



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BYRON BLAKE, DELEGATION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, DURING THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE 2008 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF ECOSOC (New York, 25 July 2007)

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China extends its sincerest commendations to you for your leadership of this 2008 Substantive Session of the Council. As a fellow member of CARICOM, Antigua and Barbuda as the Chair of the Group of 77 and China is indeed proud of Haiti's leadership of the Council and of your personal stewardship. We would also like to thank the Vice Presidents, the distinguished Ambassadors of Belarus, Luxemburg, Cape Verde and the Republic of Korea. Our appreciation also extends to Members of the Secretariat at all levels for their invaluable support, and to the facilitators of the various resolutions for their skillful guidance of the negotiations that have led to successful outcomes.

We are now at the closing session of the Council. We have completed the work of the Council well within our schedule time and we can certainly agree that we have had a good and successful Session. As we look back over the overall Substantive Session there is a sense of mixed feelings. Our deliberations were full and substantive; they identified critical issues in need of urgent action and demanding significant additional resources and effort by national governments and the international community; they revealed gains, in some instances significant gains in some areas of economic and social development, but also the need for improvement in other areas and the threat of the reversal of progress in some areas where gains have been made.

During the Council's discussions on the various economic and social issues, the Group of 77 and China has identified the areas where progress is lacking and which we deem as vital for development, and in particular for the achievement of the Internationally Agreed Development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for rural development and eradication of poverty.

Among other things, this year's ECOSOC Session focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of the UN Development System's response to the development needs and priorities of developing countries contextualized by recurrent, new and emerging multidimensional challenges at the country, regional and global levels.

Mr. President,

The Council in its High Level Segment, in the second Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and in the first Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) addressed a range of significant current interrelated challenges to the achievement of sustainable development and more generally the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. It assessed progress and identified challenges including how to achieve greater coherence and effectiveness in development cooperation.

There was a high level of agreement that global challenges such as climate change and the environmental crisis, the global food crisis, the financial crisis, the energy crisis and the crisis in international policy and institutional infrastructure - which bear disproportionately on developing countries and the poor - have to be addressed in an integrated and holistic manner. They have to

be addressed with urgency.

There was little disagreement that a revitalized ECOSOC with its cross-cutting and integrative mandate and its capacity to bring together stakeholders from all sectors and interests was ideally positioned to address these issues. The G 77 and China in its opening statement of the High Level Segment of the substantive session pointed to the opportunity and need for extraordinary responses from the international community.

Mr. President,

The Ministerial Declaration and the President's Summaries from the AMR and the DCF contain very important conclusions. However the actual content and the process of negotiating or coming to agreement on those conclusions demonstrated that the instinct for the status quo, for ECOSOC to leave all critical issues to others, especially outside the UN system, even where these mechanisms have made little progress after many years is still very strong.

The G 77 and China drew attention at the time of adoption of the Ministerial declaration to several critical issues which were pushed away from action by ECOSOC.

ECOSOC must resist this tendency to keep it in the past and on the periphery.

During the Coordination Segment, as we examined and discussed the role of Member States and the UN System in ensuring a coordinated implementation of the outcomes of major UN Conferences and Summits at all levels, the Group of 77 and China stressed the need to ensure a strong and direct link between coordination and development effectiveness. In simple terms the pay-off for increased coordination should be tangible and measurable development results at the country level.

Another important issue that we should bear in mind as we move forward and look towards future ECOSOC sessions is the fact that too often the policies of developed countries and international institutional partners are incoherent and inconsistent with development goals and objectives, particularly trade policies, financial policies, policies on intellectual-property and technology transfer. Such inconsistencies should be the subject and object of our deliberations in this Council so that they can be corrected.

During the Operational Activities Segment the Group of 77 and China sought to stress those elements that, in the perspective of developing countries, are critical for greater effectiveness of the UN Development System. In doing so we remained cognizant that our countries, developing countries, have the most to lose if the UN system is not effective in its execution of activities in the development-related fields and in its support to countries' efforts to achieve their national development goals.

We remain convinced that the UN, through the ECOSOC, can have a stronger role in advancing the development agenda and fully realizing all Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the MDGs. In this regard, it is necessary for the UN Development System and all development partners to give more than lip-service to the principle of national ownership and leadership and to work for its full realization. Common Programming tools and other country-level mechanisms must be nationally owned and the processes must be nationally-led. Country ownership and leadership also extends to the regional and global levels where the views and perspectives of developing countries, fully informed by their experiences with development plans and strategies, should be taken fully into account.

Again securing real progress on a Global Partnership for development bringing together the effort of all based on their capacities, must become a priority. The importance of benchmarks and targets under MDG 8 cannot be overemphasised, as global partnership is necessary to achieve all IADGs and MDGs.

Further, there are many challenges to coordination of the humanitarian assistance activities of the United Nations both in situations of natural disasters and in complex emergency, including addressing these situations in a timely, safe and efficient manner. A single natural disaster can set back development in a developing country by several decades, accentuating poverty and economic vulnerabilities. For these reasons, it is critical that affected States, donor countries, the UN system and other humanitarian organizations coordinate to provide much needed humanitarian assistance and development support, recognizing the primary role of the affected State and in full respect of resolution 46/182 of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

In closing, the G 77 and China reiterates that this session of ECOSOC demonstrated the potential of a strong ECOSOC. You have established a basis for ECOSOC to exploit that potential. The G 77 and China is hopeful that succeeding Presidents and the membership will build on that foundation.

Thank You.