are currently active in Egypt, the consumer food subsidy program, cash transfer for the needy provided by the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the social fund for development aiming at alleviating the negative effects of globalization on poor families and the expenses they endure for school education of their children and medical expenses in case of personal crisis, as part of the broader national poverty reduction strategies aiming at fully realizing the MDG's, job creation, social intervention, women's advancement, closing the gender equality gabs in development, participatory governance and establishing safety net measure; and target the rural and urban areas through an integrated infrastructural development plan to advance these areas and upgrade their social, economic and environmental standards through the "targeting" programme which is one indicator of commitment to new social contract which is an objective to the ministerial group for social development.

Finally, Madame Chair,

Egypt has came to an understanding while reforming its social policies that in order to do this a whole integrated social policy has to be reached achieving a social safety network aiming at improving and protecting all marginalize groups against occasional and chronicle risk, confirming the rights of ownership and participation without any discrimination on any basis, several programmes have been established to achieve this goal including for improving services and rehabilitation centers for persons with disabilities including mental institutions; development of vocational, reformation centers, providing professional training for young graduates in dealing with people with special needs including mentally disabled persons, and last but not least activating the role of the family provider women in development. These were some of many projects Egypt has established in her social safety network of projects aiming at achieving one main goal which is social integration, equal opportunities and subsequently a society for all enjoying social development.

I thank you Madame Chair.

