



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
COUNSELLOR FEDERICO NAVIA, DELEGATE OF THE ARGENTINE
REPUBLIC, AT THE NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (Bonn, Germany, 21
February 2011)**

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and great personal privilege to deliver this statement on behalf of Group of 77 and China on the occasion of the opening session of this Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD).

First and foremost I would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the city of Bonn for being such a cordial and welcoming venue for this Committee's meetings. Special thanks go for Mr. Luc Gnacadja, the Executive Secretary of the Convention for his efforts to further the objective of combating desertification and land degradation and for the organization and efficient running of these meetings, and we congratulate him upon the extension of his term in office.

Mr Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China takes this opportunity to reassert their full support and commitment to the activities of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) convened here in Bonn, as a means to contribute to achieving the goals of combating and reversing desertification and land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, consistent with the objectives and principles enshrined in the Convention.

Desertification and land degradation affect all the regions of the world and continue to pose a serious threat to sustainable development at national, regional and global levels. Poverty, food insecurity and desertification are intrinsically linked to each other and need to be tackled jointly. The present situation of the drylands in developing countries and its more than one billion inhabitants, who are among the poorest on the planet and are constrained in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those relating to hunger and poverty, and environmental sustainability, constitute a matter of utmost concern to the Group of 77 and China.

In this regard, we firmly call on all Parties to fully support the implementation of the Convention in all its aspects, in particular by promoting the exchange of knowledge on best practices and lessons learned from global and regional cooperation in combating desertification, land degradation and drought. Emphasis should also be given to mobilization and channeling of adequate and predictable financial resources as well as facilitating its direct access, in order to help mitigate the effects of desertification, land degradation and drought and improve the livelihoods of vulnerable people affected by these most urgent matters at national, sub-regional and regional levels.

We also recognize the importance of the Regional Coordination Units as useful tools in the implementation of the Convention in the different affected regions, especially at the regional, subregional and national levels, and we invite the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue their efforts to mobilize financial resources to address and improve the actions of the RCUs.

Mr Chairman,

Acknowledging that desertification, land degradation and drought are challenges of a cross-sectoral nature and of a global dimension for the reason that they affect all regions of the world, we urge all relevant United Nations organizations and agencies and all Parties concerned to cooperate with the Convention Secretariat in supporting an effective and global response to these grave and profound problems with a view to mitigating their effects and their negative impact on the environment and the global economy,

To this end, we reaffirm our commitment to initiatives such as the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"), in which the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) is recognized as one of the tools for poverty eradication.

Mr Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China also stresses its deep concern as to the negative impacts that desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change have on each other, recognizing the potential benefits of complementarities in addressing these challenges through collective effective action at all levels in a mutually supportive manner.

In this respect, while recognizing the interrelationship between climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification and the need to intensify efforts to combat desertification and promote sustainable land management, we stress the need for enhanced cooperation and identification of synergies among the Secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity (referred to as "the Rio Conventions"), while respecting their individual mandates.

In view of the urgent need for investment in sustainable land management in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, we call for the full implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018), and we stress the importance of the development and implementation of scientifically based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing the extent of desertification and land degradation and the efforts under way to promote scientific research and to strengthen the scientific base of the activities on desertification and drought under the Convention.

Mr Chairman,

Within the framework of the Convention the Group of 77 and China advocates the strengthening of the advisory role of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Committee on Science and Technology through their recommendations in order to monitor effectively the decisions of the Conference of the Parties, and calls for the enhancement of the technical capabilities of national coordinating bodies and National Focal Points of the Convention, through the provision of an institutional and coordinated scientific support.

We consider as a priority all efforts carried out with a view to raising awareness and promoting action to improve the protection and sustainable management of the world's drylands, home to a

third of the world's population and which face serious economic and environmental threats.

In this regard, we welcome and see as important steps in that direction, the organization of a high-level meeting on the theme, "Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication", to be held on September 2011, prior to the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and the launching on August 2010 of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020).

We are convinced that these two initiatives are set on the right direction to raise the awareness on desertification, land degradation and drought at the highest level and to reaffirm the fulfillment of all commitments to the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018), ensuring a higher priority for these issues on the international agenda, in particular at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio plus 20).

Mr Chairman,

This session of the CRIC-9 provides us with an opportunity to assess the progress made in implementing the Convention by using for the first time a very focused indicator approach. It is also the first time that the new reporting system agreed upon in Buenos Aires at COP 9, the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS), is implemented. More than 100 reporting entities, the majority of which are developing country Parties, have reported through the PRAIS portal, though further improvement of the system and capacity building at national level are still needed.

Financial viability of this reporting process is to be ensured in order to support participatory workshops and assist developing countries to improve it.

Mr Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China acknowledges the role being played by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in assisting countries in their efforts not only to combat desertification but also to recover degraded land, and having in mind the continuing and deepening of these actions, we urge donors to continue the effective replenishment of the Facility to ensure that it is adequately funded in order to allow a sufficient and adequate allocation of resources to its land degradation focal area.

We also welcome as a step forward the amendment to the GEF Instrument by the recent GEF Assembly to list UNCCD among the Conventions for which GEF is serving as financial mechanism and supporting UNCCD enabling activities. There is a need on the part of the GEF Council, to ensure the viability and the continuity of this financial support.

It is clear that now that the GEF is officially serving as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, the Facility sees its mandate and scope broadened; in particular that addressing desertification and land degradation constitutes another way to achieve global benefits with respect to climate change, protection of biodiversity, poverty eradication as well as to other global challenges and new emerging issues.

In this context, we would like to invite the GEF to address issues raised by Parties during its fourth Assembly, particularly those related to enhancing country ownership, governance, capacity-building, co-financing and the balance between GEF priorities while improving its overall effectiveness and efficiency on project cycle.

Mr Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China also takes note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the assessment of the Global Mechanism of the Convention, as well as the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session requesting the Bureau of the ninth session to undertake and supervise an evaluation of existing and potential reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global Mechanism and their legal and financial implications.

This assessment is an additional element to help us make a decision at the next COP 10 in the Republic of Korea that may allow us to finally overcome the enormous challenges of coordination that over many years we have had and which undermine the effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the Convention in our affected country Parties.

The Group of 77 and China will endeavour to have COP 10 solve the issue so that we can devote our full energy on what really matters: rescuing hundreds of millions of people suffering under the scourges of desertification, land degradation and drought.

Finally, Mr Chairman, the Group of 77 and China wishes to express its full and renewed support to the initiatives and actions being carried out for the implementation of the Convention, and hopes that this Committee will pay adequate attention to the theme of desertification and related issues and setting priorities in this regard by the inclusion of the elements in this statement in their recommendations and conclusions.

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.