



STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOHN ASHE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 6 October 2008)

Madam Chair,
Deputy Secretary-General
Under Secretary-General
Excellencies
Distinguished representatives

1. The core role and function of the Second Committee of the General Assembly is the promotion of economic and social development and better standards of living for all peoples. This is effected primarily through:

- Policy formulation and establishment and promotion of international norms, and fostering international agreements on development goals, targets and benchmarks for their achievement;
- Development cooperation to facilitate the realization of the policy goals through the implementation of commitments; and
- Monitoring the implementation of these goals and commitments.

2. Given the dynamics of globalization and the current global political economy, the United Nations has a vital responsibility to respond to the challenges and opportunities for development in fulfillment of its Charter mandate.

Madam Chair,

3. The Group of 77 and China has for years been warning that, as a global community, we have embarked on a path of development which is unsustainable. The evidence of systemic imbalances and instabilities are long-standing and persists in the following areas:

- Financial, trade, exchange rates, commodity markets, unsustainable debt and debt servicing burdens of developing countries;
- The chiasm between the real and the virtual economies, the developed and developing countries and the rich and the poor within and across countries;
- The rate of depletion of renewable and non-renewable natural resources and systems of production and consumption built on waste and avarice;
- The marginalization of the most vulnerable - LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, African countries and countries emerging from conflict;
- And global governance and institutional frameworks and structures which have lost capacity, legitimacy and relevance.

4. The Group of 77 and China has been calling for addressing such systemic imbalances for many years now. They have been the subject of academic and policy studies, conferences and reports including by the United Nations and its agencies.

5. Yet, we have chosen to ignore them. We have proceeded in our annual debates and resolutions

to frame the issues as matters between developed and developing countries, of a superficial nature and amenable to solutions through pressure. We have cast them merely as matters which will be resolved in due time through financial and technical assistance and changes in policy and behaviour by the developing countries. Perhaps even more detrimental, we have treated these systemic issues as matters which can be resolved independently in forums and institutions which have little interaction.

6. In addition, we have failed to implement the commitments we have given in the various forums. Critical failures include our commitments to:

- Provide 0.7% of GNI of developed countries for assistance to facilitate growth and development in developing countries generally, and 0.15% - 0.20% for the least developed countries and to enhance aid effective;
- Reduce the debt burdens especially of LDCs and African countries to sustainable levels;
- Create a development-oriented international trading environment;
- Address systemic issues and create coherency and consistency in the international monetary, financial and trading systems;
- Create a global partnership for development;
- Develop and allow access to advanced technology in key areas of development;
- Establish firm targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and to provide new and additional financial resources to facilitate adaptation by and the transfer of technology to developing countries.

These failures have reinforced several crises situations.

Madam Chair,

7. Over the last year, and more pointedly over the last few months, we have come to acknowledge that we have been experiencing simultaneously, multiple, inter-related and reinforcing fundamental international crises. There is an economic and financial crisis originating in the most developed, most sophisticated and largest economy; a food and energy crisis; arising from the demand and not production side; an environment and climate change crisis; and a global governance and institutional crisis. All these crises are urgent and in need of fundamental broad-based solutions simultaneously. There is currently no framework for devising such solutions.

8. These are major challenges to economic growth and sustainable development, and indeed to our way of life.

9. The President of the General Assembly has, in his opening address to the 63rd Session, posited that "Another world is Possible" even in these challenging times. In his closing statement to the High-level Meeting on the MDGs on September 25, 2008, made it clear that "The only way we can alleviate the suffering of the world's poor is by creating a sound and just international economic system". The elimination of poverty and suffering (hunger and ill-health) is one of our shared goals and commitments in the MDGs. The President has asked that we "together embark wholeheartedly on the task of building a new and better world."

Madam Chair,

10. The United Nations, through the General Assembly, has the task of pointing the way. In that regard, the work of this Committee as stated earlier is pivotal.

11. The real question then is "Can we, in this Committee, this year, begin to approach our work with

the mindset and the purposefulness that can lead to the results requested by the President and demanded by the circumstances of our time?"

12. The statements by almost every leader who addressed this 63rd Session of the General Assembly and the discussions in the High-level Events on Africa and on the Food and Energy Crisis have made clear that they expect us to behave differently from in the past. They expect action and decisions to implement long standing commitments.

Madam Chair,

13. There are several opportunities in this next year to begin to make that difference.

14. Firstly, the agenda of this General Segment covers a range of issues critical to our economic future. Critical here are the items relating to:

- Macro economic policies;
- Globalization and interdependence;
- Sustainable Development;
- Eradication of Poverty and other Development Challenges;
- Information and Communication Technologies for Development;
- Implementation of the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development;
- The implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements; and
- The treatment of groups of countries in special conditions.

15. Secondly, there is the Review Conference on the Implementation of the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha, Qatar, on 29 November to 2 December 2008.

16. Thirdly, there are the conferences on climate change to be held in Poznan, Poland on 1 - 12 December 2008 and in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009.

Madam Chair,

17. These are ample opportunities to address the critical challenges confronting the international economy and international cooperation. The Group of 77 and China is prepared to work with you and with other delegations to devise substantive resolutions and decisions which can address the challenges with the urgency, certainty and resources for implementation required. The current multiple crises situation demands that make a difference this year by producing decisions and resolutions that are action oriented and swiftly and fully implemented.

Thank you Madam Chair.