



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER PERMANENT, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA ITEMS 39 (A): STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS; AND 39(C): INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD OF NATURAL DISASTERS, FROM RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT (New York, 11 November 2004)

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, we would like to convey to the Secretary General of the United Nations our deep appreciation for the documentation submitted on items 39 (a) & (c) under the title “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”, and “International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development”.

The Group of 77 and China is of the opinion that the report submitted on the latter, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/25 in which the Assembly requested a report on the progress made in improving international response to disasters and which updated the activities of International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, in response to General Assembly resolution 57/150 and other subsequent resolutions, constitutes a good basis for our discussion.

Mr. President,

The problem posed by natural disasters is of crucial importance to developing countries, due mainly to the long-lasting consequences on affected populations and the adverse impact on the environment as well as social and economic development of affected countries. It is, therefore, important to examine the measures that need to be taken to improve the response capacity of affected nations and the assistance that can be provided by the international community in this regard.

The primary focus of humanitarian assistance for the Group of 77 and China, I would like to reiterate, should be the guidelines contained in the annex to the resolution 46/182 of 16 December 1991. The principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality as set out in resolution 46/182 need to guide all humanitarian action. It is essential that humanitarian action be apolitical and offered at the request of the recipient government. These principles, have been, and should remain, the basis of all responses to humanitarian emergency request for assistance. They should guide the efficiency of the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and other actors. In this context, the primary responsibility for the organization and delivery of humanitarian assistance should fall on the concerned States. It is fundamental to build strong capacities at the regional and national levels in order to strengthen cooperation between the UN and other humanitarian organizations. The States whose populations are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance should endeavor to facilitate the work of the humanitarian organizations, in particular, in securing the delivery of food, shelter and medical care.

Mr. President,

As the Secretary General has pointed out in his report, the strengthening of the national response capacity remains the most effective means for carrying out rapid assessments and coordinating the initial response as local responders can potentially overcome several obstacles that can hinder rapid response. While it may not be possible to entirely prevent natural disasters from occurring, advance warning and preparedness can help minimize the impact, particularly in terms of the human suffering imposed by natural disasters. The use of space-based and remote-sensing technologies is particularly important for the prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters. There is, therefore, an urgent need to promote the access to and transfer of technology related to early warning systems and mitigation programmes to developing countries affected by natural disasters. It is of paramount importance to strengthen national capacities, to transfer the appropriate technologies and to develop a system of advance warning in order to avoid or minimize the impact of natural disasters.

The Group of 77 and China would emphasize the need to ensure a more equitable distribution of humanitarian assistance across humanitarian emergencies, including those of a protracted nature. It has been observed that aid has been abundantly provided in humanitarian emergency situations that benefited from wide media coverage. By contrast, as soon as the media lights fade away, the resources tend to be scarce particularly in some specific regions and when the more difficult task of reconstruction begins.

