



STATEMENT BY MR. MOHAMMED ARROUCHI, COUNSELLOR, ON BEHALF OF THE G 77 AND CHINA, ON AGENDA ITEM 94 b: "IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA" (SECOND COMMITTEE), NEW YORK, 20 OCTOBER 2003

Mr. Chairman,

The process of desertification as a global and complex phenomenon is one of the major obstacles hindering the attainment of sustainable development goals and targets, mainly poverty eradication, which the WSSD recognized as "the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development particularly for developing countries". This is the language we have unanimously and enthusiastically agreed on in Johannesburg.

The challenge we are facing now is how to ensure that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification particularly in Africa, becomes an effective tool in halting the ongoing spread of this phenomenon and in reversing it to generate the environment, our common natural heritage.

We note with great concern that in the absence of long-term strategies and reliable means of implementation (adequate financial resources, transfer of sound technologies and capacity-building measures) the global phenomenon of desertification is increasing in scope and severity and continues to have serious adverse impact on a large portion of the world population, which is more than 1 billion.

Consequently an immediate action is critically needed, at all levels, to halt and reverse this phenomenon which threatens our well-being. Immediate action implies the development of long-term integrated strategies together with a verifiable process of implementation leading to the attainment of the objectives of our Convention.

The development of these strategies should take into account inter alia:

- The development at the national and local level of observational databases with the aim to establish a comprehensive approach towards completion of a new global assessment of the obscure process of desertification.

This database should be widely diffused and shared. The role of the Committee on Science and Technology in this regard is of paramount importance.

- The adoption of an ascending approach in the policy-making processes in order to ensure the participation of the local communities and populations.

- Establishment of durable and accountable partnerships between all actors (Governments, NGOs, local communities, etc.), particularly where the problem of desertification is mostly felt.

Mr. Chairman,

The key to success in the battle against desertification resides in the availability of adequate

financing with total long-term commitment at the political level and at all levels of Government and societies.

It is important to recall in this context that the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD stated clearly that adequate and reliable financing is indispensable for the achievement of sustainable development goals.

We welcome in this regard the designation of the Global Environment Facility as a new financial mechanism for enhancing the implementation of the Convention and we look forward to a similar effective contribution on the part of the Global Mechanism.

In this regard, we call on the international Community to take effective measures for the implementation of the Convention through the bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes.

We also invite the United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the donor countries and other development agencies to integrate the provisions of the Convention in their strategies to support the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed development goals.

Finally, we request the Secretary-General to make provision for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, including the seventh ordinary session of the Conference and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies, in his proposal for the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

Mr. Chairman,

It should be recalled in this respect that the international Community will be given during the biennium 2008-2009 an opportunity to evaluate within the Commission on Sustainable Development the progress achieved in combating desertification.

We would like to call on UNCCD Secretariat to ensure full cooperation and coordination with the CSD within the frame of the multi-year programme of work.

Finally, since presently the international community has at its disposal a solid repertoire of commitments with regard to sustainable development the path to sustainability goes through a strong political will to engage into long term strategies of implementation of commonly defined goals and targets.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.