



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR ALBERTO D'ALOTTO, DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND WORSHIP OF THE ARGENTINE
REPUBLIC, AT THE OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON ADDRESSING DESERTIFICATION, LAND
DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION (New York, 20 September
2011)**

Honourable Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Ministers,
Mr. President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure and great personal privilege to deliver this statement on behalf of Group of 77 and China on the occasion of the High-Level Segment on the theme: "Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought mitigation (DLDD) in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication".
2. We welcome the convening of this debate today, and we would like to recall that desertification and land degradation affect all the regions of the world and continue to pose a serious threat to sustainable development at national, regional and global levels. We would like to emphasize, also, that these issues have repercussions in the functioning of the ecosystem and the Earth System as a whole.
3. Mr. President, we would like to stress that developing countries are the most affected by these phenomena: the present situation of drylands in developing countries constitute a matter of utmost concern to the Group of 77 and China. With more than one billion inhabitants, who are among the poorest on the planet, we are the most constrained in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those relating to hunger and poverty and environmental sustainability.
4. Mr. President, the G77 and China express its concern and solidarity over the situation the population in the horn of Africa region is going through right now, hit by the worst drought in sixty years leading to starvation, loss of crops and livestock. Mr. President, this reflects well the severity of drought and desertification problems and the imperative for action.
5. For the G77 and China, the objective of this high-level meeting should be to contribute to raising awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought at the highest level, in line with the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020). Therefore, it is important to reaffirm the case for the fulfillment of all commitments to the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan and framework, ensuring, in this way, a higher priority for desertification, land degradation and drought on the international agenda, and contributing to the preparation of the 10th Conference of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio +20.

6. In this vein, it is worth to remember that this is the Convention that originated in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to respond to developing countries' concerns and needs, with the following objective: "to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas". Therefore, the focus should continue to be the situation in drylands, particularly in developing countries: Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. President,

7. Regarding the report submitted by the UNCCD Secretariat, the G77 and China fully reiterates its preliminary comments and inputs to this background document, as expressed during the informal consultations held on 23 May and submitted in writing on 23 and 30 May.

8. A fundamental point of this debate is how to ensure the full implementation of the Convention and the Ten-Year Strategic Programme. For the G77 and China this should be achieved in accordance with the principles and provisions of the relevant instruments on sustainable development, in particular, principles 2 and 7 of the Rio Declaration: the sovereign right of States to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies; and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Mr. President,

9. May I here recall that the multilateral framework of the Convention requires international cooperation and that the application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities demands that developed countries provide new, additional, predictable and stable finance, transfer of technology and capacity building for the implementation of actions on the ground.

10. Also, National Action Plans to Combat Desertification are programmes designed for activities related to the fight against desertification, as mandated by the UNCCD. Therefore, the Group of 77 and China expects that the summary of this meeting to reflect national strategies or programmes and the importance for developing countries to receive technical and financial support from the international community to adequately implement them, in the framework of UNCCD.

11. We should also stress the important role that Regional Coordination Mechanisms must play, as established by Parties, to support the implementation of Regional Annexes of the UNCCD to complement international support.

Mr. President,

12. The Group is of the view that the UNCCD is lagging behind the achievements of the other two Rio Conventions: namely the Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

13. A strong and clear political message should emerge from this High-level Segment reflecting that the UNCCD must be put on an equal footing and treated with the same importance as CBD and UNFCCC, and political support from developed countries to developing countries should be guaranteed.

14. It is vital to enhance cooperation among the Rio Conventions, while respecting their individual mandates, concerned by the negative impacts that desertification, land degradation, loss of

biodiversity and climate change have on each other, and recognizing the potential benefits of complementarities in addressing these problems in a mutually supportive manner.

15. The G77 and China supports the establishment and strengthening of existing disaster management capacities at all levels, including information and early warning systems that allow effective management of the risks associated with drought, desertification, land degradation and of the adverse impacts of climate change.

Mr. President,

16. Poverty, food security and desertification are intrinsically linked to each other and need to be tackled jointly. Therefore, DLDD should be addressed not only in terms of environmental impacts and economic growth but also, in terms of its social impacts, recognizing the causes of desertification and the need to have a socially inclusive approach and addressing inequalities.

17. Considering the impact of trade and relevant aspects of international economic relations on desertification and land degradation, we shall promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory, and equitable multilateral trading system; recognizing the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, focused on providing preferential access to products from developing countries and avoiding the implementation of trade protectionism and other trade distorting measures. Subsidies applied in developed countries not only distort international trade but also lead to over-exploitation of natural resources and, consequently, to land degradation.

18. We look forward to engage in a constructive and meaningful debate today that pays due attention to the issues raised by developing countries and finds a way to address them effectively.

Thank you.