

EGYPT



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نيويورك

Statement
of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Delivered by

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On the occasion of

The General Debate
of the High- Level Segment
of the Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council

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Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council, which coincides with the midterm review of the MDGs. I would also like to confirm our trust in your ability in support of the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustainable development and in contributing to achieving the MDGs by 2015. I would also like to support the statement made by the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G-77 and China.

Mr. President,

Egypt attaches importance to strengthening the Economic and Social Council in order to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions, economic, social and environmental protection as fundamental and complementary pillars of sustainable development. In this context, we would like to refer to the importance of the issues addressed in this current session, which focus on sustainable development, as they are all interlinked and cross cutting, and affect our efforts to achieve the MDGs.

Reaching these goals require that the international community as a whole, swiftly work towards implementing the commitments of Agenda 21, the Program of Implementation of Agenda 21, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and other internationally agreed commitments and goals according to the Rio principles, particularly the principal of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Mr. President,

In the 61st Session of the General Assembly we are able to adopt resolution 61/16 on strengthening the Economic and Social Council, and we welcome in this regard the convening of the second meeting of the Annual Ministerial Review, and the first formal meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum during the High-level Segment of the current Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council. We affirm the need to invigorate these new mechanisms, and for them to evolve into serious instruments to monitor the honest implementation of the agreements and outcomes of relevant international summits and conferences with a view to moving in tangible strides towards the agreed upon goal in the 2005 World Summit of strengthening the role and performance of the Economic and Social Council.

In this connection, and in light of our interest in effectively contributing to the work of these two mechanisms, I would like to point out that Egypt hosted the Second Preparatory Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum in Cairo on 19 and 20 January 2008. This meeting witnessed fruitful discussions on south/south cooperation, triangular cooperation, and aid effectiveness. I'm pleased to note that many of the issues that were raised during that meeting were reaffirmed yesterday during the opening of the DCF, such as aid effectiveness, the quantity and quality of funding, the increasing trends

towards south/south cooperation and other issues that constitute a priority to developing countries.

Mr. President,

It is critical that we recognize that previous years have witnessed substantial economic growth, and relative reduction in poverty. However, despite the progress achieved in some countries, poverty eradication remains the most important challenge facing the world today, particularly in Africa. Accordingly, there is a need to support the African countries to achieve that goal by 2015, as one of the essential MDGs.

At the same time, we are faced with the global food crisis. This is a responsibility that we have to recognize, and bear the burden of effectively addressing it, and prevent its exacerbation, or its reoccurrence. The food crisis and the rise of food prices is a global problem with many contributing factors, such as climate change, agricultural subsidy policies and increased bio-fuel production. Given that it is a global problem, it requires joint international efforts in a framework of international cooperation, including immediate actions and other intermediate and long term ones that take into account the priorities of developing countries and the enhancement of their policy space. In this context, we welcome the High-Level Conference on Global Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bio- fuels held in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008. We also welcome the efforts of the Secretary General in dealing with the crisis and composing a task force to coordinate the international response towards it. We believe that the way forward in this regard should be based on adequate consultations and consensus among member states in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council. We would like to affirm what President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak called for during the Rome Conference regarding the establishment of a global partnership that deals with the causes and repercussions of the current crisis to achieve the interests of developing and developed countries, as well as the urgent need for an international dialogue where food and energy exporters and importers huddle to lay out an international strategy for the short, medium, and long term handling of the current crisis.

The goals and objectives agreed on in international agreements related to agriculture form a series of policies that place sustainable food security as a priority. They provide for adequate food to reach the poor in urban and rural areas with the goal of increasing food production in a sustainable manner and strengthening food security in an environmentally sound manner that contributes to rationalizing natural resource management on a sustainable basis. This requires more efforts to bridge the divide between substantive policies and the means to implement them.

There is an urgent need to follow a comprehensive planning approach for sustainable agriculture, and for the international community to support the capacities of developing countries by investing in research and building self capacities in vital programs in order to reduce the effects of climate change and to confront them. This helps enable these countries to face the threat of droughts and desertification, while adopting sustainable

production and consumption policies, and facing the challenges of sustainable rural development, and promoting and developing technology transfer programs. Furthermore, exchanging expertise and successful experiences are needed particularly with regard to gaining access to basic social services, in addition to supporting increased investment in the agricultural sector in developing countries, including LDCs, particularly in Africa. In doing so, it should be acknowledged that following a comprehensive planning approach to sustainable agriculture requires complementarity between the eco-system approach and development plans.

At the same time, I would like to point out that Egypt is strongly affected by the problem of existing land mines left over from the remnants of world War II in its western North Coast. This area extends to cover large parts of land that is suitable for agriculture covering approximately 200 thousand acres, thus posing a huge obstacle to development in this large and fertile area, which warrants serious international efforts and cooperation to address it.

Mr. President,

The issue of financing development gains added momentum while we move closer to the convening of Review Conference in Doha at the end of this year. New challenges and issues have emerged which deserve an open dialogue and innovative solutions. The ongoing preparations for the follow up Conference in Doha will provide impetus to the related work of our session. In this matter, an honest evaluation of the status of implementation should be undertaken. In addition, a clear determination is required of the existing and new challenges, taking into consideration best practices and lessons learned, while substantively addressing the proposed initiatives and ways to deal with them in order to overcome the obstacles and challenges. These agreements need to be steered towards effective implementation with the aim of making the 21st century the development century for all.

In the same context, the efforts of developing countries to eradicate poverty require an enabling international environment to complement these efforts at the national level. This entails an increase in the volume of Official Development Assistance directed to developing countries, introducing comprehensive initiatives for external debt relief, in addition to a complete review of the process by which concessional loans are issued in order to expand the opportunities of benefiting from them by not confining the criteria to income per capita, with a view to including middle income countries. Furthermore, an agreement is needed which addresses the imbalance in the international trading system. In addition, the developing world lacks the sufficient voice and participation to influence international economic decision making. Most international economic decisions which have grave impact on the world economy as a whole are taken in the absence of developing countries, influencing their economies, even though their share in the international economy has increased.

Mr. President,

Egypt is considered one of the most affected countries as result of the negative consequences of climate change, and undoubtedly the threat stemming from the rising sea levels is at the forefront of these negative consequences. According to the reports of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change the Nile Delta all along coast of the Mediterranean Sea is affected by the rising ocean levels. We believe that those countries that are most affected deserve the most attention. Therefore, establishing a list that identifies these countries is an important issue to help direct financial and technical support in a correct and straightforward manner to address the problems of these countries. In this context, I would like to recall Egypt's proposal during the High-level Meeting on Climate Change held in New York in September 2008, which was also reaffirmed in Bali, to establish a list of the countries most affected from the phenomenon of climate change, and we welcome in this regard the decision of the President of the General Assembly to hold a session on this issue in this current GA session .

Mr. President,

I would like to emphasize that Egypt attaches great importance to an effective partnership and constructive cooperation in implementing the goals and objectives of sustainable development agreed upon at the international inter-governmental level in favor of all the peoples of the world. In this context, it is worthy to refer to the document titled “ the Framework of Egypt's Strategy to Sustainable Development”, which was prepared by the government of Egypt to affirm that the goals and principles of the sustainable development process are but a synonym to the concept of just development. From that, stems the interest of Egypt and its political leadership in achieving sustainable development, so as to achieve just development along side with it.

In conclusion, I would like to state that while recognizing that there are different considerations and sometimes conflicting interests, at the same time, we believe that there is broad room for agreement, which needs to be expanded, and possibilities for cooperation and joint work and efforts that need to be exerted and exhausted, and opportunities that that should be seized to achieve the interests of all parties in a balanced manner. We intend to adopt that approach and call on others to do the same, based on the inclination that we have to spare no effort to work on improving the lives of millions of people that aspire to the right to development, and to a better tomorrow with less suffering. Any tangible addition or small step we strive for in that direction is a measure of the success or failure of our work.

Thank you Mr. President.