



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR G.J MTSALI ON THE HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (Geneva, 14 July 2006)**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, allow me from the outset to thank Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, Vice-Chair, and the other members of the bureau for preparing the Humanitarian Affairs Segment programme of this year's substantive session of ECOSOC.

The Group of 77 and China would also like to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary General and Humanitarian Relief Coordinator, for his informative introduction of the Secretary-General's Reports.

Mr. President,

The theme of the Humanitarian Segment aptly entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance: implementing improved humanitarian response at all levels, including strengthening capacity, with particular attention to recent humanitarian emergencies including severe natural disasters" is particularly appropriate. Even more so, as the past year has been characterized by an increase in natural disasters of exceptional magnitude and scope, and worrying trends in other humanitarian emergencies. We, therefore, take note of the report and recommendations of the Secretary-General on "strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", which provides a useful framework for our deliberations.

Mr. President,

The problem posed by natural disasters is of crucial importance to developing countries, due mainly to the long-lasting consequences on affected populations and the adverse impact on the environment, as well as on social and economic development of affected countries. It is, therefore, important to examine the measures that need to be taken to improve the response capacity of affected nations and the assistance and cooperation that can be provided by the international community in this regard.

The Group of 77 and China wishes to reiterate its commitment and support for the guidelines contained in the annex to resolution 46/182 of 16 December 1991 as the framework for the provision of UN humanitarian assistance. Those principles, including neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence, should remain the basis of all responses to humanitarian emergencies and guide the efficiency and coordination of humanitarian assistance by the UN and other relevant organizations.

In this regard, we also wish to reinforce the primary role of the concerned State in the organization, coordination and delivery of such humanitarian assistance. It is important that relevant organizations of the UN system continue to engage with the relevant authorities at the regional and national levels to build strong capacities at all levels, with a view to improving the overall adequacy of deployment of resources.

Mr. President,

The Group recognizes the essential role that civil society plays in humanitarian response. Its active involvement has been proven fundamental in recent natural disasters, especially in situations where governments were unable to reach people in need. It is important to create an enabling environment for the effective participation of NGOs, community-based organizations and other actors of civil society in the planning and coordination efforts of preparedness and efficient response to humanitarian emergencies.

There is an urgent need, therefore, to enhance existing humanitarian capacities, knowledge and institutions including by promoting access to and transfer of technology to developing countries affected by natural disasters. The Group of 77 and China also wishes to highlight the importance of strengthening the health sector humanitarian response capacity in life-saving activities and in order to minimize the impact of natural disasters. Cooperation by the relevant entities of the UN and all Member States in the aftermath of natural disasters is pivotal in preventing further disasters.

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General's report notes that key requirements to improving humanitarian assistance are "the development of a stronger standing response capacity, more predictable and responsible leadership, greater effectiveness in aid delivery and improved coordination." As a result, the "cluster leadership approach" has been developed and several pilot projects using the cluster approach have been launched, whereby humanitarian "clusters" work together to collectively address identified gaps in response.

As this approach is a relatively new development in the field of humanitarian assistance, the Group of 77 and China believes that it is Member States that should assess and determine whether this approach does indeed enhance the coordination and effectiveness of response. In this regard, the UN should provide more information to Member States on the lessons learned and best practices in the implementation of these pilot projects using the cluster approach and by consulting with affected countries and relevant UN humanitarian entities. The Group is, therefore, pleased that this information would be included in the next report of the Secretary-General.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China believes that more attention should be placed on strengthening financial mechanisms for humanitarian assistance and to establish sustainable funding for all and in particular under-funded emergencies and under-resourced sectors, in order to achieve faster and more efficient humanitarian response.

The Group furthermore welcomes the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund as set out in General Assembly resolution 60/124 and looks forward to receiving the report to be submitted to the General Assembly on the use of the Fund with a view to maximizing its impact and improving its functioning.

I thank you Mr. President