



STATEMENT BY MRS. ARIEL BOWEN, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, DURING THE HUMANITARIAN SEGMENT OF THE ECOSOC SUBSTANTIVE SESSION 2005
THEME: "STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING CAPACITY AS WELL AS ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS" (New York, 13 July 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, allow me from the outset to commend Ambassador Verbeke, Vice-Chairman and the other members of the bureau for the excellent programme coordinated this year for the Humanitarian segment of substantive session of the ECOSOC 2005. Thanks also to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary General and Humanitarian Relief Coordinator for his introduction of the Secretariat Reports. Our appreciation is also extended to the representative of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) for his remarks on the report addressing post tsunami actions undertaken by the WTO.

Mr. Chairman,

The hurricane season has barely begun and already it has left its destructive trail, at a time when we are still reeling from the effects of the recent Tsunami disaster which prompted the main focus of the single panel being held this year during the segment: *"strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster"*. The challenges before us in relation to international humanitarian response are great and the convening of this segment is therefore timely. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the tsunami disaster and as we take note of his recommendations, we look forward to an active and lively debate on the issue, to further consolidate efforts towards the development of early warning systems for disaster mitigation and prevention.

Mr. Chairman,

The theme for the segment this year: *"strengthening of the coordination of the United Nations humanitarian assistance, including capacity and organizational aspects"* is particularly appropriate, in view of the scale and continuing demands placed on the United Nations humanitarian system from the increasing incidence of natural disasters and complex emergencies. We therefore welcome the report and recommendations of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, which provides a useful framework for our deliberations. Elements of the report have formed the basis for the draft resolution reflecting the outcome of the segment this year and we are grateful to Mr. Stefano Tuscano of Switzerland and Mr. Gustavo Ainchil of Argentina for their sterling work in facilitating agreement on the text to be adopted by consensus.

We wish to also extend our appreciation to the team from the UN Office for Coordination and Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) for making themselves available to provide guidance and response to some of our very difficult questions on the reports under consideration for the segment.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China wishes to reiterate, its commitment and support for the guidelines contained in the annex to resolution 46/182 of 16 December 1991 as the basis of all responses to humanitarian emergency requests for assistance. They should guide the efficiency of the humanitarian assistance of the UN and other actors. And in this regard, we also wish to reinforce the primary role of the concerned state in the organization and delivery of humanitarian assistance. It is fundamental to build strong capacities at all levels, including the regional and local, in order to strengthen cooperation between the UN and other humanitarian organizations. The States whose populations are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance should endeavour to facilitate the work of the humanitarian organizations, in particular, in securing the delivery of essential basic needs of food, shelter and medical care.

Mr. Chairman,

The recent tsunami disaster has provided many lessons with regard to response to natural disasters. International response to it has clearly demonstrated that there can be and exists considerable assets in the humanitarian system. Among its lessons is one emphasized by the Secretary-General in the latter report mentioned, which points squarely to the need for improved standby and coordination mechanisms from which the humanitarian system could benefit, in order to make better use of resources in hand.

It has been observed that aid and pledges have been abundantly provided in humanitarian emergency situations that benefit from wide media coverage. But what of the “forgotten” emergencies - those from which the media lights have extinguished and from which simultaneously resources have tended also to dissipate?

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General’s report notes the significant deployable capacity within the UN system but at the same time recognizes that “such capacity is unpredictable, thin and relies on too small a core”. The Group of 77 and China emphasizes that more attention should be placed on strengthening financial mechanisms and in this regard stresses the need to establish predictable funding for all and in particular neglected emergencies, under-resourced sectors, in order to address funding gaps, especially for post-disaster recovery. We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to expand the use of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), to address a range of financial gaps to adequately fill rapidly rising needs in emergency initial phases, prior to the launch of an appeal.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the recent 2003 initiative of donor countries under the concept of Good Humanitarian Donorship as an important peer review mechanism for humanitarian response. This initiative is a valuable tool which could be used to promote best practice among donors and facilitate improved humanitarian coordination through agreeable definitions of humanitarian assistance, improved financial tracking and identification of resources gap. We would encourage our donor partners to seek to engage with developing countries in order to ensure that priority needs are appropriately addressed.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the increasing focus which the issue of transition from relief to development has generated in recent times, including this year’s ECOSOC event – the second such formal occasion falling under the work of the Organ, for discussion on the subject. It is the position of the Group of 77 and China that the difficult task of reconstruction after events of natural disasters or complex emergencies remain of paramount importance in order to bridge the gap in terms of resource allocations between emergency assistance and aid to development. Failure to do so would mean that the international community, despite all the efforts made, would only discuss problems rather than solve them.

In this regard, we are grateful to the Secretary-General for responding to the call, particularly from developing countries, to produce a comprehensive report on the subject, one which would reflect the real concerns of millions of people. We are studying the report and look forward to further constructively engaging in its findings.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the most challenging issues for the United Nations system in humanitarian response is its role in complex emergency situations. The efforts of the Secretary-General in establishing guidelines for such missions are noted, but we would caution on the need to better ensure that humanitarian organizations work, as appropriate, with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in order to ensure that issues are accounted for, from the earliest stages of planning and design of multidimensional peacekeeping operations with humanitarian components.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.