



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY HON. DR. JACQUI QUINN-LEANDRO, MINISTER OF LABOUR, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, BEFORE THE 52ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (New York, 25 February 2008)

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

- We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under the priority theme of this 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 'Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women'.

- The Group of 77 and China reaffirms its commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women, which is vital to sustainable development, the consolidation of democracy and the creation of inclusive societies. Though governments and the international community have increasingly emphasized the importance of the empowerment of women and progress has been recorded in several areas with respect to gender equality, more needs to be done if we are to attain the goals articulated in documents such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus.

- Human development and growth that is sustainable, must involve the active participation and contribution of all people within society. The feminization of poverty, lack of access to resources, few women in positions on financial and economic boards and the inadequate financing of programmes which affect the lives of women are just a few of the challenges faced in mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- The Platform for Action emphasized that funding from all sources and across all sectors is crucial to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly confirmed that resources remained insufficient and an obstacle to implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The G77 and China therefore concurs with the observation of the Secretary General contained in document E/CN.6/2008/2, which highlighted that "the 10 year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action indicated a significant gap between policy and practice in many countries."

- This session of the Commission allows us to examine more closely the challenges related to financing for gender equality. By collectively reviewing efforts in this area and sharing best practices on the mechanisms and processes involved in financing for gender equality, the Commission could make an important contribution to the design of policies and programmes aimed at bridging the gap between policy and practice and also contribute to the upcoming meeting in Doha on Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development to review implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

- Several studies have confirmed the positive impact of investment in the lives of women on national productivity and development. For years, Governments as well as the international community have utilized varying fora, including the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development to reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that women are afforded equal rights,

opportunities and access to resources and to increase financing for programs aimed at the empowerment of women. Developing countries have used varying mechanisms to empower women, such as increased investment in the social sector, which has resulted, inter alia, in expanded opportunities and access of women to education and a reduction in maternal mortality. Access to microcredit and microfinance has also promoted productive entrepreneurial activities, particularly among poor and disadvantaged women in developing countries, while boosting employment and income generation. Among women, microcredit has had the multiplier effect of enhancing the socio-economic status of women in their homes and communities and has further allowed for their enjoyment of their human rights.

- A particularly important mechanism in the planning and evaluation of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women is gender budgeting. Gender responsive budgeting has been identified as a crucial element for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and in particular MDG3 on gender equality and the empowerment of women. This mechanism, which is being increasingly utilized within states of the G77, should not only focus on the expenditure side of the budget but also provide for the systematic planning regarding government's allocation of financial resources through the implementation of programmes nationally. It should further allow for the evaluation of how such programmes benefit both men and women, through broad-based consultations between government and other stakeholders at the national level. The Group of 77 and China acknowledges the usefulness of creating greater awareness of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives that are designed to determine resource needs and financing gaps at the national level. Developing countries can benefit from the assistance of the international community to help build their capacity in this regard.

- Despite the commitments undertaken, including those made by governments at the Monterrey Conference, some developing countries are still unable to allocate sufficient resources to programmes dedicated to the empowerment of women. Achieving gender equality objectives will require a reallocation of resources and additional and predictable sources of financing. Though there may be some difficulties to incorporate gender perspectives in financing and economic matters, more pressing obstacles to the adequate funding of gender equality include larger macroeconomic issues such as huge debt burdens, fiscal austerity requirements, low inflation targets, trade liberalization, privatization of services, trade imbalances and the lack of new and innovative financing. The G77 and China urges that this session be utilized to identify gaps in financing for the empowerment of women and that bold measures be taken to overcome such challenges in the future.

- The G77 and China believes that the following actions at the national and international levels can accelerate progress towards financing for gender equality:

- Establishing priorities for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes
- Assisting developing countries to build capacity to generate sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators to monitor and evaluate national policies, plans and programmes
- Building capacity for and creating greater awareness of gender-responsive budgeting with the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders at the national level
- Ensuring that gender-responsive budgeting initiatives address both the expenditure side of the budget and the initial stages of policy and budget formulation
- Realizing the internationally agreed official development assistance targets of 0.7 per cent of

gross national product and of 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent for least developed countries

- Our Group looks forward to working constructively with other delegations in the successful conclusion of this session and to hearing the numerous experiences and lessons learned. We further hope to pursue actively this issue of financing for gender equality during the upcoming meeting on Financing for Development to be held in Doha at the end of this year, which should provide us with an opportunity to advance concrete action-oriented gender-sensitive recommendations and coherence between macroeconomic policies and the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. We furthermore should endeavour to come out of this important meeting with renewed commitments to mobilize resources for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you