



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STAFFORD NEIL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION (New York, 29 September 2005)

Mr. President

I wish to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization over the past year. It gives us a wide survey of the many activities in which the United Nations is engaged and illustrates its extended reach and coverage in promoting international co-operation. The Report reveals significant variations across the different fields in relation to both performance and results. There have been successes as well as setbacks in a year of mixed fortunes for the Organization.

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I will address the Report's coverage of UN activities in international economic co-operation which we consider to be a major priority for the Organization. Poverty, hunger, disease and their attendant maladies are conditions which call for concerted action not just from instincts of human solidarity, but because they are central to achieving the overall goals of the United Nations.

The past year was one in which major reviews were undertaken of progress in a number of different fields. In February the Commission on Social Development carried out its 10 year review of the social development agenda set out in Copenhagen and the 24 th special session of the General Assembly. The review of the Beijing Platform followed shortly after in the March meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women. Both outcomes showed a mixed picture and registered a clear message on the need to complete the unfinished agenda on poverty reduction, social integration, full employment, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

During the Thirteenth Session of The Commission on Sustainable Development in April we recognized the critical importance of concrete actions on issues of water, sanitation and human settlements. Important and practical policy options were identified and now await support and sponsorship.

The focus on assessing progress towards the MDGs after five years occupied much of the attention of the General Assembly for most of the year. Reports and studies were presented which highlighted the importance of urgent action especially in those regions which have made limited progress. The Millennium Project Report published in January contained many impressive proposals which regrettably did not survive the negotiations for inclusion in the Outcome Document of the High-Level Plenary. We also recognized that beyond the MDGs there is a wider scope for development co-operation. The Secretary-General's report correctly points out that while the MDGs provide a compelling platform for mobilizing the international community, there is a broader development agenda which needs to be advanced particularly in trade, finance and monetary affairs and the transfer of technology. These issues were not dealt with as forcefully as we would have liked in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. They will have to be given priority in the overall implementation of the commitments undertaken with respect to development in the future direction of international economic cooperation.

Efforts within the United Nations system to promote economic growth and development are based on a shared commitment anchored on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing countries. The most urgent task is to promote implementation of commitments through the strengthening of the global partnership; through the adoption of policies which enhance opportunities for growth for developing countries; through the removal of inequities in the international system which are constraints to development and through greater democratic participation for all states in international economic decision-making. In its progress on these matters over the past year, the record has not been impressive. And it is of the utmost importance that the United Nations system gears itself to accomplish those objectives. We have to think of ways to strengthen the role of the UN in promoting the implementation of development commitments by development partners and development institutions. We believe that the ECOSOC, which has been assigned several responsibilities to promote policy dialogue and development cooperation in the recently adopted 2005 World Summit Outcome, has a critical role to play in guiding a bold and focused implementation process to fulfill these commitments.

Major efforts need to be applied in the area of implementation of commitments on transfer of resources. Important steps have been taken by the European Union on ODA timetables and by the G8 on debt which should have some

significant impact on resourceflows. The international community should build on these positive steps and maintain momentum on resource mobilization.

Mr. President,

In the UN's operational activities for development, we support the Secretary-General's emphasis on increasing the level of interagency co-ordination in the delivery of technical co-operation, but we are concerned with the inadequacy of oversight arrangements and with the tendency towards concentration on governance and human rights. What is needed is a broader approach to capacity building which encourages assistance and support to projects which address poverty alleviation directly, such as those driving increased employment generation and development of infrastructure.

At the global level, greater efforts need to be made to improve the United Nations role in the interface with Bretton Woods Institutions in order to have greater influence in the formulation of global economic policies. The current arrangement for the Spring High-Level meeting with the ECOSOC needs to be expanded in its scope, duration and substantive result. It is essential that we move beyond the current format in order to give this mechanism the possibility for greater impact.

Mr. President,

The Report also draws attention to the wave of humanitarian emergencies experienced during the past year. The increased frequencies of hurricanes in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, the swarm of locusts in Africa and the tsunami in the Indian Ocean were among the most devastating. The great outpouring of international support for relief to countries affected by the tsunami was unprecedented in its scale and served to alleviate the human and economic costs to affected developing countries. Unfortunately, other crises less spectacular and on a lesser scale suffered from neglect and lack of media attention.

We wish to commend and acknowledge the work of the United Nations which in all of the circumstances has been sustained and effective. The OCHA and its leadership deserve our praise for its advocacy in generating international support and for its own contribution in the conduct of relief operations. We endorse the Secretary-General's appeal for increased funding which continues to be below the level required to effectively deal with the consequences of natural disasters. We welcome the moves to expand the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the commitment of donors. The increased attention to natural disaster management which is called for at the national and international levels is clearly justified. Much of the devastation has affected developing countries already besieged by economic problems making it more difficult to cope with severe hardships and to advance development efforts.

We need to work expeditiously and with a sense of urgency towards the early establishment of a worldwide early warning system for all natural hazards.

Mr. President,

In the course of the past year much attention was focused on administrative and management issues resulting from allegations of improprieties which gave rise to investigations conducted in some operations. Allegations of misconduct and corrupt practices gave rise to great concern and adverse publicity in sections of the news media. We are satisfied that the Secretary-General took prompt action to ensure a thorough and fair investigation, especially in relation to the management of the Oil for Food Programme. The revelation of irregularities in the conduct of the Programme obviously would justify the need for improved arrangements for accountability and oversight. It is vital that the independent auditing and oversight arrangements ensure that ethical standards are maintained; that there is full accountability; that there is transparency in United Nations operations; and that efficiency and the avoidance of waste is ensured.

It seems clear that what is needed now is not a rush into hasty action and the installation of new mechanisms to satisfy pressures generated through sections of the news media. There should be a comprehensive review of governance arrangements and proposals submitted to the General Assembly for consideration on the basis of which carefully thought-out remedies can be applied to meet the exacting standards of efficiency and ethical conduct we require in the operations of the United Nations. We should at the same time recognize reforms that have already been achieved. The Secretary-General has pointed out in his Report that most of the reform elements previously proposed have been implemented with clear benefits including a revised budgetary process with a shorter and efficient cycle of planning and budgeting; a reduction in the quantity of reports and better utilization of Conference Services.

We note that the Secretary-General has embarked on internal management reforms and we particularly welcome his new initiatives for more transparency in the system for the appointment of senior officials and heads of agencies. We hope that this policy will be extended to all appointments at the appropriate levels of senior management.

In relation to the process under the Capital Master Plan, the situation has become difficult from complications in the availability of temporary accommodation and the alternatives are not appearing to be very favourable. In addition, as the Secretary-General points out, some of the underlying expectations for advancing the project as approved in 2004 have not been fulfilled. This is especially so with regard to financing arrangements and the terms and conditions of the loan offer from the host country which needs serious reflection by Member States.

On the overall question of resources, we share the Secretary-General's concern over the fragility of the United Nations financial situation. The problem of unpaid assessments continues to deplete resources which in turn require resort to cross-borrowing to finance existing programmes. The Group of 77 and China reaffirms that the solution lies in the hands of Member States to honour their legal obligations to pay their assessed contributions to the United Nations fully, on time and without conditions.

Mr. President,

Increased security arrangements for the Secretariat were carried out during the past year, including the establishment of a Department of Safety and Security which came into effect in January. This was in response to the increasing concern over security affecting the United Nations staff at Headquarters and in different parts of the world. We support arrangements for ensuring that the staff of the United Nations receives adequate protection especially where conditions are most volatile. However, we expect that appropriate security arrangements would be determined on the basis of some principles of differentiation and that stringent security arrangements do not unduly limit the engagement of the United Nations staff in dealing with problems on the ground. It is important that at the people level the United Nations presence is more than a symbol and that visible engagement takes place especially in relation to implementation of social and economic programmes.

Mr. President,

In reporting on partnerships the Secretary-General has emphasized the importance of forging links and broadening the involvement of civil society, business groupings and other entities in the work of the United Nations. This should be encouraged but with the recognition of the need to respect the intergovernmental nature of the Organization and the need to ensure that all initiatives in relation to participation and joint efforts with non-governmental organizations fall within accepted guidelines and do not compromise or undermine the rights and interests of Member States.

In conclusion, Mr. President, the Secretary-General's report on the past year shows a mixed record and underlines the need to strengthen the United Nations and the system of international co-operation. It is obvious that the Organization will have to adapt to the changing conditions and that reform should be made where reform is needed. It is important that in that process we recognize the importance of inclusiveness and transparency in any decision-making and ensure that the results reflect the wide interests of what is a diverse community of nations. This is best accomplished by due consideration of all proposals for reform in a process within the established procedures and mechanisms of the General Assembly.

In achieving our goals we will continue to rely on a Secretariat which is politically neutral and objective in the implementation of mandates and which is committed to the principles of international service, working on the directions of the intergovernmental bodies of the Organization. This should always remain paramount.

Thank you, Mr. President.