



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR BYRON BLAKE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
PERMANENT MISSION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UN DURING
THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE GLOBAL FOOD AND
ENERGY CRISIS (New York, 18 July 2008)**

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in this plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the global food and energy crisis.

Mr. President,

2. The group wishes to compliment you on the initiative to organize this meeting and for inviting the Secretary General to brief the General Assembly on the revised version of the Framework for Action (CFA) developed by his High Level Task Force (HLTF) on the global food crisis. The Group of 77 and China is on record as requiring that while we must be in crisis mode, opportunity be found for UN member states to be continuously updated and kept involved in the process. In the final analysis any recommendation to meaningfully address the global food crisis must be accepted and implemented by national governments, individually or as a group, and by local populations.

3. The group is pleased to thank the Secretary General for this fulsome briefing, for the document and for earlier briefings on the global food crisis and the initiatives of the United Nations to respond.

Mr. President,

4. Given the limited time available for this statement and the fact that the CFA is intended for early action in light of soaring food prices and, in cases, limited availability, over the last year on top of the longstanding, deep structural crisis in the agricultural and food sectors in developing countries during the last 20-25 years, the G 77 and China has decided to concentrate on the CFA.

5. The Group of 77 and China is very conscious that it has had very little time to study a complex document, addressing a most complex issue intended to guide action in a large number of states at different levels of development and with different specificities in their agriculture and food sectors. Further, delegations have not had an opportunity to consult their capitals on the proposed framework. The Group therefore reserves the right to return to this framework with more detailed comments either in writing or orally if there is an early opportunity.

Mr. President,

6. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to note that there is a recognition, among other things that:

- Prior to the onset of the recent phase of the escalating global food prices some 854 million people mainly in developing countries were undernourished and 4,800 million humans beings suffer from

hunger today. They have lived in a food crisis in a world of plenty;

- Many poor small farmers were constrained by lack of inputs, investment and facilities for marketing to take advantage of high prices or indeed to withstand global competition in their local market;
- Increased productivity must be accompanied by investment into local and regional market development and adjustment. We would add the elimination of global trade distorting practices; and
- There is need for urgent and simultaneous attention to meeting the immediate food needs of vulnerable populations and to building resilience and contribute to global food and nutrition security.

Mr. President,

7. The Group of 77 and China is struck by the fact that while the framework document correctly recognizes that the financial implications of the crisis will be considerable, the HLTF simply recognizes "developed countries intention to increase their Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI)" and urges donor countries to double ODA for food assistance. This is an invitation for reallocation of existing ODA. At the same time the HLTF, in the CFA, "calls on developing countries to allocate additional budgetary resources for social protection systems and to increase the share of agriculture in public expenditure". This, at a time when the national budget, especially of net food importing and energy importing developing countries, is under very significant strain.

8. The HLTF has also avoided a detailed costing of the financial implications on the grounds that "the CFA is not a funding document or an investment program". The Group of 77 and China is of the view that the CFA should be a living document which can be expanded over time to incorporate actions which will make it more meaningful and responsive to the actual needs of the developing countries. This should be very possible since the Task Force will remain in existence for some time. It must also give priority to the interest of the poorest and neediest groups therefore such a framework should be more local in scale as well as much more sustainable in social, environmental and economic terms.

Mr. President,

9. The Group 77 and China is also struck, that, given the importance of technology and research and development to increase agricultural food production and productivity in a situation of high energy prices, climate change and the need to minimize adverse environmental impacts the issue of access to technology and transfer found no mention in the CFA. Further, it is quite unclear whether the trade and tax policies which are to be adjusted to improve access to food and nutrition support and increase food availability include international trade policies such as trade distorting subsidies. A clear mention should have been made to subsidies and trade distorting practices in the developed world as a major deterrent to agricultural development in the developing world and, consequently, a cause of the current food crisis.

Mr. President,

10. The Group of 77 and China maintains that the CFA must, at this stage, remain a living framework and process to allow for governmental and wider societal input, acceptance and approval. In this regard, and accepting the need to proceed to action, the Group of 77 and China considers that there should be a third urgent and simultaneous objective. That objective would be "secure and strengthen buy-in and ownership at community, national and regional levels". Activities towards this objective, such as consultations with international community here at the UN and regions/sub regions and national governments as well as with relevant stakeholders would be

pursued, urgently and simultaneously with the actions in the other two objectives. This would permit action, involvement and transparency.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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