



STATEMENT BY H. E. AMBASSADOR STAFFORD NEIL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, TO THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (New York, 11 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at this formal meeting to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Thirteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the other members of the Bureau elected this morning. We thank you for your efforts during these past few months in preparation for the policy session of this first thematic cycle of the Commission including your initiatives to facilitate increased the participation of developing countries. The G-77 and China reiterates its pledge of co-operation and support to you during the next two weeks, which we hope will be characterised by constructive and positive deliberations and a careful search for practical policy guidelines which will increase significantly the level of development in the three target areas.

Mr. Chairman,

This policy session is important both because of the significance of the issues of water, sanitation and human settlements and also because it establishes precedents for the policy sessions on the other thematic areas to be considered in the future within the CSD.

The discussions in the preparatory meeting were necessarily wide ranging and this is reflected in your Report. This policy session must necessarily be more specific and action-oriented.

The G-77 and China expects to make detailed statements and specific recommendations on each of the thematic areas in the next few days. I will, therefore, confine this initial statement to some of the overarching, cross-cutting issues of policy, critical to achieving the goals in all three areas of water, sanitation and human settlements and to the follow-up arrangements for these themes after the end of CSD-13.

Mr. Chairman,

In our statement to the Preparatory Meeting for the CSD-13, we emphasised the need to address key issues militating against development generally and to treat with water, sanitation and human settlements wherever feasible in as integrated a manner as possible. This brings to the fore immediately a number of longstanding systemic deficiencies in current development paradigms to which many, including the G-77 and China, have consistently drawn attention. I speak here of issues such as the inadequacy of financial resources and the net outflow of resources from developing countries; the lack of integrated planning; the inconsistency between project financing and the long-term programmatic needs of these sectors; the need for research and access to environmentally friendly technology on preferential terms; the limited institutional and technical capacity; the lack of coherence in international policies and within national policies; and the persistently unfavourable terms of trade between developed and developing countries and between urban and rural areas.

Your report of the Preparatory Meeting mentions many of these issues, but because of its thematic structure, does not pull the issues together in a manner which brings out their full implications for either international or national policy formulation except in the area of integrated planning in the section on inter linkages. The G-77 and China reiterates that these systemic issues must be tackled and appropriate recommendations for action included in the outcome document of the Session.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the Preparatory Meeting, the Secretary-General has issued his report, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All". He has confirmed that many countries especially in Africa and among LDCs have become poorer in the last ten years and are in danger of not meeting many of the MDGs including the water, sanitation and human settlements targets. In our initial reaction to the Secretary-General's Report, we stressed, and we now re-emphasise, the urgency for the international community to adopt aggressive and far-reaching initiatives to reduce poverty and promote sustained development, and an important part of that strategy must be substantially increased assistance in achieving water, sanitation and human settlements targets.

Mr. Chairman,

We stressed, in the Preparatory Meeting, that a major constraint to the achievement of the targets in all three sectors is limited financial resources. The developing countries have made significant efforts but these have had less than optimum results, since Governments have difficulty in finding the resources, and these areas are not attractive for private sector investment, particularly in the least developed and small island developing states, in poor urban areas and in rural areas with dispersed population. There is need for significant international support especially in the form of increased official development assistance; debt relief, including debt swaps and debt cancellation; and greater opportunities for earning from trade. This issue has been treated in a fair amount of detail in the Report in the section on Water. However, it is very inadequately treated in the sections on Sanitation and on Human Settlements. Furthermore, there is no place in the Report which examines the implications of the combined financial requirements of the three sectors.

The Group of 77 and China considers it important for policy purposes that the financial needs of the three sectors be presented in an integrated manner and that there be a consistent approach in addressing the financial issues across the three sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

The importance of research and of access to appropriate technology and of facilitating the transfer of technology among developing countries was stressed in the Preparatory Meeting as critical in all three sectors. There are references to these issues in parts of the Report. However, we feel that there should have been a greater effort to highlight the linkages among them, so that they could have been addressed in an integrated manner.

Mr. Chairman,

The G-77 and China recognise that urgent action is required if the MDGs are to be achieved. The Group emphasises, however, that the level and sustained nature of the actions are equally, if not more, important. The actions must also involve **people** within their particular social and cultural context, which varies among countries and within each country. Accordingly, responses to water, sanitation and human settlement issues should involve public awareness and education in its most holistic form, and should encourage the full involvement of all stakeholders, including women and community groups. The G-77 and China recommends that this Meeting fashion long-term programmatic recommendations, with significant short-term actions to build confidence, reduce scarcities and provide the basis for sustainability.

Mr. Chairman,

The G-77 and China proposes concretely that this Meeting recommend policy actions across the three thematic areas of water, sanitation and human settlements, to:

1. To strengthen the means of implementation through, *inter alia*, significantly increased official development assistance; debt cancellation, debt swaps or other debt-relief measures; providing and facilitating access to and transfer of appropriate and environmentally-friendly technology; and building and beneficially using local capacity including indigenous knowledge;
2. To increase education and public awareness, arrangements for planning and policy formulation and for broad-based involvement and participation;
3. To integrate and mainstream the three issues in national development policies, plans and programmes, including budgeting processes;
4. To integrate water, sanitation and human settlement plans into disaster mitigation and preparedness policies and plans, with particular attention to the security of women and children, as well as other vulnerable groups;
5. To improve efficiency in resource use including through better donor co-ordination, reduction of 'tied aid' and elimination of policy conditionalities, reduction of transaction costs, better co-ordination at the national level and the delegation of responsibility, as far as possible, to local and community levels with effective management and controls.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of appropriate follow-up must be addressed by this first policy session. It is a critical issue which requires deep consideration since decisions here will create precedents for the future consideration of other thematic areas. The G-77 and China will have specific proposals when the Meeting engages in those discussions. We will only say at this stage that we reiterate the important role of the CSD as the high-level forum for follow-up to the implementation

of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Programme of Action. We also recall that the Mauritius Strategy mandated the CSD to be the main inter-governmental body for follow-up to its recommendations. It would not be good management to divide co-ordinating responsibility.

The G-77 and China also wishes to recall that there are several cross-cutting issues which CSD-11 mandated to be addressed continuously by the Commission. I draw attention here in particular to the issues of the Means of Implementation, the changing of changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; the sustainable development of the Small Island Developing States, on which there has been an international meeting which adopted a strategy for the further implementation of the programme of action since CSD-11; and the sustainable development for Africa, where meeting the MDGs is a major development challenge.

Mr. Chairman,

I close by re-emphasising that the G-77 and China will work with you and our all partners to achieve real positive recommendations for policy measures during this session.

I thank you.