



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MISS CHERRYL GORDON, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, TO THE GENERAL SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ON AGENDA ITEM 13(d): ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS - HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (New York, 20 July 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 13, sub-item (d), on Human Settlements.

Mr. Chairman,

The G-77 and China thanks the Secretary-General for the reports made available under this item and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein; as well as the representatives of the Secretariat who introduced these reports.

The challenge of sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter for all still persists and continues to require our urgent attention, especially as it is closely intertwined with poverty, employment, transportation and the provision of basic services such as water and sanitation. The challenge of human settlements can only be successfully addressed through a comprehensive, holistic strategy that must include decisive efforts to fulfil the commitments made at Istanbul, the Millennium Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

More specifically, Mr. Chairman, the international community must give due attention to the continuing challenge of human settlements, including the provision of the necessary means of implementation, which would include improvement in the quality and quantity of ODA, technology transfer, capacity building, free and fair trade for developing countries, increased foreign direct investments to developing countries and the solution of the external debt problem.

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding the foregoing scenario, the G-77 and China feels it is important to take note of the various efforts already underway to address the issue of human settlements. The Report of the Secretary-General highlights several key programmes being implemented by UN-Habitat. They include shelter and sustainable human settlements development, monitoring the Habitat Agenda, regional and technical co-operation and human settlements financing. The Report also highlights co-operation efforts with partners, and innovations in financial, human resource and information management within the framework of the UN-Habitat programmes. We take this opportunity to commend the Executive Director for her efforts in this regard.

The G77 and China wish to commend the countries and development partners that have continued to support the Habitat Foundation as well as UN-Habitat in its efforts to improve the living conditions of the poor people of the world through provision of shelter. As we acknowledge that provision of shelter goes a long way to alleviating poverty, there is no doubt that the work of UN-Habitat and other actors in this sector play a very important role in poverty reduction, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

It has been estimated that there will be some 1.4 billion slum dwellers by the year 2020 if the current trends remain unchecked. Hence, stringent and concerted efforts to avoid this occurrence must be undertaken on a priority basis, by all concerned. In order to halt or check these trends, safeguard measures will be needed, including some to monitor the trends. In this respect, the G77 and China encourages countries to support the ongoing efforts of the UN-Habitat under the 'Monitoring the Habitat Agenda'. Similarly, monitoring of the developments within the human settlements area should be intensified at national and regional levels in order to complement the efforts by the UN-Habitat.

Mr. Chairman,

An appropriate response to human settlements can also be fast-tracked through building adequate capacity at regional and country levels. This can be done partly through sharing of experiences, common regional policy

formulation and implementation within the context of the Habitat Agenda and Millennium Declaration targets. In this regard, we welcome the efforts by UN-Habitat to organise regional ministerial meetings on housing, land and urban development in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

A critical factor in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda relates to the financing of the identified programmes and projects. Some of these programmes are on track, however, others such as the arrangement with the African Development Bank, are either progressing too slowly or have stagnated to the detriment of their original good intentions. In addition, while we appreciate that a number of funding proposals are being finalised between UN-Habitat and development partners, much more needs to be done. For instance, the Secretary-General's Report indicates that UN-Habitat is collaborating with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Bank, the African Development Bank under the Cities Alliance, however, these arrangements need to be brought to fruition.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China would also wish to highlight the persistent imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions to the United Nations Human Settlements Foundation. Earmarked contributions to the Foundation have remained higher, making it difficult for UN-Habitat to plan and implement its work programme. In addition, we also note that the donor base has remained narrow, leading to over-reliance on a few contributors. We therefore, urge all Member States to contribute to the Foundation, with emphasis on contributions for non-earmarked resources and on a multi-year basis.

The G-77 and China notes with appreciation the initiative of UN-Habitat to develop a Slum Upgrading Facility to raise funds for upgrading slums and other human settlements activities. We welcome this Initiative and encourage all Member States to support the Facility.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China places on record its support for the recommendations of the Secretary-General as outlined in his Report. It is our expectation that the High-Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005 will give due consideration to human settlements issues and come up with concrete decisions that will ensure the realisation of the goals and targets related to human settlements.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.