



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. AQEELAH AKBAR, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 65: STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (New York, 11 December 2008)

Mr. President,

I am honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and to introduce the draft resolution entitled, "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development", contained in document A/63/L.53. I am further honoured to inform that Mexico has joined as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution.

At this time, I would like to make an oral revision to operative paragraph 28 of the draft. Op28 will now read:

Requests the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, and to include in his report, within existing resources, an analysis of the possible existing gaps in the assistance provided in the period between emergency relief and development, taking into account information provided by Member States and relevant UN entities, with a view to formulate recommendations on how to address any problems identified in a systematic manner and to ensure sustainable solutions, particularly in rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Mr. President,

Efforts to achieve economic growth, sustainable development and to realize the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, can be adversely affected by natural disasters. A single natural disaster can result in massive loss of life, livelihood and property and set back development by several decades.

While there is no substitute for effective national efforts to minimize the impact of natural disasters, a national response alone can sometimes be inadequate.

L.53 emphasizes that States must cooperate to find collective and cooperative solutions to the challenges that disasters present and to promote a more responsive, prompt, fair and needs-based humanitarian assistance system. The relevance of this cooperation has multiplied with the increase in the number and scale of natural disasters and their impact in recent years.

The United Nations system and the international community have a unique role to play in assisting developing countries to enhance their existing humanitarian capacities, knowledge and institutions including by inter alia, promoting access to and transfer of new technology, funding and expertise to developing countries.

Such assistance will help developing countries to strengthen preparedness, including through the development and maintenance of early warning systems; to respond rapidly to natural disasters; to mitigate the impact of natural disasters; to address the long-term challenges of the post-recovery

period; to accelerate relief and rehabilitation; and to reduce the risks associated with future natural disasters.

Mr. President,

We believe that the transition from relief to development is an important juncture to transform disasters into opportunities for sustainable development. In this regard, L.53 requests that the Secretary-General continue to improve the international response to natural disasters with a view to identifying possible gaps in the assistance provided in the period between emergency relief and development as well as outline recommendations that address any challenges. In recognition of the practical concerns expressed, we agreed not to insist on a separate comprehensive study detailing this information that will undoubtedly assist developing countries to determine best practices and where improvements need to be made. Instead, we agreed to the reasonable suggestion to have these issues incorporated into next year's report of the Secretary-General on this item.

The co-sponsors of L.53 are convinced of the need for continuing international engagement in the post-disaster period, for restoring livelihoods, building resilience and reducing vulnerability. We believe that L.53 reflects this common understanding among all our partners in this regard.

Finally, Mr. President, the G77 and China would like to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Anupam Ray of India for accepting the enormous challenge of coordinating this resolution on behalf of the Group. We thank all delegations that have lent their support and contributed to the outcome of this final text and as in years past, we look forward to the adoption of this draft resolution by consensus.

Thank you very much.