



**STATEMENT BY TEHMINA JANJUA, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAKISTAN, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA IN THE HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT OF THE SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF ECOSOC 2007 (Geneva, 16 July 2007)**

**Mr. President**

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to thank you and other members of the bureau for organizing the humanitarian affairs segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC. We hope that our deliberations in the general debate as well as during the two panel discussions would lead to concrete conclusions that will help the UN System coordinate humanitarian assistance in an effective manner and help minimize the impact of disasters.

The Group of 77 and China would also like to thank Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his introduction of the Secretary-General's Reports.

**Mr. President**

This year's theme of the segment entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance through enhancing the effectiveness of needs-based humanitarian assistance" is very pertinent in the context of innumerable human and economic losses caused by natural disasters in the last few years. The challenge to respond in a timely and predictable manner to humanitarian emergencies and disasters, especially for the UN system, is becoming more and more complex. The increase in the severity, frequency and magnitude of such disasters has wreaked havoc in communities across the globe. The need for a strengthened and more coordinated response by the international community to meet these challenges cannot, therefore, be overemphasized. The devastating impact of disasters on lives, livelihoods and economies has to be minimized.

The Group of 77 and China take note of the report of the Secretary-General on "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" which, inter alia, highlights the importance of capacity building at national and regional levels to bolster humanitarian response. While we cannot control the overpowering strength of natural disasters, we can reduce the impact and the devastation caused by them.

**Mr. President**

The alarming frequency and ferocity of natural disasters is a major concern of today's world. The number and scale of natural disasters, in developing countries in particular, over the past decade, are on an increase. Vulnerabilities are accentuated in most developing countries as the poverty-disaster interface has the potential for immense suffering and loss. Implications of disasters in developing countries are immense, due mainly to the long-lasting consequences on affected populations and the adverse impact on the environment and livelihoods of millions of people. It is, therefore, imperative to examine the measures that need to be taken to improve the response capacity of affected nations and the assistance and cooperation that can be provided by the international community in this regard.

The Group of 77 and China reiterate its commitment and full support for the guidelines contained in the annex to the GA resolution 46/182 of 16 December 1991 as the framework for the provision of UN humanitarian assistance. These principles, namely neutrality, humanity and impartiality, should remain the basis of all responses to humanitarian emergencies and guide the efficiency and coordination of humanitarian assistance by the UN and all relevant organizations.

**Mr. President**

Respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must remain the overarching parameters in all efforts for coordination of humanitarian assistance. In this regard, we also wish to emphasize the primary role of the concerned State in the identification, coordination and delivery of such humanitarian assistance where assistance is requested from the international community.

It is important that relevant organizations of the UN system engage with the relevant authorities at the national and regional levels to build strong capacities at all levels, with a view to improving the overall adequacy and deployment of resources. Such cooperation is particularly relevant in strengthening capacities for disaster preparedness to enable the countries in responding challenges of natural disasters.

The Group of 77 and China believe that provision of the emergency assistance to an affected country should not be seen as an isolated mechanism in the overall effort for humanitarian response. There is a need to recognize the clear linkage between emergency assistance, rehabilitation and long term development as different stages of a coordinated effort. It is therefore important that emergency assistance should be provided in ways that facilitate the early recovery and long term development of the country concerned.

The Group of 77 and China would like to emphasize that humanitarian assistance cannot and should not be viewed as a replacement for development cooperation. It should be additional and complementary to development cooperation through the regular activities of the UN Funds and Programmes.

**Mr. President**

Disaster preparedness is a crucial part of the overall capacity building to meet the challenge of natural disasters. The Hyogo Framework for Action, particularly its priority 5 emphasizes the need to build capacities particularly at the national level to mitigate the affects of natural disasters. However, as also noted by the Secretary General, national and local institutions often lack adequate capacity to address such emergencies.

The Group of 77 and China would like to endorse the proposal of the Secretary General that the international community should support the efforts of the developing countries in building humanitarian capacities, inter alia, through transfer of technology and expertise and extending multi-sectoral cooperation particularly in health, sanitation and shelter.

In a similar context, the Group of 77 and China also take note of the First Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Geneva on 5 to 7 June 2007 aimed at raising awareness on disaster risk reduction and sharing experience and best practices.

**Mr. President**

This year's substantive session is historic in marking a strengthened ECOSOC in overseeing its coordination role in the UN system. The Group of 77 and China wish to highlight the specific role of

the ECOSOC in supervising the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. In this respect, we would like to recommend that Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) adopt a regular practice of reporting to the Economic and Social Council, in an emergency session if necessary, whenever a major natural disaster takes place and a request for assistance is made by the affected country. This would provide an opportunity to the international community to assess the magnitude of disaster and would also facilitate the necessary assistance required by the country concerned.

Similarly, Mr. President, the Group of 77 and China have stressed the need, on numerous instances, for the implementation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the entire UN system including in the Office of the Coordination of the Humanitarian Affairs. We would like to request the Secretary General to include information in his next report on the break up of personnel working in OCHA both at Headquarters and in the field with details on their level, function and nationality. This information would be additional and complementary to the request made in this year's resolution regarding the update on the Inter Agency Standing Committee's policy statement of 1999 on the integration of gender perspective into humanitarian assistance.

We also support the importance of preparedness. The UN system has clearly a strong role to play. We agree with Under Secretary General Holmes that the greatest risk we face is complacency or inaction of any kind. We need to address all issues squarely to mitigate the effects of disasters.

**Mr. President**

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China would like to stress that more attention should be given to strengthening financial mechanisms for humanitarian assistance and to establish predictable and sustainable funding for all humanitarian emergencies, in particular the under-funded emergencies and under-resourced sectors. This is crucial to address funding gaps, especially for post-disaster recovery. The possibility to expand the use of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to address a range of financial gaps arising in initial phases of an emergency and prior to the launch of an appeal needs further consideration. We believe that the primary objective of the CERF should remain to provide vital assistance to save lives in the initial phase of an emergency. For broader funding predictability, we would like to stress the importance of increasing other sources of humanitarian funding as well.

I thank you Mr. President