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ITEM: 82(A)
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UNGA 44: Second Committee

ITEM 82(a): INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Statement of Australia, Canada and New Zealand

Delivered by Ms. Bethany Armstrong, Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour on this occasion to speak on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, as well as Canada.

While at this stage of the debate there is not much new I can add to the comments of earlier speakers, I do wish to make a brief contribution to the Second Committee's reflection upon where we stand. I wish also to express our appreciation for the report on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee and, more generally, for the energy and initiative of our Rapporteur.

Our delegations believe there are reasonable grounds for a degree of satisfaction in the progress made so far, while recognizing that the substantive elaboration of the strategy still lies ahead of us and that no specific agreements have yet been reached. We are nevertheless optimistic for several reasons. First, the tone of the debate in the Ad Hoc Committee has been positive and conciliatory. We discern flexibility and openness to new approaches on all sides. This apparent willingness of all participants to avoid rigid postures and strive for consensus, and to seek pragmatic solutions augurs well for the balance of the process.

A second positive factor has been the increasing engagement of delegations in setting out ideas on both the content and structure of the IDS, as illustrated by a veritable outpouring in September of formal and informal papers. In the various interventions, we saw increasing evidence of convergence toward the view that the IDS should seek to focus on several priority themes, notably the acceleration of growth and development, human resources development, the problem of extreme poverty and environmental concerns. A wide body of opinion also appears to support the view that the appropriate optic for the IDS is the development of the developing countries, and that the IDS could be situated under the umbrella of whatever wider framework for international cooperation emerges from the planned special session of the General Assembly.

While there are important positive aspects in the progress to date, we cannot conceal elements of disappointment, especially with respect to the second substantive meeting of the Committee last month. With the advantage of hindsight, we consider that meeting may not, throughout the week, have been conducted with sufficient focus on reaching agreement on the structure of the IDS. We very much appreciated the efforts of the G-77 and the EEC in the final hours to prepare a non-paper which could serve as the basis for wider agreement. We regret that there was not sufficient time to allow possible fine tuning to that text so as to accommodate all groups and delegations. It is a disappointment to find that that non-paper has, in the end, not been appended to the report of the Ad Hoc Committee, as had appeared to have been agreed in the informal discussions. Appended or not, that non-paper remains, in our view, a useful point of departure.

It is important to be realistic on what the outline is. What the Committee was discussing was basically a framework with various headings, without editorial content on what should be said under those headings. The greater challenge will be in filling in the content, but the outline is important because it sends a signal on the basic approach to the IDS. It is thus necessary to ensure that the words used convey the intended message.

The outline prepared by the G-77 and the EEC do reasonable justice to the idea of an IDS focussed on priority themes, which many of us seek. The question of acceleration of growth must be a top priority. In our view, a key determinant of growth prospects is the adoption of sound economic policies. Such national policies need to be reinforced by a supportive international environment. These priorities need to find appropriate reflection in the outline.

A second preoccupation in terms of the outline relates to how to treat the population issues. On this issue, ECOSOC resolution 1989/90 on the role of population in the IDS, adopted by consensus, may point the way to a solution.

Mr. Chairman,

If there is a general disposition to do so, our delegations would work with others during this General Assembly to complete the unfinished business of the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee. We believe it would be worth the effort so as to enable the Committee to resume its discussions in January with undivided attention to substantive questions.

Mr. Chairman,

The preparatory process for the IDS is certainly being enriched by the increasing number of inputs received from different parts of the system. It is important always to recall, however, that contributions either from Secretariats or other inter-governmental bodies can only be seen as supportive to the leadership function entrusted to the Ad Hoc Committee by the General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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