



STATEMENT BY MRS. JANICE MILLER, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE G77 AND CHINA UNDER AGENDA ITEM 7 (h) OF THE SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL: AD HOC ADVISORY GROUPS ON AFRICAN COUNTRIES EMERGING FROM CONFLICT: ECOSOC AD HOC ADVISORY GROUP ON BURUNDI (New York, 18 July 2005)

Mr. President,

We thank the representative of South Africa for introducing the Report of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi. The work of this Advisory Group has provided a significant contribution towards the economic and social recovery of Burundi and indicates continued interest by the international community in the future development of the country.

The Group of 77 and China congratulates Burundi on the successful holding of communal and legislative elections which has established a basis for a return to political stability. The expected end to the transition period after the appointment of the new government and President should allow for the further strengthening of the peace process for Burundi and its people.

Burundi, a least developed country is now on the path to political peace after enduring ten years of conflict. This has been a positive development. Serious humanitarian, economic and social problems still remain as detailed in the report. These include the persistence of food insecurity, the expected return of refugees which could place additional strains on already stretched resources and the serious difficulties being experienced in the health sector in relation to HIV/AIDS and malaria. These are all serious challenges to the country's development prospects.

In the view of the Group of 77 and China, the case of Burundi now provides the international community with the real opportunity to ensure that the country does not relapse into conflict. The new government and the people of Burundi will therefore need sustained support to build on the momentum of change currently underway.

International support for Burundi should be commensurate with the needs of the country and place it firmly on the road to recovery. When the Economic and Social Council last met to discuss this issue, it was pointed out that the realization of donor commitments was far less than expected. It was also indicated the prevailing political uncertainties of the time had led to a "wait and see" approach on the part of the donors. The G77 and China believes that international donor commitment to Burundi should be fully implemented and shares the view contained in the report that improvement in the economic and social situation of the country will serve to strengthen political stability and sustain peace. In this context, the G77 recognizes the positive contribution made by donors to Burundi thus far and calls for the increased disbursement of funds committed at the Forum of Development Partners held in Brussels in 2004. The Group also calls for the full financing of the UN Consolidated Appeal for 2005.

The development challenges faced by Burundi in the short to medium term will need to address the diversification of its economy and the alleviation of its unsustainable debt burden – obstacles to the achievement of economic and social policy and poverty alleviation. The expected completion of the Poverty Strategy Reduction paper should allow for Burundi to benefit from the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. The G77 and China calls on the Bretton Woods institutions to support Burundi in this endeavour by allowing access to the HIPC Initiative. Additional assistance from the international community and the donors would also be critical in addressing the short and medium term needs of the country.

The G77 and China supports the convening of a donor-roundtable in order to bolster the new Government in the post-transition phase. The Group also endorses the recommendation that the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group should promote a round-table meeting with Burundi's development partners including the Bretton Woods institutions. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group has a continued valuable role to play in monitoring the process of transition from relief to development and in assisting in ensuring the achievement of a genuine partnership between Burundi and its development partners in order to consolidate its long-term development prospects. The Group therefore strongly supports the continuation of the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi.

