

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Division of Social Policy and Development and the Bureau of the Session for inviting me to speak at this panel session to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Copenhagen Summit.

As a representative of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), and as the only panelist from the civil society, I would speak more from the perspective of a civil society organization and share our experience in following up the Copenhagen Summit. Prof. Adesina has just given a very thorough account of the progress of the implementation of the Declaration, and the Report of the Secretary-General has highlighted many aspects which require the governments to step up their efforts in order to realize their commitment in the Summit. I am sure that our civil society representatives will speak on this in the following discussions. I will hence spend more time in discussing the roles of the civil society in helping the governments to achieve the targets and building a society for all.

The HKCSS is an umbrella organization of direct social services NGOs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), China, and we have a membership of more than 370 organisations, together we provide about 90% of all the social services in HKSAR including services for elderly persons, people with disabilities, children and youth, families, etc.

After the Copenhagen Summit, the HKCSS started our long term effort in advocating for pro-poor policies in Hong Kong in 1996. We conducted the first research on poverty in that year, and successfully drew the attention of policy makers, media and the general public towards the problem of poverty in Hong Kong. This was indeed the first time over years as the economy of Hong Kong was so good that people thought that poverty did not exist. Since then, we have conducted more than 30 researches on different aspects of poverty and have become the major source of poverty information and analysis. For example, whenever there are policy debates on poverty in the Legislature, our research data are the most often quoted.

If you have been to HKSAR before, you probably know that Hong Kong is an affluent city. The UNDP has put HKSAR under the category of Very High Human Development, but its statistics also shows that income polarization in HKSAR is the

most serious among the developed economies. The State of the World's Cities published by the UN Habitat in 2008 also pointed out that HKSAR was the most divided among Asian cities. So the nature of poverty in HKSAR is not that of absolute poverty but of high disparity between the haves and have-nots.

Because of the high disparity, there was indeed a lack of understanding in the mainstream society towards the plight of the disadvantaged. Hence, in addition to conducting researches, it is important to have wide understanding and support from different sectors. Prof. Adesina just mentioned about the importance of inter-sectoral synergy. Our experience certainly echoes this point. As an umbrella organization of NGOs, the HKCSS has become the most important partnership platforms in HKSAR for NGOs, foundations, think tanks, academics as well as the private sector. Through this platform, we promote the partnership between the private and NGO sector in direct social services and in the development of social enterprises. We engage think tanks and researchers in poverty researches. We also help foundations and potential donors understand the situation and make decisions in providing services to meet the needs of different disadvantaged groups.

In short, the 3 major roles and strategies of the HKCSS are:

1. Knowledge building through conducting researches
2. Networking with both NGOs and private sector, and
3. Agenda setting through getting support from the public and policy makers.

With the efforts of the HKCSS and other concerned civil society organizations, the HKSAR Government set up a Commission for Poverty in 2005. In a public opinion survey, most respondents selected "poverty" as the priority policy area of the Government in 2010. The Head of HKSAR Government has also recently pledged to introduce proactive measures to address the issues of poverty and unemployment in the forth coming government budget. This is on top of the Government's effort to legislate for minimum wage, set up child development fund and other measures.

In addition to the above, the HKCSS has been an active member of the International Council on Social Welfare (the ICSW) for many decades. This year, we will host the first joint world congress of the ICSW, International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work. We are expecting more than 2,000 participants, with Mr. Sha Zukang, the UN Undersecretary for Economic and Social Affairs, as the keynote speaker. We will also have a special session on social protection to be co-organised with the UN Department of Economic

and Social Affairs.

I hope that my sharing has convinced you of the important roles of civil society as change-makers. There are many other NGOs with similar functions which perform even better than we do. I would like to stress that, we do not only provide direct social services, but we also help to build community consensus and engage different sectors in this meaningful course, and this is essential for the government in winning the support of the corporate sector and the general public in its effort to build a society for all. To achieve this, I hope that the governments could set up policies to maintain continuous dialogue with the civil society, to support their policy research and advocacy functions, and to engage them as a key partner in the policy-making process.

Thank you.