



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR BYRON BLAKE, PERMANENT MISSION OF ANTIGUA AND
BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ON THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS (New
York, 20 May 2008)**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in this very important and timely Special Meeting of ECOSOC on the global food crisis.

The Group wishes to complement you on your initiative to convene this Special Meeting of the Council. It also wishes to thank the President of Malawi and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for setting the boundaries and framework for this Special Session. The Group also appreciates the pointed keynote address.

Mr. President,

The global food crisis, compounded and reinforced as it is by the global financial crisis, the global energy crisis and the global climate crisis, is a major multi-dimensional challenge for development and the achievement of several of the millennium development goals. It has emerged in a situation of significant mal-distribution of the world food supply and lack of coherence in international policies as well as unfavourable environment towards development, including towards rural development, agriculture and food production.

Several bodies and agencies have been responding to the crisis seeking to respond to the immediate manifestations and to address the proximate causes from their perspective. This, in a situation where it is generally agreed that there are multiple causes. The G-77 and China welcomes these initiatives but sees a risk of conflicting responses and unnecessary pressures on the Governments at the centre of the crisis. Coordination and synchronization of action is critical. In this regard, the G-77 and China welcomes the High-level Task Force established by the Secretary-General in response to the request made to him by developing countries on the occasion of the UNCTAD-XII Meeting in Accra, Ghana. Comprised, as it is, of Heads of more than 20 UN and other international agencies the Task Force can make a major contribution to the coordination of policy and approach and to the release of significant resources. It will be important, however, that the Task Force consult with Member States in formulating its proposed plan of action.

The G-77 and China agrees that there are multiple proximate causes of the crisis. The Group is, however, of the view that the crisis is essentially a development challenge which has arisen fundamentally from incoherence and a failure of the international economic and trade policy we have pursued over the last quarter of a century. These policies have, inter alia, systematically (a) discouraged agriculture, in particular food production in developing countries; (b) reorient the tastes of populations in developing countries, including in rural areas, away from domestically produced foods; and (c) provided decided advantage to the import of foods by lowering their costs through allowing subsidies and other support by developed countries while simultaneously increasing the price of domestically produced foods by removing any subsidies or other support including infrastructural and research, development and extension services .

Mr. President,

ECOSOC has a responsibility for coordinating action for dealing with global development challenges; for seeking to promote coordination and coherence at the international level - within and outside the United Nations system and involving governmental, civil society and private sector actors; and for engendering coordination and coherence within the UN system. The ECOSOC also provides for a wide range of views and for issues to be considered away from the overriding influence of any particular group.

Mr. President,

In the above context, the role set for this special meeting "to help in the process of defining a concerted, coordinated and comprehensive global response to the crisis" and the focus on immediate and on long-term actions is appropriate. It might, therefore, be appropriate to give some consideration to the following:

- (1) The role and actions of ECOSOC beyond the Rome meeting being convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in June, 2008. Consideration could be given, for instance, to the staging of a High-level Thematic Debate on a Special Session of the 62nd General Assembly on Food Security as an input into the High-level Meeting at the beginning of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly in September 2008.
- (2) The relationship of the Secretary-General's Task Force to ECOSOC and the General Assembly. For example, does the ECOSOC have the opportunity to discuss the report before it is presented at the Rome meeting?
- (3) Where will the debate on the linkage between the food crisis, and the various other interlocking crises take place?
- (4) In going beyond the crisis, should the ECOSOC be giving consideration to "The human right to food";
- (5) How does the ECOSOC impact the discussions in the Doha Development Round Negotiations which could have significant implications for the production of food and hence food security in developing countries?
- (6) How can ECOSOC help to preserve the policy space of developing countries as it encourages action at national, regional and international levels;
- (7) How does ECOSOC help in creating the enabling international environment necessary for any fundamental resolution to the underlying games of the food crisis?
- (8) Is there a role for publicly generated technology in seeking to address the agriculture and food issue in the longer term? What role can ECOSOC play?
- (9) Is it time to establish an early warning system on food security?

Mr. President,

The G-77 and China sees this as an important initial debate but not as a closing debate on a crisis of life and death in many developing countries.

In one sense, this debate was ignited in CSD-16 and will continue in CSD-17 as these focus on the themes of agriculture, desertification, drought, land, SIDS and Africa. The policy debate in 2009

will provide an idea opportunity to give operational content to any policy proposal.
Mr. President,

Having closed my official statement, let me say for my conscience "This was a crisis waiting for time to happen."

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