



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BYRON BLAKE, DELEGATION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE, ON AGENDA ITEM 49: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, SUB-ITEMS (A)-(G), IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 27 October 2008)**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Group thanks the various Secretariat representatives for the presentation of the reports before us on Agenda Item 49: sustainable Development.

Introduction:

1. At the outset the Group of 77 and China continues to emphasize that action to address the multi-dimensional challenges of sustainable development must be taken simultaneously in relation to the three pillars of sustainable development - economic development, social development and environmental protection. We cannot overemphasize the need for a coordinated, integrated, balanced and urgent approach to sustainable development.

2. We reiterate that at the national, regional and global levels, economic, social and environmental goals should be promoted in complimentary and consistent ways.

3. The multi-dimensional threats we now face: a global economic downturn and looming recession; international financial and food crises; high cost of fuel; unfulfilled commitments to provide financial resources, technology and capacity building; and climate change all combine in unprecedented ways to undermine the many efforts of developing countries in achieving the objectives and goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

4. The Group commends the Secretary-General for providing in his report (A/63/304) an update on the activities of Governments and other stakeholders in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the WSSD.

5. In May 2008 we had fruitful discussions in the Commission on Sustainable Development during its review session on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. Our discussions and the views of the Group provided good guidance and indication on furthering implementation of Agenda 21 as it relates to this thematic cluster of issues. We look forward to a consensus and action-oriented outcome of the policy session of the Commission in 2009 based on an open and inclusive negotiation process.

6. Further implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of WSSD requires greater emphasis on sustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

7. In 2012 the international community will reach the twenty-year mark of the Earth Summit held in 1992 and the ten-year anniversary of WSSD held in 2002. It will be 40 years after the Stockholm

Conference of 1972. There have been myriad activities, commitments, conferences, workshops, pilot projects etc., at different levels, but the fundamental challenges identified in Rio remain and in cases have worsened. The international community should bring the information together and thoroughly review and assess the progress achieved since these two momentous summits. Guided by the "Rio Spirit", a Rio-plus-20 Summit should provide the necessary political impetus for the range and level of action required to bridge the implementation gap. In this context, the G-77 and China supports and welcomes the offer of the Government of Brazil to host such a Summit in 2012.

#### Follow-up to and Implementation of Mauritius Strategy

8. The particular vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to the vagaries of climate change, which poses an existential threat to these countries, are well-known. Sea-level rise, coral bleaching due to rising temperatures, increased frequency and intensity of severe weather events including hurricanes and cyclones, are but few of the adverse impacts of climate change with which SIDS have to grapple.

9. These daunting challenges fall beyond the scope of SIDS to effectively address, and underscore the vital role of support by the international community including the United Nations. This support must be provided through different on-going and new initiatives. The Group repeats its call for adequate resources to be allocated to strengthening the SIDS Unit, the focal point in the UN which is mandated to provide critical support to SIDS, as well as resources to facilitate the revitalization of SIDSNET.

10. The Group also supports the Caribbean States in their efforts to gain international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. Recognizing the importance of the Caribbean Sea to the economic well-being and sustenance of people living in the area, the international community, including the UN System, should support countries of the region to take appropriate steps for its preservation and protection.

#### International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

11. The impact of natural disasters on lives, property and livelihoods is increasingly devastating. Human activities can exacerbate the negative impact of natural disasters. Storms, droughts and floods may be inevitable, but they need not necessarily lead to humanitarian crises. Recognizing that is an essential step in disaster planning and mitigation. Actions should be aimed at the most vulnerable countries and populations and include developing early warning systems, increasing preparedness and risk reduction.

12. Developing countries' vulnerability is exacerbated by the convergence of global challenges including global population growth, urbanization, climate change, desertification and loss of biodiversity, which in turn adversely impacts the poorest in the world, increasing their exposure to risk and thereby heightening their vulnerability - it is a vicious cycle.

13. Vulnerability to natural hazards contributes to increasing the scale and scope of disasters and humanitarian crises, and can significantly impede our ability to achieve the MDGs. In spite of this and a growing recognition of the benefits of investing in disaster risk reduction, financial resources to this end have been insufficient.

14. We express our support to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its mandate to promote public awareness and commitment, expand networks and partnerships, and improve knowledge about causes of disaster and options for risk reduction.

15. The Group reiterates that discussions on climate change should be placed squarely within the context of sustainable development. It is imperative that our decisions reinforce the promotion of sustainable development by promoting all three pillars in an integrated, coordinated and balanced manner.

16. The Bali Action Plan launched a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the United Nations Climate Change Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012, in order to reach an agreed outcome at COP-15 in 2009. This decision was in recognition that deep cuts in global GHG emissions are required to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention. The emerging science is suggesting that even deeper cuts might be necessary than realized in Bali. It is therefore vitally important that we achieve a successful and ambitious outcome of the on-going negotiations under the Bali Action Plan.

17. It will be crucial that developed countries participate in these negotiations in earnest and take the lead in addressing the implementation gap with respect to both their own historical responsibility to mitigate emissions, in particular by complying with their obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, and by facilitating adaptation by developing countries. The extent to which developing countries can effectively respond to the challenge depends on the effective implementation by developed country Parties of their commitments relating to financing and technology transfer.

18. While the UN should support the efforts of developing countries in formulating policies for attracting climate change related investment flows, adaptation and nationally appropriate mitigation actions will have to be enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner, as agreed to in the Bali Action Plan.

19. In this regard the provision of financial resources is a binding commitment of developed country Parties. It is essential that such financial resources not be considered as part of current official development assistance (ODA), but be additional, and in compliance with existing binding commitments under the Convention.

#### Implementation of UNCCD

20. Desertification, drought and land degradation continue to pose a serious threat to development and to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. This triple threat is also being exacerbated by climate change and climatic variability. The Group calls on all relevant UN agencies that deal with issues related to desertification, drought and land degradation to cooperate under the aegis of the UNCCD in order to provide a holistic and integrated response to the threats to sustainable development posed by these issues.

21. The Group acknowledges the role being played by the GEF in assisting countries in their efforts not only to combat desertification but also to reclaim degraded land and make it useful again. In this context, the Group calls on the international community to substantially increase its resource allocation to the land focal area of the GEF during the fifth replenishment so as to allow it to respond to its ever-increasing requests for services in this focal area.

22. The Group also commends the Executive Secretary of the Convention for his efforts to continue the administrative renewal, reform and streamlining of the functions of the secretariat in order to

fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and bring them into line with the Convention's ten-year strategic plan and framework. We look forward to COP-9 when the JIU is scheduled to present its findings on the assessment of the Global Mechanism.

## Convention on Biological Diversity

23. Two events should frame our discussions on biodiversity for this session. The first is a very eventful COP-9, held in Germany, in which Parties took 35 very important decisions. The Second is the World Conservation Congress, recently held in Barcelona, Spain, which presented conclusions regarding the state of the world's biodiversity that may prove useful in taking stock of what still needs to be done and where progress is lacking. The target that we have set for ourselves in 2010 - to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth - seems even more challenging than before.

24. Most of the biodiversity in the world can be found in developing countries. However, the Group recognizes that we are all custodians of the richness and variety of the world's ecosystems and we all benefit from the services they provide. In this regard, the Group is pleased that we will be dedicating 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. It will provide a great opportunity for raising awareness and rallying efforts to achieve our internationally agreed targets.

25. The Group places particular emphasis on the decisions made on the access and benefits sharing (ABS) regime and the road map set out for negotiations. This topic has been on our priority list for some time, and we look forward to the process that will lead up to COP-10 in Nagoya.

26. We welcome the decision on the strategy for technology transfer and that on resource mobilization taken during COP-9, since both financing and technology are crucial means if implementing the objectives of the Convention.

## Report of the Governing Council of UNEP

27. The Group welcomes the report of the Governing Council of UNEP on its 10th Special Session, particularly with regard to the medium-term strategy for the period 2010-2013; the proposal for the proclamation of the international decade for addressing climate change; and the Global Environment Outlook. We trust that the deliberations of the Council and decisions taken will effectively guide the work of UNEP in its endeavours to address current environmental challenges.

28. The medium-term strategy is an important step in the Programme's efforts to become a more effective, efficient and results-focused entity. The strategic direction contained in the strategy provides a clear focus for work programmes. This should enable UNEP to deliver on its mandate more effectively by building on its existing expertise and comparative advantage in the selected six priority areas, namely: climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystem management; environmental governance; harmful substances and hazardous waste; and resource efficiency - sustainable consumption and production.

29. Additionally, concrete measures are needed to ensure the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer. We are concerned by the slow pace of implementation of this important plan which is indented to enhance the ability of developing countries to better address environmental challenges. While we recognize the important role of UNEP, it is even more important for development partners to demonstrate their commitment to the Bali Strategic Plan by providing the necessary resources for its implementation.

30. We reiterate the call on the United Nations to increase substantially its resource allocations to UNEP's regular budget to demonstrate, in more than just words, our commitment to addressing the dire environmental challenges that we face.

31. We began this statement by reiterating the importance of an integrated, coordinated and balanced approach to sustainable development based on the three pillars - economic development, social development and environmental protection. We also began by highlighting the new challenges we face. We conclude by emphasizing the need to address the fundamental issues while confronting the current challenges. We cannot sequence them and most importantly we cannot use the current difficulties to delay implementation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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