SAINT LUCIA

FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT BY SAINT LUCIA
on behalf
OF CARICOM
October 4, 2002

TO THE THIRD COMMITTEEE
Item: 97, 98 and 99

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing

STATEMENT BY

Ms. Michelle Joseph
Representative to the Third Committee
Permanent Mission of St. Lucia to the United Nations

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen Member States of The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country St. Lucia on items 97, 98 and 99 of the agenda. CARICOM wishes to congratulate you Mr. Chairman and the other member of the bureau on your election to preside over the important work of this committee.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community is faced with many of the same economic and social inequities to which we referred in our statement one year ago. According to the U.N. Report on the World Social Situation 2001, " world income inequality increased in the 1990s despite unprecedented global economic growth. Thus, in many respects, the world social situation has worsened, and from the recently-concluded deliberations in Johannesburg, we are reminded that poverty remains one of the greatest - if not the single greatest - impediment to sustainable human development. Heads of Government of the *Association of Caribbean States* in the *Margarita Declaration* adopted in Venezuela last December recognised that "among the fundamental causes of poverty and underdevelopment is the unequal distribution of wealth and knowledge prevailing in the world." They supported "all coordinated and determined efforts to create an environment leading to sustainable economic and social development aimed at combating poverty and inequality."

The African, Caribbean, and Pacific Heads of Government in their *"Nadi Declaration on ACP Solidarity in a Globalised World"* last July reaffirmed their commitment to center their development strategies on the fight against poverty, and made it clear that while globalisation offers opportunities, the envisaged benefits have not materialised for developing countries. To address these concerns, the proposal to establish a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication has been broached, and the important *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)* has been brought forward by our African colleagues.. CARICOM pledges its support for these and other activities in furtherance of meaningful and sustained social development in a globalised world. In this connection, we wish to stress the importance of implementation of the *Millennium Development Goals*, especially given the recent disturbing findings by Secretary-General Koffi Annan that the world was falling short in meeting these objectives agreed by global leaders two years ago in the *Millennium Declaration*. CARICOM endorses the Secretary-General's plan for a Millennium Campaign to make these commitments better known throughout the world and to ensure that they are the focus of global action.

We further reiterate our support for the speedy implementation of the provisions contained in General Assembly Resolution 56/189 of 21 December 2001 which "recognises the importance of developing human resources as a means of promoting economic growth and eradicating poverty," and in Resolution 56/150 of 19 December 2001 on the *Right to Development.*

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM has taken note of the many activities in implementation within the United Nations system of the outcome of the *World Summit for Social Development* and of the 24th special session of the General Assembly. In addition to the important follow-up work undertaken by intergovernmental bodies as outlined in the Secretary-General's Report, the relevance of the United Nations conferences and summits on these issues should be emphasized, since these activities seek to provide in depth solutions to the multifaceted challenges to achieving social development. Thus, the mandates contained in the *Millennium Declaration*, the *Durban Declaration*, the *Monterrey Consensus*, and the *Johannesburg Declaration* - and their concomitant programmes of action - should be fulfilled, as a matter of priority, and as essential components of the overall framework contained in the *Copenhagen Consensus*.

In this connection, we wish to commend the *Division for Social Policy and Development* of the Secretariat which organised a series of regional workshops for capacity-building and networking. Included in this series was the *'United Nations Subregional Workshop for the Caribbean on Social Development Policies*" that convened in St. Vincent and the Grenadines last November where national papers were presented on activities underway in the respective countries. The outcome resolution of the Caribbean meeting contained a number of recommendations on the capacity of the social sector to improve the quality of life of the people, the link between recommendations of the *World Social Summit* and policy-making at the national level, the importance of timely information on U.N. programmes in the social sector, and the need to link human development goals with economic policies. We also commend the Division for the convening of a second workshop in our region, held in Havana, Cuba last January, which focused on strengthening the subregional network in Central America and the Caribbean for implementation and follow-up to the Social Summit commitments.

CARICOM also wishes to express our gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for its financial assistance in the preparation by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) of a compendium of selected social statistics of 5 Caribbean Countries for the period 1995 - 2001 as a contribution to the enhancement of the information base on social policy in the Caribbean. Further, CARICOM is pleased with the progress of the *Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean* of the U.N. Development Programme and the U.N. Population Fund for 2001-2005. In this connection, we are heartened that UNDP will deepen the work that it has been carrying out in partnership with regional development banks, ECLAC, national think tanks, and academic institutions.

Mr. Chairman,

Focus of international attention on the issues and complexities of matters related to youth can be traced to the adoption in 1965 of the *"Declaration of the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples."* This was followed by the 1985 *International Year of the Youth*, and the tenth anniversary of that commemoration in 1995 which focused on the challenges to youth in the new millennium. The *World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond* was the outcome of these early efforts with

particular attention to education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, girls and young women, the participation of youth in the decision-making process, among other areas. It is important to note that some 60 per cent of the world's population is below the age of 25, while some 85 per cent of the total of 900 million youth live in developing parts of the world. In this connection, as indicated in the Secretary-General s Report 2001 on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, "the economic situation of developing countries contributes to the precarious situation of many young people, (and) in both developing and developed countries, millions of young people's needs are still unmet." The dangers of a growing population of disaffected youth are becoming clearer. As it has been said, "what society does to young people, young people do to society." Ironically, youth are potentially the most productive workers in a developing economy, and youth need to be integrated into that economy, in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Secretary General Koffi Annan in his message on *World Mental Health Day*, to be commemorated on 10th October, brings another dimension to youth issues, in his reflection on the effects of trauma and violence on children and adolescents who can suffer through conditions of abuse and neglect, sexual violence or gang violence, with global youth homicide rates having more than doubled since 1985. And then there is the almost unfathomable plight of the child soldier - addressed under other agenda items of the United Nations, but still so soberingly relevant to youth concerns as we address them in this committee.

The international community has organised a number of recent efforts to address the myriad of issues facing youth. The *Fourth World Youth Forum* of the United Nations system was convened in Senegal in August of 2001 which produced the *Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy* with concentration on education and communications technology, employment, health, capacity-building and social integration, among other areas. Forums on youth issues were held by the United Nations in all regions in 2000-2001, while numerous United Nations bodies have re-doubled their energies to integrate youth issues within their work programmes.

As a guide to addressing youth-related issues, CARICOM has approved its *Regional Strategy for Youth Development (RSYD)* as a broad framework intended to facilitate the development and reprogramming of youth initiatives at the national level. This initiative is to be used in conjunction with other relevant planning guidelines, and to be continuously reviewed and updated in keeping with the pace of achievement, emerging issues and trends. Targeted activities through the period 2001 - 2006 include the creation at the national level of youth information/social statistics data bases, the decentralisation of the youth development functions, the development of comprehensive education/ training systems and resource bases for youth workers and leaders, and the creation of umbrella youth organisations. Additionally, the CARICOM Youth Strategy is establishing representative structures and mechanisms which give youth a voice to open spaces for them to participate in public policy formulation, electoral politics and civil society processes. Further, CARICOM countries have begun to implement inter-sectoral community-based projects promoting economic participation, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and healthy families, communities and nations, as well as projects intended to raise awareness, change behaviour and empower young people to educate and counsel their peers.

In this vein, CARICOM takes note with satisfaction the coordinating role to be played by UNESCO under the *United Nations Literacy Decade*: *education for all (2003-2012)* as outlined in General Assembly Resolution 56/116 of 19 December that reaffirmed the importance of schooling and education, in particular for girls and young women, and the value of all forms of life-long learning including formal education and training and non-formal education. Owing to the importance attached to this initiative, CARICOM Ministers played an active role in the first session of the *High Level Group on Education for All* which met at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in October 2001, and in May 2002 CARICOM convened in Barbados an inter-agency meeting on youth with representatives from donor organisations, regional and international agencies, Ministries of Youth Affairs, and National Youth Councils to explore mechanisms for increasing levels of collaboration, coordination and information-sharing among key stakeholders; and to better allocate and utilise scarce programme resources.

As outlined in the 2001 Secretary-General's Report, my own country of St. Lucia in preparing the national youth policy undertook extensive consultations with youth organisations and other interested groups. The policy takes into account the principles of youth participation, responsiveness, gender sensitivity, access to services, integrated development, and youth empowerment. The policy is intended to provide youth with a voice, equal opportunities and autonomy with a view to developing their full potential, and ensuring their role and participation in all aspects of nation-building.

Mr. Chairman,

It is estimated that over 10 per cent of the world's population have disabilities, with two thirds of them living in developing countries. International efforts to address issues related to the disabled have been consistent with the adoption in 1982 of the *World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons*, and the inclusion of recommendations on the disabled in the programmes of action of many of the United Nations world conferences. The designation in 1994 of a Special Rapporteur on Disability of the *Commission on Social Development* provided a boost to global efforts to implement the *'Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities."* CARICOM congratulates President Vicente Fox of Mexico for his most recent forward-thinking initiative resulting in the establishment by Resolution 56/168 of 19 December 2001 of an ad hoc committee to draft a comprehensive and integral international convention on protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. CARICOM takes note with satisfaction the progress made in the deliberations of the expert meeting which convened in Mexico City in June to review a draft of elements of an international convention, and which subsequently adopted a revised set of principles for drafting a future convention and accompanying guidelines. CARICOM looks forward to contributing to the future deliberations on finalising the international convention in this important human rights area. In this regard, CARICOM reiterates its support for Resolution 56/115 of 19 December 2001 on the *Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: Towards a society for all in the 21st Century*, and in particular provisions related to continued assistance from the U.N. system in the promotion of non-discrimination in respect of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Chairman,

A few days ago on 1st October the international community commemorated the *International Day of Older Persons*. In his message, the Secretary-General recalled the "*groundbreaking developments on issues affecting the lives of older persons*" over the past year with the adoption by the *Second World Assembly on Ageing* in Madrid of an International Plan of Action" that called on the international community to address fully the link between older persons and development, and challenged society's conventional perceptions of ageing." As the Madrid Plan of Action noted, ageing is not a problem but an achievement, and governments agreed on the need to integrate ageing with other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights. But as in the case of most recommendations of the General Assembly, the real challenge is in the implementation of the mandate.

Indeed, as it has been increasingly evident, the world is getting older, and in the next 50 years, the number of older persons will nearly quadruple, growing from about 600 million to almost 2 billion people. As we are reminded, one in every ten persons today is 60 years and older, and by 2050, one out of every five will be an older person, and by 2150, one third of the people in the world are expected to be 60 years of age or older. These are the facts and projections. But how we should respond to this objective reality can be seen in the perspective of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Osbourne Riviere of Dominica who, in his statement before the 57th Session of the General Assembly, observed that in small countries, the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action must, "of necessity, include the recognition of older persons who make a significant contribution as the pillars of our societies, who make a significant contribution to our economic development." Accordingly, the policy of Dominica consistent with national policies across the CARICOM region, "seeks to ensure that older persons be provided with protection, care and opportunity to continue to participate" in the development of the nation. Dominica's position is bolstered by the fact that of a population of 75,000 persons, there are 22 centenarians.

Thus, CARICOM views the Madrid Plan of Action with particular importance as a blueprint for the international response to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing in the new millennium. Simply put, ageing should have its rightful place in the development agenda. Accordingly, CARICOM supports the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly in support of older persons, including Resolution 56/162 of 19 December 2001 on *The Situation of Older Women in Society* which stresses the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective, taking into account the needs of older women, in policy and planning processes at all levels; and which stresses the need to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender and age.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM reiterates the importance of the many initiatives undertaken by the international community in furtherance of the strengthening of the family, as far back as 1994 with the designation of the *International Year of the Family*. In this connection, CARICOM acknowledges the important work done by the *Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)* which continues to focus the attention of the international community on the message that "families are the economic and social engines of society." We acknowledge the efforts of DESA in its multifaceted efforts to ensure a successful commemoration of the tenth anniversary through its four-pronged approach which includes interaction at the national level, improved communication within the U.N. system and with non-governmental and intergovernmental

organisations, enhancing research capacity, and servicing relevant intergovernmental bodies. The United Nations family programme web site continues to provide updated information on family issues including preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the first *International Year of the Family*. We note with interest the role of the regional commissions which have assisted in the identification of trends that have transformed families to a considerable degree, including changes in family structure, increased migration, demographic ageing, the HIV-AIDS pandemic, and the impact of globalisation. CARICOM is in accord with the activities envisaged in ECOSOC resolution 2002/6 of 24 July 2002 on preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. We look forward to further collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as preparations for the activities of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family intensify.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, on behalf of the 14 member states of CARICOM, I thank you for the opportunity to address these agenda items on social development of particular interest and importance to our region.