

STATEMENT BY

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On behalf of

THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA

TO

**THE HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY OF
THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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{Please check against delivery}

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my colleague Ministers in the Group of 77 and China, I thank you for inviting us to be a part of these deliberations. You may be assured of our active participation during the next two days.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me share with you and my other ministerial colleagues some of our thoughts regarding these discussions on the themes of water, sanitation and human settlements. I am certain that you have been left in no doubt as to our position on the issues and would have had the benefit of our specific detailed recommendations as to how we propose to meet the targets set by the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation. Allow me therefore to elaborate on a few of these general principles:

First, on the role of government.

Mr. Chairman,

Governments represent the people. Those who choose us, do so on the basis that Governments have the primary responsibility for facilitating its citizens' access to affordable, appropriate and sustainable water, sanitation and housing, particularly for the most vulnerable in society. When these are not forthcoming, or are seen to be sub-standard, it is the Government which is held responsible; defamed; sued; even occasionally thrown out of power.

It was the Governments that committed themselves to the Millennium Development Goals and who agreed on the Political Declaration and Programme of Implementation at Johannesburg.

It is the reason that I and my colleague Ministers are here today.

Against this background, we as Governments recognise that we cannot simply delegate our responsibility in a wholesale manner, to others.

Having said this, Mr. Chairman, the G-77 and China also recognise that, if we are to be successful in meeting our goals and targets in the three thematic areas, then we cannot act alone. It is quite obvious that we must all explore public-private as well as public-public partnerships, in order to leverage the kind of resources - human and financial - to achieve these goals and targets.

Mr. Chairman,

While we know that water, sanitation and human settlements are linked to issues to be covered in subsequent cycles; today I will only focus on water, sanitation and human settlements and the main obstacle to achieving progress in these areas: **lack of financial resources.**

On that point, Mr. Chairman,

We continue to hear calls for an 'enabling domestic environment', particularly for successful interventions in the water and sanitation sectors. The G77 and China agrees with calls for increased international support for the creation of this enabling environment, as requested and indicated by the affected countries. The G77 and China also agrees with recommendations for increased and better integrated planning incorporating the three sectors; the involvement of all relevant stakeholders; and tapping into local and indigenous knowledge including the re-capturing of 'lost knowledge'. These were amongst the host of recommendations that were submitted to this Commission during this Session.

Mr. Chairman, Colleague-Ministers, I have some bad [news](#):

Many developing countries have already put in place all or most of these measures to some degree. Particularly in the areas of water and sanitation, many of us in the 'South' have laid the necessary foundations, managed to create and sustain - however tenuously - some kind of 'enabling domestic environment'. Despite this, we are still waiting for 'success'; still lagging behind in delivering on our commitments to our respective populations; and many of us in danger of not meeting the global targets in these three areas. We are literally unable to move forward in any meaningful way, because we simply do not have and cannot leverage the kind of financial resources necessary to do so.

Mr. Chairman, Colleague-Ministers, Experts,

I know that you will agree with me that, for the most part, we require a mixed set of interventions in the three thematic areas to achieve any kind of success.

The G77 and China has highlighted, in our submissions to the Commission, the need for the small, community-based, innovative approach to the provision of these services. Often, this is the only way to achieve basic access as well as wider coverage in developing countries.

Unfortunately, this approach alone will not bring about sustainable access to these services across the national spectrum. For the developing countries to meet the goals and targets of the MDGs and the JPOI, then the international community will have to face up to the fact that large infrastructure and management projects, and their attendant programmes and policies, will have to be financed, implemented and sustained; that this will require massive capital injections, which often exceed any budgetary allocation that may be made by developing country governments. In addition, investments in these three areas must not result in high costs and user fees, as this would defeat the purpose of the projects. This is a serious challenge faced by many developing countries, especially when we try to enter into partnerships with domestic or international private sector or multilateral interests.

Mr. Chairman,

We; the international community; should work together to overcome the single-most difficult obstacle of lack of financial resources.

For our part, the Group of 77 and China has suggested some recommendations. Debt cancellation, debt swaps; increased ODA in keeping with commitments and increased market access for developing countries together with reform of the international trading regime are just a few of our suggestions.

We would also ask that international financial institutions place greater emphasis on lending for infrastructure projects; to redress the decline in funding for this area that has been occurring in recent years; but that there be significant reduction in the interest rates applied to such loans, to enable recipient countries to avoid adding to their existing debt burdens and to manage repayments, without prejudice to competing budgetary demands.

I would be very interested to hear from my fellow Ministers, particularly those representing the developed donor countries represented here today, about which of these recommendations they would be prepared to utilise to clear the resource hurdle of which I have spoken.

For those of my colleagues who have already increased their ODA toward these efforts, I would only ask that you encourage your counterparts in other developed countries to join this progressive trend.

We remain eager to hear your response.

Mr. Chairman,

The developing world is home to the world's most populous countries and host to its most populous cities. The `South' represents the world's fastest-growing urbanisation trend, which means that the majority of the world's population will eventually be living in urban centres in the developing world. These statistics call for urgent response to the issue of human settlements, given the institutional and financial deficiencies that plague developing countries, including our ability to cope with these kinds of pressures.

In most countries, the challenge of human settlements is generated by pressures wrought by population movements, mainly rural-urban drifts, as well as the influx of refugees and economic migrants, who are themselves spurred by poverty, lack of employment opportunities, lack of access to education and adequate health care services as well as factors such as war and political instability.

The Group of 77 and China therefore joins in the call for integrated planning and management of human settlements, incorporating water supply and sanitation, as well as land use, housing, waste management, employment, income-generation, education, health care and transportation considerations, among others. We also support the recommendations, (as reflected in your Report, Mr. Chairman), for innovative approaches to the successful provision of low-cost housing, including utilisation of community-based institutions. Similarly, we have called for the integration of slum upgrading and slum prevention into national development planning. With a view to sharing experiences, I would also be interested in hearing, from my colleagues, during our upcoming discussions, of their

experience and lessons learnt with addressing the social causes of cyclical slum-creation, particularly social apathy and displacement in large housing development and 'dormitory communities'.

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of human settlements, there is also a need for the international community to assist developing countries. The G77 and China urges international donors and institutions to support and provide innovative forms of financing for low-income housing and community improvements. We also call upon multilateral and regional development banks to increase the percentage of their allocations to the housing sector.

The G77 and China also calls for increased support to UN-HABITAT, in particular, its Slum Upgrading Facility. We urge increased support to refugee host countries, particularly for the development and maintenance of housing, water and sanitation infrastructure, as well as the development and rehabilitation of eco-systems and other habitat that incur damage in the process of receiving and settling refugees. There should be increased support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to enhance its capacity to assist refugee host countries, as appropriate, in a realistic and consistent manner.

Mr. Chairman, Colleagues,

I close by stating categorically, that the G77 and China reaffirms its commitment to pursuing sustainable development. As difficult and complex as this may seem, we view sustainable development as the only, logical course for all countries. When we conceive of the natural environment, we do not envision the world outside and apart from ourselves, but the world which includes all human beings. It is this vision which makes us anxious to put in place proper infrastructure and management in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. We have experienced and are experiencing the negative results of human pressures coupled with inadequacies in these three systems; including the very health, well-being and survival of our own species.

I thank you.