



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. SUHAYFA ZIA, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,, BEFORE THE SECOND COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEM 53 (E): IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (New York, 30 October 2006)

Madame Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I take the floor on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on Agenda Item 53 (e), Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

Desertification and land degradation in general continue to pose a threat to sustainable development. Human factors such as overgrazing, deforestation, and overexploitation of land due to demographic pressure, compounded with climate change, are turning once fertile soils into unproductive and barren patches of lands. Poverty is widespread in those areas.

Four years ago, in Johannesburg, the World leaders agreed to consider the Convention to Combat Desertification as one of the important tools for poverty eradication. Yet, the international community continues to shy away from providing enough attention to desertification and land degradation. This is a matter of concern for the Group of 77 and China. The Group regrets that even the Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization does not pay a single attention to this major problem. It is our hope that the international community will pay more focus to desertification as a priority issue for its impact on the survival of hundreds of millions of peoples is at stake.

Recognizing that 2006 is a significant year in the life of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, as the General Assembly has designated it The International year of Deserts and Desertification, the Group of 77 and China finds this to be an opportune moment to pay attention to this fundamental question of opportunities in the drylands.

The poor management of land resources is often exacerbated by the very vulnerability of the land itself and by the adverse impact of climate change and the biodiversity on which it depends. Results oriented efforts need to be strengthened in order to mitigate the risks of desertification and serious droughts from poor land management, as well as the impact of climate change and loss of biodiversity.

We reaffirm what the Conference of the Parties stressed in their seventh session that there is an urgent need for strategic guidance and targets in order to foster the implementation of the Convention. The UN Secretary General's report on Desertification stresses the need to, and I quote, "engage the international community in setting benchmarks and defining indicators for progress, and to make the Convention a centre for excellence in scientific and technical knowledge and practices" (A/61/225 Para 7).

The crucial element of resource mobilization in the success of the Convention must be addressed. The affected developing countries need support in capacity building to gain more access to financial resources and technology transfer. The Group of 77 and China reaffirms its support for the

Global Environment Facility as the financial mechanism for the Convention and we reiterate our request for the GEF and its implementing agencies to work with the countries concerned to build capacity to facilitate ease of access to GEF funding and avoid complexities and conditionalities involved in accessing these funds. It is clear that complying with the Convention would support developing countries' efforts in eradicating poverty.

I thank you.

