



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BYRON BLAKE, PERMANENT MISSION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AFTER THE VOTE ON DRAFT RESOLUTION E/2008/L.28 ENTITLED "STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS" (New York, 25 July 2008)

Mr. Vice President,

Let me first say that the Group of 77 and China is pleased that we have adopted today, the draft resolution on "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

Having said this, allow me also to express how extremely disappointed the Group is, that for the first time since it was presented in the Economic and Social Council, a vote has been called on this very important resolution. We hope that this does not set a precedent.

I wish to be very clear on what has brought us to this point; the Group of 77 and China has never had and does not now have any difficulty with a reference to the safe, timely and unhindered access of humanitarian assistance, with the consent of affected States and with full respect of resolution 46/182 of the General Assembly. We stated thus in previous years; in our preliminary remarks delivered at the start of our informal consultations this year; and in our statement to the Council on 15 July. For this reason, we have been engaged from the start in considering the proposals made by our partners and in introducing our own proposals on the issue.

The provision of humanitarian assistance is of utmost importance to members of the G77 and China in all situations and that is why we are troubled that our proposal to include a reference to strengthening humanitarian assistance to civilians living under foreign occupation was repeatedly rejected. The proposal was rejected despite the importance of this issue to members of the G77 and China; despite the fact that this reference has been in previous versions of this resolution; and despite the fact that the Group resorted to previously agreed language.

We are saddened also, because of the process that ensued after a very long period of negotiation that brought us, over one week ago, to the final text that has just been adopted.

Under the pressure of time and in the spirit of compromise, many proposals of the G-77 and China were not incorporated in this resolution, among them humanitarian assistance to countries affected by the global food crisis, references to support by the international financial institutions as well as the issue of transfer of new technology to developing countries affected by natural disasters.

Despite this, we recognize that the text contains several issues related to the continued strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance that were not present in recent ECOSOC resolutions, including to safety and security of humanitarian personnel, gender mainstreaming, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, capacity-building at all levels, the relationship between emergency assistance, rehabilitation and development, reaffirmation of the humanitarian principles, among others.

We would like to reflect on the hard work and effort of all delegations that engaged constructively in a process that began three weeks before the start of the ECOSOC. It is not an easy task to find agreement among such a diverse group of countries. Nevertheless, a compromise text was

achieved.

The call for a vote belies the agreements and compromises that were made during the course of our deliberations on the many important and difficult issues in this resolution and diminishes the importance of the subject of the resolution. Nonetheless, we reiterate our support to this resolution and intend to continue to work toward achieving the consensus that has traditionally accompanied this important resolution.

Finally Mr. Vice President,

We wish to express our thanks for the efforts of our colleague, Rodrigo Cardoso of Brazil who served as Facilitator of this resolution.

Thank you.