



**STATEMENT BY MS. JANIL GREENAWAY, MINISTER COUNSELLOR,
DELEGATION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP
OF 77 AND CHINA, IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEM 50:
THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (New York, 28
October 2008)**

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 50: Implementation of the outcome of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Group thanks the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/63/291, as well as for that contained in E/2008/64 and for the detailed presentation by the Executive Director.

Madam Chair,

2. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme plays a unique and key role in the overall pursuit of Sustainable Development. Recent trends in human settlements, including increasing urbanization and growing mega-cities, increase the need to focus on implementing the Habitat agenda, and in particular MDG Goal 7 and the targets to halve by 2015 the proportion of people living without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation; and to achieve by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of 20 million slum dwellers.

3. The growing trend of rapid urbanization means that a significant portion of the challenge to achieving sustainable development is the challenge of managing cities and urban sprawl in a sustainable manner. We are therefore encouraged by the efforts of the UN Human Settlements Programme to deepen the international community's understanding of the impact of rapid urbanization.

4. The secretary-general's report indicates that the current energy and food crises are likely to exacerbate an already growing trend of urban inequality and lead to further marginalization of the urban poor. Like income inequality anywhere, growing urban economic inequality will significantly compound socio-economic challenges already faced by the millions of poor people living in urban areas. The Group urges the UN-Habitat to continue to pay attention to this issue with the aim of helping to reverse this trend.

5. Giving the proportion of people living in urban areas, and the fact that this number will steadily increase, the role of cities in addressing the climate change crisis is another important factor. In this regard we note that, according to UN-Habitat analysis, consumption patterns and lifestyles with regard to land-use and urban sprawl play a critical role. The promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production, according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and taking into account the economic and social needs of developing countries, is critical to the implementation of the UN-Habitat agenda, and should be given greater priority. Special focus should be placed on protecting the urban poor so that they are not further marginalized by the current rising food and energy prices.

Madam Chair,

6. The fulfilment of both the internationally-agreed goals on the provision of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development, including the target on slum eradication, requires

a holistic and integrated approach through nationally-owned and led strategies focusing on, inter alia, full and productive employment and decent work for all; access to safe water and sanitation; poverty eradication; the provision of modern, affordable energy services; waste collection and disposal.

7. The UN-HABITAT agenda is a significant component of the broader development agenda of internationally-agreed development goals including the MDGs. The Group emphasizes the importance of meeting the target on water and sanitation. During this year's review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16), specifically on the review of the water and sanitation targets, the Group noted that the priority given to water and sanitation by developing countries in their national development plans and poverty reduction strategies has not been adequately echoed and supported at the international level. There is scope for UN-Habitat to play a greater role in this regard, within its specific mandate and through the implementation of its medium-term strategic plan.

Madam Chair,

8. We welcome the continued good performance of UN-HABITAT in regards to its fundraising activities, and on securing a steady increase in resources over the past six to seven years. We remain concerned, however, at the imbalance in the levels of core and non-core funding. We have consistently argued for greater predictability and reliability of funding for operational activities of the UN in general, and that argument should be repeated here. The continued unpredictability of funding of the Programme that is attributed to the imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions, as well as dependency on a small number of donors, lessens the ability of the Programme to function as Member States require, and hampers the effective and efficient implementation of the Programme according to the national priorities of developing countries.

9. We continue to express our support for the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013 and the Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations in support of pro-poor housing and urban development, as they are important developments to help take UN-HABITAT's agenda forward. We hope that the Plan will give renewed impetus to coordinated implementation of HABITAT's agenda, and to achieving targets 10 and 11 of MDG-7.

Madam Chair,

10. There remains a continuing need to bolster progress in the achievement of shelter for all and sustainable human settlements through building adequate capacity at regional and national levels. This can be done partly through sharing of experiences, common regional policy formulation and implementation within the context of the Habitat Agenda and MDGs.

11. We continue to express our support for the series of ministerial meetings held at the regional level on housing and urban development. These meetings should continue to focus on integrating the Habitat Agenda and related internationally agreed development goals into national plans and strategies.

12. In conclusion we urge the international community to give due attention and support to achieving the goals of the HABITAT agenda, including through financial support on a predictable basis, given its focuses on critical aspects of human livelihoods, basic needs and, poverty eradication. Further, the UN-HABITAT and all other development partners should continue to play a major role in supporting the efforts of developing countries in the provision of shelter for all and the achievement of sustainable human settlements.

Thank you Madam Chair.

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