



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. MR. MARTHINUS VAN SCHALKWYK, MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 14TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (New York, 10 May 2006)

Chairperson,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, may I congratulate you on your election as Chair of the 14th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

This is the first year of the second implementation cycle, which focuses on the four themes namely Energy for Sustainable Development; Industrial Development; Air Pollution/Atmosphere; and Climate Change as identified in the Multi Year Programme of Work. It is our intention to work for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals on sustainable development that are enshrined in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Our discussions should address the crosscutting issues that were identified during CSD-11. In this regard, we wish to stress the particular conditions prevailing in Africa and in the SIDS, the LDCs and LLDCs who despite their best efforts, are still unable to meet the goals set in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The African Union has adopted the NEPAD programme which also requires support of the international community.

Chairperson,

As we agreed in Johannesburg "Eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries." It is on this premise that we approach the Commission on Sustainable Development, in order to find sustainable solutions to the challenges we face and to give proper impetus to all our hard fought agreements. We urge for concerted and immediate action.

The Commission on Sustainable Development should continue to serve as a forum for consideration of issues related to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and more importantly the means of their implementation. We must strengthen the Commission and enhance its mandate to review progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and foster coherence of implementation, initiatives and partnerships. Therefore it is important to retain the integrity of this body. The Commission on Sustainable Development is of high importance within the functional commissions of the United Nations, considering that it treats the three pillars of sustainable development together.

From Rio to Johannesburg, and in New York last year at the High-Level Summit, we declared our collective political will to address issues on the three pillars of sustainable development. Yet, we have not seen this will being converted to action. The Group of 77 and China would like to convey its disappointment on this matter and requests that our discussion, underpinned as it should by the Rio Principles especially Principle 4 and 7, must be informed by the sincere quest to find ways of achieving sustainable development.

The Group of 77 and China recognizes that achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals is vital for developing countries, and an absolute necessity to provide better standards of living, restore human dignity, and free our people from the scourge of hunger want and fear. However, it is not entirely within the capacity of developing countries to bring this to pass without an enabling international environment with policies and practices targeted to implement these commitments. We welcome international initiatives on enhancing the efficiency of aid, debt cancellation and call upon our development partners to abide by their commitments, including those made in Monterey, to provide stable, predictable and adequate financial resources.

Chairperson,

The Group of 77 and China cannot over-emphasize the need for a comprehensive and robust international development agenda that promotes the achievement of national development strategies. In the past, our demonstrable political will has proven insufficient to overcome the challenges we face. These challenges transcend the issues of commitment and will, but relate more closely to our lack of capacity, inadequate resources including financial, human and technical, unfair trade policies, particularly on agricultural subsidies, and other economic

policies, which impede our development efforts.

We must seek ways to enhance coordination and strengthen scientific knowledge and assessment and cooperation which must aim to add value over and above results that have been achieved through existing institutions and structures, reduce costs to developing countries, build capacities and foster the transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries. The Group of 77 and China believes that the urgent implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer is one of the essential elements towards achieving this.

Chairperson,

The international community faces the daunting task of achieving sustainable development by addressing the adverse impacts of climate change, enhancing energy efficiency, access to energy and transfer of cleaner energy technologies, including renewables and advanced fossil fuel technologies, achieving industrial development, and the abatement of air pollution and atmospheric problems to improve the quality of life for all, particularly the poorest.

The replenishment of the Global Environment Facility remains urgent. The GEF is an important instrument that has made significant contributions to the financing of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). However, the new Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) will make the GEF financing more illusive and this will have adverse effects on our abilities to meet our targets under the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan. We hope that the 3rd GEF Assembly, to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in August 2006, will address the concerns of the developing world.

The innovation of partnerships agreed to in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, requires a more coherent overview on the corporate, environmental and social responsibility and accountability, which would allow developing countries to benefit from lessons learnt and best practices in different parts of the world. Thus far partnerships have not shown any real benefit to the developing world.

The Group hopes that during the discussions, adequate attention will be paid to our concerns in the Chair's Summary, to include the constraints and obstacles that the international community in general and developing countries in particular are facing in the implementation of the outcomes of major international conferences concerning the agenda items under consideration in CSD-14.

I thank you.