



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CONROD C. HUNTE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA ON AGENDA ITEM 65(A), STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (New York, 10 November 2008)**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 65(a), Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

All countries are vulnerable to disasters. States can - and indeed must - cooperate to find collective and cooperative solutions to the challenges that disasters present. The relevance of this cooperation has multiplied with the increase in the number and impact of natural disasters in recent years. The collective efforts of Member States to promote a more responsive, prompt, fair and needs-based humanitarian assistance system must be augmented and strengthened.

The G77 and China believes that a system such as the one just described, calls for an increase in resources available to the United Nations for humanitarian assistance. We also believe that greater attention needs to be paid to the ability of the United Nations to coordinate responses to demands for humanitarian assistance. This can be achieved, inter alia, by strengthening the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and by making sure that the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is well funded.

In this regard, we thank the Secretary-General for the recent report on the CERF. While we are still analyzing that report, our preliminary view is that after two years of operation, the CERF has been a step forward in ensuring a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies. We take note of the findings in the Secretary-General's report that the CERF has become "a valuable and impartial tool for humanitarian actions by helping to accelerate response". We also note the call to Member States to contribute to the Fund and we would, in particular, like to be kept abreast of amounts being disbursed and the policies governing the disbursement of funds. We certainly can support the recommendation that the General Assembly keep the Fund's progress under review.

Mr. President,

The increase in the number and scale of natural disasters and their impact in recent years has resulted in massive loss of life and livelihood and threatened agricultural production and food security. The global food crisis has further exacerbated conditions for more than 900 million people, mainly in developing countries, who are undernourished. This crisis is expected to significantly increase the demand for humanitarian assistance. We believe that there is a need to address these developments in a holistic manner and significantly scale up the response to this crisis.

Mr. President,

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that international humanitarian law and the guidelines contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, remain the framework governing the provision of humanitarian assistance. The General Assembly has stated on numerous occasions, including in the Guiding Principles of resolution 46/182, that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and on the basis of an appeal by it. The resolution also emphasizes that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Moreover, coordination of all types of external assistance must be done by the recipient Government. This would ensure better coherence and coordination of the relief effort.

The G77 and China is concerned about statements and efforts made this year that would imply modifying the agreed basis for the provision of humanitarian assistance. We should avoid attempts to expand the scope for humanitarian assistance or to introduce guidelines and principles on operational and other matters into deliberations of the General Assembly without due regard to adequate and sufficient intergovernmental consultations. We are engaged in the strengthening of the humanitarian response capacity of the United Nations and its role in coordinating international assistance to national responses to emergencies. We remain open to proposals and ideas that will contribute to these objectives and that result from an inclusive intergovernmental process which duly takes into account the views and needs of the recipient countries of international humanitarian assistance.

Mr. President,

Sound national disaster management policies require strong capacity and coherent strategies that address both disaster prevention and disaster management. However, while there is no substitute for effective national efforts, a national response alone can sometimes be inadequate.

In this regard, there is need for more bilateral, regional and international cooperation in response to natural disasters. 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 reduce the risks associated with future natural disasters; and to accelerate relief and rehabilitation.

Mr. President,

Building on this last point, an issue of great interest and concern to our Group is the transition from relief to development. We believe that it is possible to make this transition and transform disasters into opportunities for sustainable development. This is the case when efforts are made to support local and national recovery processes at an early stage.

We are convinced of the need for continuing international engagement in the post-disaster period, for restoring livelihoods, building resilience and reducing vulnerability. We hope that there will be greater focus on meeting this need even as we work towards improving the CERF.

In this context, and as in previous sessions, the G77 and China will submit a draft resolution on

