



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY AMBASSADOR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE 12TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (New York, 19 April 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

We came together in Johannesburg two years ago to agree on a set of concrete actions that need to be taken to enhance the implementation of Agenda 21 adopted at Rio. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation contains action-oriented goals and targets aimed at enhancing the achievement of sustainable development. Among others, the WSSD identified actions needed to fulfill the goals of halving, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who do not have access to safe drinking water, and to sanitation. Recognizing the immense challenges in the provision of shelter the Summit reaffirmed the goal of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020.

This 12th session of the CSD provides us with the first opportunity to review the progress that we have made in the implementation in areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. In preparation for policy discussions during CSD13 this is an occasion to look at progress, identify challenges, constraints and obstacles that have been encountered in implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

The review of implementation, as shown in the reports of the Secretary-General, shows that developing countries have taken steps to improve the provision of services and infrastructure for water, sanitation and human settlements. As a result of these efforts progress was made by developing countries during the past decade to improve access to safe drinking water, sanitation and the provision of shelter. There have also been improvements in policy formulation in these areas by developing countries. At the same time it is also clear that the challenges facing developing countries are still immense. Their efforts are still far below what is needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals and the goals set in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The persistence of poverty continues to hinder the efforts of developing countries towards sustainable development.

The review shows that two years after the Johannesburg Summit, developing countries are still facing serious challenges and difficulties in meeting the commitments, targets and goals contained in JPOI due to severe lack of financial resources, appropriate technology and required capacity. We hope to discuss ways of making the international environment more responsive to the needs of developing countries in these three areas. Our discussions during this session should highlight not only the challenges and constraints but also the possible approaches needed to improve the provision of the means of implementation. The reports of the Secretary-General reflect the huge gap that still exists and the failure of the international community to fulfill its commitments in the area of means of implementation. The review also shows the central role that is played by governments in the implementation especially in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements.

For developing countries to move ahead the international community will need to fulfill its commitments to increase support in the areas of finance, technology transfer and capacity building. This is a necessary and important complement to the efforts undertaken by developing countries themselves. This is also fundamental if developing countries are to succeed in meeting the targets set in the Millennium Declaration and the JPOI.

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to highlight other challenges facing developing countries and which need to be taken into account in the context of preparations for policy discussions.

The provision of safe drinking water is a critical element of poverty eradication. In improving the provision of safe drinking water, however, developing countries have limited financial and technological capacity to respond to the growing demand for water for agriculture, industrial and potable water. There are still high levels of degradation and contamination of their limited water resources by various sources of pollution, effluents, industrial and residential sewages and wastes. Water losses due to leakages are a problem. Developing countries also have to deal with poor water quality in both urban and rural areas due to its contamination by pollutants as well as insufficient water purification facilities and infrastructure. Rapid urbanization has led to increased demands for water, often beyond the

ability of countries to provide them. Developing countries need the support of the international community to improve the infrastructure for the provision of water, including for water supply networks in the cities and their repair. Access by people living in rural and remote areas in the developing countries to safe drinking water continues to be a major problem due to the huge investment and capacity needed. Natural disasters also have devastating impacts on the ability of developing countries to provide water. Technology transfer and provision of financial resources are crucial for sustainable waste management. In this context, we welcome the decision taken by UNEP in its recent meeting of the Governing Council on waste management, and in particular its decision to explore innovative ways of mobilizing financial resources to support the efforts of developing countries in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

At the WSSD the international community agreed for the first time to the target of halving, by the year 2015, the proportion of people without access to sanitation. The report of the Secretary General shows that two billion more people will need to gain access to sanitation between now and 2015 if the international target is to be met. The majority of these people live in developing countries. The international community should therefore support developing countries to improve investment in sanitation. In this regard, the transfer of technology and its development will also be critical. As a result of inadequate investment developing countries' efforts in this area are also limited by the lack of infrastructure for the environmentally sound disposal or recycling of wastewater and sewage. The inability of developing countries to improve the provision of sanitation has huge economic costs for developing countries as it affects other sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China remain committed to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium. The rising urbanization level of is one of the major challenges facing developing countries in this area. The report of the Secretary-General shows that slum populations make up to 43% of the urban population in developing countries. In the coming years this number is projected to rise even further. The report further shows that in the coming decades most of the global population growth will occur in the cities of developing countries. Therefore, without proper preparations this will lead to the development of more slum settlements. The high rates of urbanization put a strain on the infrastructures of cities in developing countries. It is also related to the rising levels of poverty in urban areas. The international community should therefore increase its support to developing countries in this area. Inadequate capacities, lack of appropriate technology, combating poverty as well as the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases are among the daunting challenges that affect developing countries with regard to the provision of shelter and improvement of the conditions in slum settlements. Support is also needed to improve the situation in rural areas as urbanization is also caused by the continued movement of people from rural to urban areas.

Mr. Chairman,

We also wish to highlight that our discussions should address the crosscutting issues that were identified during CSD11. In this regard, we wish to stress the particular conditions prevailing in Africa and in the SIDS. Water scarcity and natural disasters remain perennial problems for the achievement of sustainable development in Africa. The reports of the Secretary-General show that African countries still lag behind in implementation in these three areas. Despite their best efforts, it is clear that they still require more support from the international community to meet the goals set in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The international community should also supports African countries in the implementation of the NEPAD initiative as well as other regional initiatives.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation contains a set of intergovernmental commitments. Partnerships were seen as complimentary but not a substitute for the commitments and responsibilities of governments. The report of the Secretary-General on partnerships shows that out of 266 registered partnerships, only 172 responded to the request of the Secretariat to provide reports on their status of progress. According to the report the majority of active partnerships are still in an organizational phase. Furthermore those on which there has been progress were concluded before Johannesburg. We also note from the report that 72 per cent of the partnerships have funding from Governments, while 18 per cent are receiving funding from intergovernmental organizations. Only a very small number of partnerships are funded by the private sector. Therefore this shows, and contrary to our expectations that partnership initiatives would help mobilize additional resources and strengths from other stakeholders, they are increasingly relying on the governmental resources. We are concerned that this trend is not consistent with the understanding of the international community of the partnership initiatives. Moreover, this may affect the fulfillment of

the developed countries commitment vis a vis the developing countries in the provision of financial resources. We believe that in future the reports should also illustrate the exact theme and parties involved in the partnership initiatives, including the UN agencies and programs. The report also shows that sectoral and geographical balance is still to be achieved with regard to the partnerships. Areas such as biotechnology and desertification are still under-represented.

Mr. Chairman,

The WSSD was a summit focused on implementation. Through the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation the international community adopted a unique intergovernmental framework to advance the implementation of Agenda 21. Furthermore, the eleventh session of the Commission deliberated and agreed on a multi-year work programme for the coming years. The G-77 and China are fully committed to this work programme. We therefore believe that the work of the CSD should continue to follow the approach of the JPOI and adhere to the decisions taken at CSD11. Therefore, our discussions of constraints, challenges, possible approaches in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements should be in the same framework. We highlight this fully cognizant of importance of CSD12 as a beginning of the first substantive cycle after Johannesburg. Evidently, international economic growth and the provision of increased levels of ODA to developing countries remain as the fundamental elements that will help them to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, we also note that some stakeholders and contributions to this session already address issues relevant to the policy session. We have no doubt that such contributions will find their place for discussion during the policy year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.