



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

333 East 38th Street
9th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 213-5583
Fax: (212) 692-2498
E-mail: pmun@southafrica-newyork.net

STATEMENT
BY

AMBASSADOR DUMISANI S. KUMALO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE FOURTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF
THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Chairperson,

I have the honor to address the 47th Session of the Commission for Social Development on behalf of the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Allow me to extend, our congratulations to you and to the Bureau on your election and to assure you of the cooperation and support of SADC during the deliberations of this important Commission, which will focus on social integration as a priority theme for the 2009/2010 policy cycle taking into account its inter-relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all.

SADC wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by Namibia on behalf of the African Union as well as the statement delivered by Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Chairperson,

The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, characterized social integration as "creating a society for all, where every individual has rights, responsibilities and an active role to play." Such an inclusive society, as noted in the Copenhagen Programme of Action, "must be based on respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious diversity, social justice and the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, democratic participation and the rule of law."

In this regard, SADC welcomes the significant strides that have been achieved since the World Summit for Social Development, which focus particularly on the needs of marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of our society, such as people with disabilities, the family, older persons, women and children. These include the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Chairperson,

Whilst these achievements are monumental and critical, it still leaves us with a number of compelling and pervasive social challenges that must be addressed effectively at both the international and national levels to achieve the full objectives of the World Summit for Social Development, the 24th Special Session of the UN General Assembly of 2000 and the ten year review of the World Summit for Social Development held in 2005. In its quest to achieve social integration, SADC believes in the importance of an integrated approach to all three of these outcomes.

Chairperson,

Social Integration requires the creation of robust broad policies and programmes to promote social cohesion and social justice, whilst addressing the challenges of unemployment, underemployment, child labour, inadequate productivity, perpetual poverty and social protection. These policies and programmes should be aimed at ensuring integration of all communities and individuals, respect for diverse cultures, good governance and addressing the inequities of the past. This is critical for the formation of cohesive societies, which puts people at the centre for development and peace.

In addition to this, there is a need for the following:

To carve out a long term processes that involve setting concrete and actionable social development goals

The promotion of access to resources that prevent marginalization

The provision of instruments for combating poverty, discrimination and racism

The Promotion of social justice, which could give practical expression to the notion of equality

Freedom and human dignity by ensuring that legal instruments are in place to combat inequalities for social groups.

To address the question of social integration in the informal economy, where the majority of the working poor, especially women are found.

The SADC region remains committed to addressing these challenges and accordingly Member States have assumed national ownership of SADC programmes and policies in various areas. Member States approved the SADC Code on Social Security, which aims to address the challenges in the region such as high levels of poverty and vulnerability, wide disparities, narrow coverage and fragmentation. The Code provides guidelines to develop and improve the welfare of the people in the region.

Chairperson,

Poverty continues to persist in levels that are of great and immediate concern to all of us. In developing countries social exclusion is often a direct result of poverty. Therefore whilst development and enhanced international cooperation is essential in addressing this scourge, there is also a need for strategic intervention in the following areas vis-à-vis social integration:

- (a) Comprehensive social security,
- (b) Social welfare services,
- (c) Community development,
- (d) Sustainable livelihoods,
- (e) Population development

The struggle to eradicate poverty has been and will continue to be part of the SADC regional priorities in order to ensure the achievement of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDG'S).

Chairperson,

Development challenges cannot be met unless countries work in effective partnerships with the international community and unless the international community and development partners collaborate and support developing countries in implementing their social agenda. This includes the flow of sustainable financial resources through increased official development assistance (ODA), debt cancellation to enable developing countries to invest in the social sector and public works, access to markets and the exchange of technical support programmes.

Chairperson,

I wish to conclude by re-iterating the importance of ensuring full and effective social integration, towards achieving a society based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, values of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, tolerance and mutual respect, which promotes education and skills development, food and water security, environmental protection, full employment and decent work for all and poverty eradication. In this regard, emphasis must be placed on the interconnectivity and inter-relationship of poverty eradication, full employment and social integration, the 3 pillars towards a sustainable human centered development.

It is our hope that the 47th Session of the Commission will provide guidelines on how we can move forward in the implementation of a truly people centered development agenda. SADC remains committed to this process.

I thank you.

