

**STATEMENT BY MS. ALISON DRAYTON, HEAD OF DELEGATION OF GUYANA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)**

**Recife, Brazil  
November 16, 1999**

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Mr. President  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates,

Like its sister city - Rio de Janeiro, Recife has become symbolically identified with the protection of the global environment. Only last year this bustling coastal community played host to the First Africa-Latin America Forum on Desertification. Today, it again provides a forum for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification to review the challenges faced and to plan our strategy for the continuing fight against this rampant threat to our sustainable development. I would therefore wish, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to acknowledge with appreciation the steadfast commitment of the Government of Brazil to issues related to the environment. We would also like to thank the municipal authorities and citizens of Recife for the warm hospitality accorded us.

Mutto obridaga!

The Group of 77 and China, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, welcomes the opportunity presented by this Conference of the Parties for a timely assessment of both our achievements and our shortcomings. Our appreciation is clearly due to the Secretariat of the Convention for the dynamic role it continues to play in sensitizing the international community to the threat of desertification and in mobilizing support to arrest it. From the reports which it has submitted to us, it is clear that appreciable advances have been made in our joint campaign, testifying to the efforts made both by developing and developed countries.

It is, however, very clear that much of the activities which have taken place have done so in the context of South-South cooperation. The Third Africa-Asia Forum on the implementation of the Convention will take place early next year; the Second Forum between Africa and Latin-America and Caribbean is also scheduled for February next year. These meetings have set up frameworks for cooperation between the three continents which constitute an efficient and cost effective plan to combat desertification and we hope that they will be supported by all of the Parties to the Convention.

The need to improve the means of implementation, however, continues to preoccupy our Group. Although there is no separate GEF window for this Convention, the Group is nevertheless pleased by the way the Facility is widening its scope of intervention to include, among others, activities and projects aimed at combating land degradation. We encourage the GEF to further widen the scope of its activities to cover other aspects of the Convention aimed at improving the overall environment of this planet.

Mr. President,

The implementation of the Convention was envisaged under a partnership scheme. Partnerships, when they work successfully, offer great advantages in an increasingly interdependent world. However, as any gardener can testify, hybrids require time, care and, above all, constant monitoring in order to reach their full potential. In 1997, in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms, the

Convention established a Global Mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channeling of financial resources. This institution is intended to be an important pillar for the implementation of the Convention and we must all work towards its continuing evolution. The Group places great importance on the successful functioning of the Mechanism, especially in the area of partnership-building and mobilizing and channeling financial resources at country, regional and sub-regional level. The Group of 77 and China encourages the Global Mechanism to fulfill the mandate for which it has been established by adopting a more proactive role in identifying possible partners and taking all possible steps to become a successful broker of such arrangements. We underline that the Global Mechanism should play a key role in supporting all enabling activities under the Convention.

Mr. President,

The new document on the medium-term strategy has been elaborated on the basis of written contributions and comments of the Parties. The Group of 77 and China made its contribution and is grateful to those partners who did likewise. It is our hope that we will reach agreement on the document during this session so that the Secretariat of the Convention has a clear tool for guidance to discharge its activities in conformity with its mandate.

At COP-2 the Secretariat was requested to submit to the current session a proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. The Group believes that the figures proposed reflect a trend to strengthen the Secretariat's ability to successfully fulfill its mandate in the facilitation of the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we would like to underline the importance of the Regional Coordination Units in Africa, Asia and Latin America and Caribbean and the necessity to integrate their activities in the programme budget, taking into consideration the crucial and catalytic role they shall play at the regional level.

Mr. President,

During the present session, we will review activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions, international organizations, institutions and agencies. Developing countries would like to commend the results achieved in this regard and we encourage the Secretariat of the Convention to continue to further such relationships.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China believes that the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification will greatly depend on the ability of the Committee on Science and Technology to provide the Conference of the Parties with relevant information and advice consistent with its mandate. The Group appreciates the activities carried out by the Committee. We believe that the Committee would be strengthened by the provision of greater support from various actors, in particular the Secretariat of the Convention. In this respect, there will be a need for the members of the Committee to meet more frequently between the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and to broaden its cope to include more academic, scientific and research institutions in its work. The Group emphasizes the importance of the Secretariat's activities in facilitating the organization of meetings and seminars and the assistance it proffers to Governments in the areas of project formulation, assessment and the evaluation of action programmes at national, subregional and regional levels.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to reiterate the Group's appreciation to the Government of Brazil and to the Secretariat of the Convention for the arrangements they have made for this session. We came to Recife committed to achieve positive results. We are fully confident that the results of this meeting will realize that intention.

I thank you.