

STATEMENT BY MS. ALISON DRAYTON GUYANA DELEGATION, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTER-SESSIONAL AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS AND ON TOURISM UNDER AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

New York, 22 February 1999

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to offer my congratulations on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Commission of Sustainable Development. The energy and enthusiasm which you and your very able delegation have already brought to this body, have been felt by us all. The Group of 77 & China welcomes the Bureau's attempt to make the deliberations of the CSD more action and process-oriented. We anticipate that concrete outcomes will address the issues of all Member States of the United Nations.

The Group of 77 & China is proud to have put the issue of sustainable consumption and production patterns on the agenda of the world community. We note with regret, however, that the debate on these issues has failed to produce tangible results and concrete action. We hope that this debate will allow us to move towards international agreement on what actions need to be taken. In that regard we propose that attention be focused on the issues of (1) resource management and cleaner production; (2) globalization and its impact on consumption and production patterns; and (3) possible concrete actions to address the specific problem of urbanization.

We take note of the initiatives that various Governments have undertaken, individually and collectively, to promote a dialogue in this field and to search for solutions to our common dilemma. We would also like to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretariat and its comprehensive preparations for CSD-7 as contained in document E/CN.17/1999/2. We found this report very useful in preparing our comments.

Without blaming our developed partners, I would like to state that the excessive over-consumption in the North and poverty-related problems in the South are both unsustainable. Therefore, structural changes are crucial in both instances. In this respect, we welcome the proposal contained in the Report of the Secretary-General to have a coordinated programme of national and regional studies concerning destructive patterns of consumption and production, notably in the area of energy use, transport of waste products and the use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources, to assess their sustainability. It would also be important to ensure a sustainable development energy agenda that would cover all types of energy and address all aspects – economic, social and environmental.

Developing countries' immediate needs in this regard are clear. It is, inter alia, through investment in skills and technologies, promoting efficiency, that developing economies can eradicate poverty. Transfer of skills and technologies, in combination with financial resources, are required by prospective and existing enterprises, particularly small and medium enterprises, to reduce local economic leakage and to permanently open up international markets. The Group of 77 & China is looking forward to developed countries meeting their commitments to official development assistance leading to more tangible and visible results.

The Group of 77 & China believes that in the world of globalization and trade liberalization, the consumption patterns of developed countries strongly influence those of developing countries. Any discussion of sustainable consumption patterns would not be complete without considering the dynamics of consumption patterns being transferred through trade, investment, communication, media, advertising and marketing of companies. Information is the key to raising awareness on the range of consumption options available and

enabling consumers to make informed choices. We believe that there is also a need for a thorough study of the role of media and advertising in promoting unsustainable consumption patterns, and indeed, in exporting them.

The Group of 77 & China would now like to make the following proposals on the need for a partnership approach to address the issue of:

A. Resource Management and Cleaner Production

1. We emphasize that industrialised countries have to encourage the establishment of best practices in cleaner production and environmental management and, where appropriate, this can be the basis for capacity-building and technology transfer for particular industrial sectors in developing countries.
2. Production processes can be made more efficient and cleaner by using less resources per unit produced and by adopting and promoting access to best available, cost effective and environmentally sound technologies in industries, as well as through economic incentives, government regulations and voluntary business practices.
3. The UNEP/UNIDO cleaner production centres should provide additional support to industries, in particular small- and medium enterprises, capacity-building on auditing and certification schemes, loan applications and financing of new technologies, and, through marketing efforts, improve the access of their products to markets worldwide.
4. As part of our discussion on these issues, we may wish to consider what structures would enhance the sharing of the requisite expertise, knowledge and technologies in this area.

B. Globalisation and its impact on consumption and production patterns

Trade pressure from developed countries has also contributed to unsustainable consumption practices in developing countries. For example, it is not unusual for developed countries to seek, through various means, agreement on lower taxes on their exports to developing countries. From a trade perspective, they might consider this to be a justifiable policy. However, from the perspective of achieving sustainable consumption patterns, there are a number of implications which we need to consider. The lowering of taxes on luxury cars, energy-wasting home appliances and expensive imports from developed countries, for example, will have a definite impact on the consumption patterns of developing countries. In this regard, the Group of 77 & China recommends that developed countries take steps to harmonize their policies on trade and sustainable development, with particular reference to avoid the tendency to export unsustainable consumption patterns to developing countries.

1. Developed and developing countries should co-operate in addressing sustainable consumption and production issues.
2. Countries can consider applying an environmental taxes on particular luxury and disposable goods that have negative environmental impacts. There also needs to be a greater examination of the role played by transnational and multi-national corporations.
3. Countries can also consider adopting voluntary initiatives which promote sustainable patterns of production and consumption.
4. The Report of the Secretary-General deals in the most cursory way with the role of the media in promoting unsustainable consumption patterns. If we intend to seriously address this issue it would be necessary to discuss the need for agreed guidelines in this regard.

C. Cleaner technologies and urbanization

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that production patterns should be made more sustainable through economic incentives, government regulations and voluntary business practices. Governments should cooperate with business in encouraging industrial environmental management systems and publications of information on the environmental impacts of goods and services, where possible based on assessment of production processes, distribution, use and disposal. In this regard, efforts should be made to ensure that changes in production and consumption patterns in the industrialized countries do not present obstacles to sustainable development in developing countries.

In past years the debate on the transfer of technology has focused on the transfer of cleaner production technologies. The Group of 77 and China believe that such transfers would contribute substantially to a cleaner global environment and we continue to hope for the support and active cooperation of our developed country partners in this regard. It has also been demonstrated that unsustainable consumption patterns also leads to the generation of inordinate wastes. We should therefore consider also that technology transfer can address other crucial issues with which developing countries are coping as our societies become more urban.

1. Waste collection and disposal is a major environmental issue driven by the process of urbanization. New and innovative collection systems and disposal facilities are crucial to improving the quality of life in many developing country cities. Such new technologies and management systems can be developed in co-operation with, and supported by, developed countries, focusing on improving the infrastructure and disposal facilities.
2. Major concerns persist in the lack of freshwater and adequate sanitation in urban areas in developing countries. This should be a priority issue for developed and developing countries on the international agenda of sustainable consumption patterns.
3. In the process of urbanization many developing countries experience transportation related problems. Health related issues for the city population caused by air pollution, and stagnating development due to traffic congestion and lack of planning. Developed country expertise and financial resources can help in addressing these issues through comprehensive city-planning.
4. Waste prevention policies, consumer education and information can play an important role in national waste management strategies. Producer responsibility (imported goods) and take-back requirements can also be applied with success in developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Our collective challenge is how to promote change in all countries, but particularly in developed countries, so as to make the transition to a society in which the patterns of production and consumption are sustainable. This effort should fully integrate the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" .

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.