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World Summit for Social Development
Copenhagen, 6 - 12 March 1995

Statement by

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Mihály Kökény, M.D., M.P., Secretary of State,
Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Hungary

Mr President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to contribute to the work of this World Summit for Social Development, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Hungary. I should, first of all, like to give expression to our gratitude to the host country for organizing this conference. We take this gesture as an outstanding symbol of Denmark's commitment at the highest political level to the cause of social welfare. Deep appreciation should also go to the United Nations celebrating its 50th birthday for focussing on policies and actions concerning social development.

I am coming from a central European country, which is undergoing an economic, political and social transition on a scale unprecedented in history. We have stepped on the road leading from a centralized management and economic system towards market economy, political pluralism and a democratic society.

The overall economic reforms take more time than expected. These reforms have deep and complex economic and social implications, demanding considerable sacrifice from society.

Unemployment has been dramatically growing in Hungary since 1990, and this growth has affected all groups of society, especially young people and persons with low educational level. Unfavourable demographic trends, changes in family structures, bad health status of the population, environmental problems, spreading poverty and signs of social exclusion are also challenging our society.

At the same time, we have to speak of our results. As a matter of fact, a great variety of institutions, schemes of social security and social assistance are functioning in Hungary. It is an important task for us to improve their efficiency and to better involve the civil society, promoting a deeper understanding and an extensive manifestation of the value of solidarity. We should also make efforts to emphasize the global, intersectoral aspects e.g. by joining projects of environment protection, unemployment or care for the elderly. Efficiently managed, innovative models have better chances for gaining international support as well.

When dealing with economic and social transition, we are also establishing new, modern patterns for social integration. In our perception, this integration covers a colourful, pluralistic institutional system, which provides possibilities for all citizens to be active, to participate in public affairs, to maintain social relations and contacts, to express their interests and wills and to influence public affairs.