



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BYRON BLAKE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE 13TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (New York, 2 March 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

The G-77 and China welcomes the opportunity to make a brief statement in this interactive session on human settlements. The objective is to seek solutions to the constraints which have been identified in CSDXII and other reports including the Secretary-General's report.

The G-77 and China remains committed to the targets for human settlements including slum upgrading. Providing sustainable human settlements is both complex and costly. Complex because it involves integrated planning, addressing both urban and rural situations; and costly because it requires simultaneous attention to housing, water, sanitation and other basic infrastructure as outlined in paragraph 76 of the Secretary-General's report. In addressing the Millennium Development Goals, the provision is for those sections of the population with least income.

There is no single solution which will work for all Developing Countries. Each country needs to proceed based on national realities. There are however examples of good, innovative solutions, many in Developing Countries, which can be adapted or provide other lessons. Credible and systematic information on national experiences and the financial resources to facilitate the sharing and transfer of the technology would be very useful. UN-HABITAT or some other UN body might be tasked to facilitate cooperation and the transfer of information and technology, especially among Developing Countries.

The capacity for integrated planning has to be strengthened in most Developing Countries. This is both in terms of process - to organise and engage the relevant stakeholders in accordance with national policies and in terms of the technical issues involved. The second aspect can be facilitated by assistance in training and appropriate technical assistance.

The most critical constraint is the issue of financing. Many Developing Countries have experimented with a variety of approaches to deal with settlements mainly at the higher end. Where the potential settlers have land or where Government own land the transfer of titles can be an important instrument to stimulate private action. At the critical lower level this option is often not available. Governments have to assume a much more direct role. In many Developing Countries the capacity of the Government is constrained by the low level of revenues and by claims such as debt servicing. This calls for international partnerships which could involve any or all of the following:

- Increased ODA. In addition to bilateral arrangements consideration could be given to an international slum upgrading or settlements facility;
- Debt reduction for investment in slum upgrading and the provision of settlements;
- Soft loans which can be accessed by Governments for on-lending with appropriate subsidy elements.

The G-77 and China is convinced that the most fundamental and sustainable solution to the human settlements dilemma is the reduction of poverty through the expansion of employment, and the provision of access to markets for the goods and services of rural and urban semi-skilled and unskilled workers. This goes to the issue not just of conducive macro economic policies at the national level, but to facilitative policies at the international level.

I thank you.