



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. JANIL GREENAWAY, MINISTER COUNSELLOR, DELEGATION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, AT THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, GENEVA, ON AGENDA ITEMS 8 AND 9: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR AND THE UNDP STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2011 (Geneva, Switzerland, 23 June 2008)

Mr. President,
Mr. Administrator,
Distinguished delegates and members of the Executive Board,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China. The Group thanks the UNDP Administrator for his comprehensive and analytical statement, which serves to remind us of the complex and difficult task he undertakes regularly at the helm of the organization - the development arm of the UN. His statement also reminds us of the scale and scope of the challenges to development in the environments within which the UNDP operates.

2. Mr. President, with regard to agenda item 9, as you are aware, it has been quite some time now since the Group has been engaged in extensive consultations with the UNDP and members of the Board on the 2008-2011 Strategic Plan, including in informal sessions since the first regular session of the Board in January of this year. As you are also aware, the Group has taken a very strong and principled stand on the revision and updating of the UNDP Strategic Plan. Developing countries - the programme countries which are also the client countries within whose borders the UNDP operates - firmly believe that the strategic plan be in line with the priorities of developing countries, and in line with the core development mandate of UNDP.

3. For these reasons, the Group seeks to ensure that the UNDP carries out the mandate of decision DP/2007/32, which, among other things, stresses that the UNDP plan 2008-2011 is a living document, which will be reviewed by the Executive Board on a regular basis during the plan period, and emphasizes that the UNDP should take a human development-based approach to programming.

4. In our view, the previous version of the plan significantly overlooked the views and perspectives of developing countries on our development needs and priorities. Given the urgency of progress required to achieve the MDGs in many parts of the developing world, in particular Africa, LDCs and countries emerging from conflict, and underscoring the need for progress in achieving sustainable development, development effectiveness requires that the UNDP's strategic focus be in line with the real development needs and priorities of the programme countries.

5. Underpinning the position of the Group on the Strategic Plan is the high level of importance the Group accords to the core development mandate of the UNDP, in advancing efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs, particularly in supporting national efforts at poverty eradication, and for the organization to continue to effectively deliver on its mandate and produce the desired positive impacts on economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication. It continues to be a priority for the Group of 77 and China that the UNDP remains focused on its core development mandate, in particular support to capacity-building and capacity-development efforts of programme countries to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

6. Mr. President, the consultations on this and other issues have been intense and at times quite testing. From our perspective, however, it has been worthwhile. Indeed one of the things we hope will ensue from our experiences over the last year or so on this particular issue is a greater culture of listening and responding to the views and perspectives of developing countries, as well as a culture of engagement with developing countries to inform the strategic direction and planning of the organization and the decision-making processes of the Executive Board. This we believe is essential for improved development effectiveness, particular given the UNDP's move towards results-based management and operations.

7. Mr. President, the Group is therefore pleased to see that the Strategic Plan, as contained in document DP/2007/43/Rev. 1, and its annexes, contain some significant improvements, and we are pleased that the many consultations and brainstorming sessions have not been in vein. We sincerely hope that the UNDP will continue to be responsive to the views and interest of the programme countries. Indeed we reiterate our view that what we hope for is a true partnership between programme countries, donor countries and the UNDP, with the aim of achieving decisive, significant and measurable development on the ground.

8. Our discussions on the UNDP's strategic plan have involved disagreements on certain approaches to development that do not give the level of primacy and priority to poverty eradication, the MDGs and economic and social development that is required and desired by programme countries. In this regard we highlight the development perspectives to which developing countries themselves ascribe, i.e. perspectives focused on human development, sustainable development and poverty eradication, and urge that these be reflected in a meaningful way in implementation of the Plan during the current four-year period.

9. Mr. President the Group is also of the view that responding to the priority development needs of programme countries requires operationalizing the principle of "national ownership." Numerous intergovernmental agreements have highlighted and emphasized the importance of national ownership and leadership in the success of development assistance, including the 2007 TCPR. As such, during the current four-year plan period, implementation of the Strategic Plan should include robust operationalization of the principle of national ownership. This is one of the important implications of the 2007 TCPR on the Strategic Plan, and we would urge the UNDP to keep this in mind throughout implementation of the Plan.

10. Additionally, Mr. President, and with regards to the annual report of the Administrator (DP/2008/23), the report states that major initiatives were undertaken in 2007 to enhance the UNDP's focus on capacity development of programme countries. We encourage UNDP to continue in this direction by enhancing such initiatives to focus increasingly on capacity development as well as capacity building. The report also provides us with an analysis of programme portfolios, and we note that poverty eradication was not the number one programme priority in terms of the percentage of spending during 2007. Again, the Group of 77 and China urges UNDP to make poverty eradication the top priority in terms of programme spending, in line with requirements for achieving the MDGs. This issue also takes on a renewed sense of urgency given the current global food crisis and the need for food security.

11. The Report also provides us with information on support to UN system coordination. In this regard we would welcome the inclusion of a comparative analysis of spending on support for UN System coordination vis-à-vis spending on programme portfolios (including levels of core and non-core resources) in future annual reports, to help us ensure that coordination and coherence does not become a cost-cutting exercise, and that it does not detract or divert vital resources required for development programming.

12. In conclusion, Mr. President, the Group would like to say a special thank you to you, Sir, for your leadership and guidance, particularly on the issue of the Strategic Plan, and for your patience and understanding during the consultations and brainstorming sessions. We would also like to thank the Vice Chairs of the bureau, the facilitators you appointed, and the individuals within UNDP with whom we have had discussions on this issue, and in particular those UNDP representatives who have made themselves available to listen to and respond to the concerns of the G77 and China. Indeed we will continue to work with you and your bureau in a constructive manner throughout the rest of your presidency.

Thank you.

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