



**STATEMENT BY CHERRYL GORDON, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, TO THE OPENING OF THE 7th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD) (Nairobi, Kenya, 17 October 2005)**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Executive Secretary,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the Presidency of COP 7. The G77 and China also expresses sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Kenya and to the Head and staff of the United Nations Office in Nairobi for hosting this session of the Conference of the Parties and for the warm welcome and excellent hospitality extended to delegations to this Conference.

We reiterate our appreciation to the Government of Cuba for its sophisticated and productive Presidency of the Sixth Conference of the Parties and express our condolences to the Government and people of Cuba on the passing of H.E. Dr. Rosa Elena Simeón Negrín, President of COP 6.

The G77 and China also conveys its full recognition for the tremendous work being undertaken by the Executive Secretary, Mr. Hama Arma Diallo and the staff of the UNCCD Secretariat in facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

Mr. President,

This 7th Session of the COP takes place nearly two full years after our last meeting in Havana, where we made significant progress in implementing the Convention. Specifically, COP 6 oversaw the designation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the funding mechanism for the Convention and initiated the programme of work for the first proper review of the implementation of the Convention by affected country parties, beginning with the African region, which presented their National Action Programmes (NAPs) to the Third Session of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC.3), held in May 2005 in Bonn, Germany. We are determined that COP 7 should continue the momentum created by COP 6 towards full implementation and demonstrate to the people of the world that we as governments are committed to the fight against desertification. In this respect, the G77 and China eagerly anticipates the continuation of the review process with CRICs 4 and 5, which will allow country parties in regions other than Africa, to properly evaluate the effectiveness of all our implementation efforts as well as the functioning of the CRIC itself as part of the implementation mechanism of the Convention.

Mr. President,

This COP 7 also takes place in the ever-present shadow of efforts to reform the United Nations. Whether justified or not, the UN and multilateralism in general have come under increased scrutiny and attack from within and without the Organisation. Even the organs of the UNCCD itself have been subjected to a level of scrutiny unparalleled in the history of MEAs.

This Session, for instance, will address the matter of the Report of the UN's Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), whose inspectors undertook a "comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat", at the request of country parties. It is the view of the G77 and China that this Report raises fundamental questions and makes significant recommendations, which demand in-depth analysis and discussion by all concerned. The G77 and China is happy that we have decided to consider this Item earlier, to allow more time for discussion. The Group will address specific concerns relating to the Report at the time that the item is considered.

At this juncture, however, we wish to highlight one aspect of the JIU Report, which points to some perceived 'misunderstandings' about the UNCCD, and which the inspectors believe to be responsible for the lack of financial support and stable financial commitment to the Convention. The G77 and China believes it is imperative that we as country parties clarify these so-called 'misunderstandings' once and for all, especially as they seem to be interfering with the proper implementation of the Convention.

Mr. President,

The 'environment versus development' debate was settled some time ago. To pursue it now is to engage in a dangerous and ridiculous distraction, guaranteed only to stifle this Convention. It is worth reminding ourselves, however, that in 1992, the UN convened 'The United Nations Conference on **Environment and Development**' in Brazil. The three conventions which were born out of that 'Rio Conference' have continued to address these two main issues, from each of their peculiar perspectives, but always intertwined. The G77 and China agrees with the JIU inspectors that the glaring lack of commitment to this Convention, in particular, by the developed country parties, stems partially from a lack of clarity. However, we believe that this ambivalence has more to do with our loss of focus on **people** – who are the real target of the fight against desertification, the effects of climate change and the loss of bio-diversity. It is quite clear to us, Mr. President, that, when we speak of 'development', we are referring to the development of **people** and that when we speak of 'the environment', we are, obviously, referring to a largely physical construct that includes mankind as the chief arranger, beneficiary and top predator within that construct. The UNCCD clearly address both these aspects.

Mr. President,

The 'top predator' is in danger of becoming extinct.

All over the globe, our land is being degraded at an alarming rate by our **people**, who are in turn pushed onto unsustainable land, by the lack of options resulting from stark poverty, hunger, forced migration, instability, conflict, occupation, improper land distribution and re-distribution policies, as well as being motivated by ignorance and other socio-economic factors.

The failure of **people** to manage land resources in a sustainable manner is often exacerbated by the very vulnerability of the land itself, and of the characteristics of the climate that impact it and the bio-diversity that depends upon it. The increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, such as we are currently witnessing, provide ample evidence of these facts. We recognise that the problem of desertification is particularly pronounced in Africa, and yet, it is also a global problem, presenting special challenges for countries such as small island developing States and the least developed countries.

In recognition of these facts, our governments, which represent the **people** of the world, agreed to enter into a legally-binding framework to fight the scourge of desertification. Recognising the multi-faceted nature of the challenge, our governments also committed to battling poverty and hunger, war and conflict on several other fronts, notably through the adoption of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr. President,

The future of our civilisations depends upon us fulfilling these commitments which we have made. We cannot turn back for any reason. And so, even as we discuss budgets, posts, figures, and bench-marks, we must do so in a positive manner; in order to make progress in the fight to preserve our land and the future of the human race. In just a few months, we will be observing the **International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD)**, which will grant us a new opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges faced and actions needed to fight desertification.

We would wish to embrace this coming Year in a positive and proactive manner, and would wish to build upon the progress that we have made so far in the implementation of this treasured Convention.

We all know what the problems are; we have identified them, listed them, analysed and scrutinised them. It is time to address them.

The G8 countries have demonstrated their commitment to advancing development in the poorest countries by their recent decision to cancel debts owed by those countries. It should therefore be a small matter for the G8 and other developed country parties to give this Convention the level of financial and technical support it was meant to have, on the basis of the legally-binding commitment undertaken by all Parties, and in keeping with the financial commitment made to the CCD's two sister Conventions.

Country Parties must continue to enhance their relatively new relationship with the GEF, particularly through the implementation of OP 15 on Sustainable Land Management, by giving clear guidance to the GEF to ensure that the Programme and resources are driven by needs identified by the affected countries. In turn, the GEF and its implementing agencies must work with the countries concerned to build capacity to facilitate ease of access to GEF funding and avoid conditionalities involved in accessing those funds. Developed countries should do their part by

supporting the GEF's fourth replenishment and by respecting the modalities identified by the developing country parties, in collaboration with the GEF, for implementing OP 15 in their countries.

The Global Mechanism (GM) must continue in its role as broker of funding for the affected country parties. To be successful in this area, the GM has to concentrate on its mandate, as difficult as this may be. The developed countries should support the GM in this regard.

Affected developing country parties should be commended for their ongoing efforts to implement the Convention. Specifically, those who have already presented their NAPs should assimilate the views, recommendations and lessons learned, as expressed during the recent CRIC, with a view to making the necessary adjustments to their NAPs. These countries should then, in consultation with the Secretariat and the funding mechanisms, consider and address the implementation of these NAPs.

Country parties who have not prepared their NAPs should make every effort to complete this exercise, in accordance with the stipulation of the Bonn Declaration. In recognition of the valiant efforts by many developing country parties in this regard, the G77 and China reiterates its call for the GEF, as funding mechanism of the Convention, to make resources available, as it did for the African region, to the other regions that have not yet presented their NAPs, to enable them to present these at CRIC.5 next year. This would be in keeping with the practice of the GEF in other Conventions which it supports.

The UNCCD Secretariat should continue its yeoman work on behalf of the Convention and continue to demonstrate the same level of commitment in spite of the constraints faced in terms of staffing and resources. The Secretariat should also continue to preserve its excellent relations with the Secretariats of the other two 'Rio Conventions', including collaborating on shared challenges.

Finally, Mr. President,

The G77 and China believes it is imperative that we address, in a serious and comprehensive manner, the longstanding issue of the Regional Co-ordinating Units (RCUs) at this COP 7. We will be elaborating on this issue in due course.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China reaffirms its commitment to the UNCCD and to the fight against desertification.

We stand ready to support you throughout this Session as you guide us in our consideration of the many issues of importance to this Convention.

I thank you, Mr. President.

