

**Closing Statement by Mohammad Reza Salamat (Islamic Republic of Iran), on behalf of the Group of 77, COP-5/UNCCD  
Geneva, 13 October 2001**

---

Mr. President,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to make this closing statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China towards the end of COP-5 of UNCCD. We all recognize that this Conference was a very pivotal event, marking a turning point in the life of the UNCCD. The level of participation at the High-Level Segment was indeed heartening. We also welcome the NGO dialogue meeting during the COP-5. The decisions we have taken are of paramount importance for the future of this multilateral process.

The Group of 77 and China showed a tremendous flexibility by accommodating the concerns raised by the North on the Group's proposals with regard to the Programme and Budget, CRIC, GEF, WSSD and Synergies. Nevertheless, we note with appreciation the agreements reached on draft decisions on these issues.

The establishment of the CRIC, a long-awaited decision, is a significant step towards the objective of reviewing the implementation of the Convention. However, much remains to be done to that end. The actual commencement of the work of the CRIC could ensure an effective review of the implementation of the provisions of the Convention

The level of resources contained in the decision on the Programme and Budget is far from satisfactory, and fall short of our expectations. Nevertheless, the Group of 77 and China, recognizing the time constraints we were encountering, and in the spirit of compromise, accepted the budgetary figures so as to enable the UNCCD process to continue to function.

We believe that the work of the CST is of fundamental importance in achieving the objectives of the Convention. Therefore, the provision of all necessary support for strengthening its functioning and capacity is pivotal. We welcome the decision taken at this COP on the establishment of the Panel of Experts with 25 members.

The Group of 77 and China supported the draft decision on GEF. We look forward to an expeditious completion of the steps necessary to be taken by the GEF Council for designating "Land Degradation" (especially desertification and deforestation) as a new focal area of the GEF. We are also of the firm belief that the Third Replenishment of the GEF should take into full account the need for new and additional resources required in assisting to achieve the objectives of the UNCCD, in light of the possible designation of land degradation by GEF as a new focal area.

I would like to express our warmest felicitations to you, Mr. President, for your commendable stewardship and excellent leadership in guiding us towards successful results at this meeting. I should also like to express our deepest gratitude to Mr. Jabbari, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, for his dedication, patience, wisdom and diplomatic skills in bringing us all to a consensus on all outstanding issues.

Allow me, Mr. President, to seize the opportunity to sincerely thank all my brothers and sisters in the G-77 for their excellent cooperation and for the sense of solidarity and unity with which they worked together throughout this meeting. My special gratitude goes to Ambassador Biao, our coordinator, for his excellent work in the course of discussions. I also seize this opportunity to congratulate him for his well-deserved election as the first Chairman of the CRIC. We wish him every success in his new responsibility.

I would also like to express our appreciation to our negotiating partners from the North for their openness, understanding and constructive approach. I hardly need to reiterate that the achievements we have accomplished here in Geneva are not but a result of the spirit of dialogue, cooperation and understanding that prevailed in the course of our deliberations.

Special words of thanks are due also to Ambassador Diallo, Executive-Secretary, for his hard work and commitment and to his capable staff in the Secretariat for their sterling job in the production of documents for this meeting and for the support they provided to all of us throughout our discussions.

We also wish to congratulate Mr. Kofi Annan and the UN for having received the Noble Peace Prize.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I trust that the achievements we accomplished here at COP-5 have opened a new chapter in the book of the international cooperation in combating desertification. Let us continue to work together towards that shared goal.

Thank you, Mr. President.