



STATEMENT BY MR. ARJUN CHARAN SETHI, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 54: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 15, 2008



Mr. President,

The Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations are in many countries of the world including India, the visible face of the United Nations. Article 55 of the Charter recognizes the link between development and international stability. It also charges the United Nations with the responsibility of promoting development. These operations are thus amongst the most important activities of the United Nations. The current global financial crisis, with its implications on global poverty levels and on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals has exponentially increased the importance of discussing ways and means to strengthen

these capabilities of the United Nations and the importance of ensuring that the crisis does not affect the MDG process.

India would like to align itself broadly with the statement made by Group of 77 on this issue.

Mr. President,

Developing countries greatly value the universal, multilateral and impartial nature of UN Development Operations. The neutrality and legitimacy of these activities give them a character, credibility and effectiveness that set them apart from the development operations carried out by other development actors. Developing nations, including India, would therefore like to augment the capability of the United Nations as a development organization.

Keeping this in mind, we would like to thank the Secretariat for the extensive documentation prepared for discussions under this agenda item. The Secretary General's report on *Trends in contributions to operational activities of the United Nations and measures to promote and adequate, predictable and expanding base of United Nations development assistance (A/63/201)* as well as the *Comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (A/63/71)* are particularly relevant to today's deliberations.

They make for depressing reading. The share of the United Nations in global ODA flows remains more or less static at a little over 10% of global ODA. Not only are 90% of global ODA funds disbursed through non United Nations channels, the availability of funds to the UN system in the past year actually declined in real terms.

The Secretary General has justifiably reported that the trends in financing the United Nations system, in particular the decline in core resources, are of great concern. In the absence of a sound financial footing and an expanded funding base, the ability of the UN system to deliver coherently, relevantly and effectively, is impaired.

India believes that funding – core, predictable funding, funding without conditionalities, remains the key to the objective of making the United Nations deliver better and more. India agrees with the Secretary General's assessment that greater political will is required to ensure that the United Nations is equipped to deal with the development challenges of the world.

Mr. President,

Our position on the reform of UN Development Operations has been guided by our desire to bring about improvements. When we talk of improvements, we mean genuine, verifiable improvement in the quality of development services, further

enhancements in responsiveness to national requirements, and a greater share for and a greater control by the United Nations of the global flows of voluntary funding in terms of budgetary discipline and Fifth Committee oversight.

India would like to strike a note of caution in respect of the ongoing debate about Systemwide Coherence and proposed reforms. Execution and better delivery of development operations and outcomes should not become hostage to structural objectives that remain nebulous. The question of programme content is as important, if not more important than the pursuit of purely administrative measure. The means cannot become more important than the end.

Different countries have different development objectives. The objective of "delivering as one" must not negatively affect the choices available to recipient countries. The choice of agencies and programmes available to a recipient country must not be curtailed and must necessarily be determined on a national basis.

The demand-driven nature of UN development operations is highly valued by developing countries. This country-based approach, rooted in national priorities, was strongly emphasised in the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Development activities that was carried out last year and remains of the greatest importance to my delegation.

Mr. President

The Government of India is fully supportive of the objectives of gender empowerment, gender parity and gender mainstreaming. These are laudable objectives and the United Nations is mandated to pursue them both within and without. We support measures that will improve the operational capability of the United Nations in these areas, including the creation of a gender entity. We would however like to be sure that these are accountable to the General Assembly and adequately resourced. The absence of augmented funding for UN development operations has a direct bearing on this issue.

Mr. President,

The relevance of South-South Cooperation for developing countries has been increasing over the years. Market based economies in an era of globalization have not brought the economic benefits to a large number of developing countries. Cooperation among developing countries is necessary for mitigating the adverse effects of international economic policies, the most immediate manifestation of which is the crisis caused by developments in the international finance and capital markets.

Despite continuing challenges, capacities in the South have risen dramatically in the last two decades and now there are hardly any goods or services required in the South, which cannot be sourced from the South itself. It is no surprise that the developing countries' share of total world trade has risen in the last two decades and that intra-South trade is growing at a rapid pace. Developing countries also continue to emerge as international investors.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by requesting the United Nations developmental system to give greater recognition to harnessing the potential of South-South cooperation. It is our belief that this will be a positive influence in the work of the United Nations in the development arena.

Thank You

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