

STATEMENT BY MS. ALISON DRAYTON, HEAD OF DELEGATION OF GUYANA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE SPECIAL SEGMENT OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)

**Recife, Brazil
November 22, 1999**

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates,

It is the profound hope of the Group of 77 and China that meeting again in Brazil will enable all of us to recapture the sense of common cause with which we left Rio in 1992.

In 1992 developing countries made a key concession - we agreed to the principle of sustainable development and in so doing we acknowledged that this decision would entail important economic consequences and we accepted that it would very probably impact negatively on our immediate development initiatives.

Agenda 21 was a carefully negotiated package in which States attempted to balance the right of countries to secure the economic well being of their citizens with the global good as a whole. It requires little deductive power to note that, in view of the unequal levels of development, the bulk of action toward making the necessary adjustments would fall to developing countries. It is for that reason, above all others, that the provision of the requisite assistance was considered vital if this package were to have any hope of working. It was for these reasons that developed country partners agreed to assist developing countries with building capacity, the transfer of environmentally sound and appropriate technologies and that they would commit new and additional financing to fulfil the objectives outlined in Agenda 21.

The Group of 77 and China believes that the various reports on implementation provide abundant evidence that developing country Parties place a high priority on our responsibilities under the various Conventions and action programmes. The Global Environment Fund has noted that developing countries have contributed \$2 for every \$5 raised for project implementation since the Fund began to operate. A 40% contribution is hardly a minor achievement, especially when one considers the sacrifice this represents in terms of choices over other abiding priorities such as health care and education.

Mr. President,

It is no secret that, unfortunately, the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification has, and continues to, lag behind its sister Conventions. Doubts continue to be voiced as to what added value this Convention contributes to the Rio processes. Such questions ignore the critical contribution which the CCD - properly implemented - can make to the alleviation of poverty, the development of sustainable livelihoods and ultimately, to the economic growth of all countries. The presence of so many ministers from developing countries here today attests to our continued commitment to the implementation of this Convention. The Group of 77 & China hopes that the developed country Parties remain similarly committed and that their failure to participate at senior Ministerial level does not reflect a faltering of political will.

The integration of dryland concerns into our national development plans and regional economic integration instruments is essential if we are to achieve long-term success in combating desertification and to realize the full potential of the CCD. The Group of 77 & China also recognizes the need to strengthen efforts concerning

resource allocation to address dryland issues. Indeed, many affected African and other developing countries with urgent and pressing needs have taken notable steps in this direction. As we have heard during the past week, African countries are proactive in taking institutional, policy, and in some cases, legal measures, to place the CCD on a firm footing. The national reports do not only inform on the commitment which developing countries have brought to fulfilling their obligations under the CCD, they also provide lessons to other regions.

The Group of 77 and China would wish to see greater reciprocity from our developed country partners as we embark on a new phase in the implementation of the Convention. The deeds need to match the challenge at hand, and we must together forge effective compacts to successfully tackle the scourge of desertification.

In these last seven years we have recognized the value of the bargain struck in Rio. To our utmost extent, the Group of 77 & China has sought to utilize the capacities which we possess and would wish to go even further. We believe that our full potential is unrealized and that in order to take that next step we need partnership: an equal partnership with our developed country counterparts to reinvigorate that common sense of purpose born in Rio.

I thank you, Mr. President.