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**Agenda item 60 "Social development"**

**Statement**

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Belarus considers social development as one of the key and promising areas in the UN activities. UN decisions in the field of social development adopted over the last few years, including the 2005 Outcome Document, have largely contributed to raising efficiency of the UN capacity in social sector.

However, as revealed by the Secretary-General's reports submitted to the Third Committee, social record is dissimilar in different parts of the world and requires additional and more efficient efforts from international community. The delegation of Belarus shares the Secretary-General's concerns raised with regard to such major aspects of social development as eradicating poverty, raising literacy and improving care for the aged people.

Over the last ten years, Belarus has been carrying out an economic course with a strong social emphasis. The course that seeks both to increase the welfare among people and address their social needs most effectively. The key priorities of our social policy are in education, employment, health care and care for the older people.

Belarus shares and demonstrates in practice its commitment to encourage social equality while promoting economic growth – a principle that the Secretary-General urges to support. Along with the high GDP growth of more than 10 percent annually over the last few years, Belarus has protected its population from an extreme social gap. The Gini index for our country has been lower 0.3 percent over the last ten-year surveillance.

An important driving force for both economic growth and social equality is employment and decent jobs for people. With the lowest unemployment level in Eastern Europe of currently 1.5 percent, Belarus undertakes system-based and comprehensive measures to increase relevance of professionals with high and secondary education on a labour market, and to encourage more labour opportunities and larger demand for specific professions.

National and regional programmes aimed at increasing employment and retraining unemployed for professions that are demanded on a labour market also helped achieve low unemployment rate in Belarus.

Education and literacy are the key contributing elements of progressive social and economic development. Belarus shares the Secretary-General's appeal to increase political commitment and financial support to addressing literacy challenges. These efforts should be made on the basis of comprehensive strategies and programmes.

Education is a top priority for Belarusian social and economic policy. Our annual public spending on education is about 6 percent of GDP – higher than in many well-developed countries.

Belarus has ensured a free secondary education, preserved a free high education available to all people on the basis of competition. A special emphasis is given on encouraging equal rights to education both for rural and urban youth.

For years our national education system produces one of the top literacy levels in the world – 99.7 percent among adults.

Belarusian social policy largely and traditionally focuses on providing sufficient care system for the aged people, and especially for the veterans of the World War II. Our main objectives in that area are to consolidate social guarantees and increase welfare of the aged population. There are four national laws and five state programmes constituting a legal framework for social protection of the older people.

Belarus gradually launches new and flexible types of social assistance widely favoured among the aged people like social taxis and social service facilities, both designed to address their needs quickly and directly. In 2005 Belarusian Government examined living conditions of all veterans of the World War II that helped reveal their most urgent needs and choose most appropriate measures to address them timely and responsibly.

Belarus supports the Secretary-General's appeal to strengthen efforts in bridging social gap while promoting economic growth. A pushing step to that end might be strengthening both national and international measures on eradicating poverty and cutting unemployment.

Belarus also confirms its readiness to work for a strengthened UN capacity in social development. ECOSOC should be a principal body to coordinate implementation of all UN decisions in that area. This goal inspires our intention to become an ECOSOC member starting from January 2007.