



# STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT  
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**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Guyana to the United Nations  
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Mr. President,

Guyana is again delighted to recognize your astute guidance of the work of the Council. I wish to address brief remarks to two aspects of our deliberations – the overall international context in which the pursuit of sustainable development now takes place and some perspectives on the importance of promoting an integrated approach to rural development. My delegation associates itself with the Statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 & China.

As we undertake this thematic debate of the 2008 High-level Segment of ECOSOC, the current development landscape provides a somewhat foreboding panorama for developing countries in pursuit of sustainable development. The coincidence of a plethora of significant new and interrelated challenges with those of an enduring nature has rendered the task of such desired progress for all an even more demanding enterprise. Among other things, the rapidly escalating and record oil prices, higher food prices, considerable global economic and financial uncertainty and insistent demands for realistic actions to combat the impact of climate change stand in stark contrast to declining levels of resources to respond to these needs and in many instances unfair and declining terms of trade.

The international community is thus faced with a defining moment in taking action to foster the sustainable development of states. Left unchecked, the energy, food and climate crises together portend not only the evaporation of the prospects for enhanced global achievement in relation to internationally agreed development goals but also a reversal of hard-earned progress. This conjuncture invites attention to the important role that ECOSOC can and must play in response to the global situation.

Mr. President:

There can be little doubt that the overall impacts of the current crises will be felt most severely by the most vulnerable segments of the global population – notably the poor. In relation to the food crisis, for instance, the World Bank notes that more than 150 million people could be placed into poverty. And while many factors might be advanced as underlying the crisis, including the decline in relative terms in investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure, the effects of climate change, depletion of global food reserves, diversion of agricultural production from food to bio-fuels and unfair global trading arrangements, it is clear that it is seriously inimical to the interests of small economies and producers.

In this regard, although Guyana is a net exporter of food, the country is vulnerable to the rise in the cost of fuel and other inputs needed for food production. Clearly, the current crisis could significantly intensify challenges attendant to the promotion of the sustainable development at the national level. It could also potentially amplify deep-seated and growing inequalities between and within countries, thereby accentuating associated social, political and security risks.

For this reason, Guyana emphasizes the importance of measures to support greater and sustained investment in agriculture in the medium to long term, including suitable arrangements for agriculture in a fair global trading regime. We believe that the International Financial Institutions can assist by providing concessionary term credit for small agricultural producers to help in expanding agricultural production

and maintaining livelihoods. In addition, a prudent approach to the use of bio-fuels should assure that it contributes to solving rather than aggravating the challenges faced by developing countries in regard to the supply of their energy needs.

At the regional level, though cognizant that the keys to resolving the regional food security challenge are not fully within the control of the region itself, the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community have already taken steps to ensure the adequate supply and distribution of food intra-regionally. In this regard, the Community recently convened an Agro-Investment Forum to help operationalise the Jagdeo Initiative which provides the blueprint for the collective effort to revitalize agriculture in the Caribbean.

Mr. President,

Even before climate change emerged as one of the defining issues on the global development agenda, Guyana was seized of the importance of pursuing a path of sustainable development. The core principles of sustainable development were thus enshrined in the National Development Strategy and are represented as a core component of our foreign policy. In 1989 Guyana dedicated almost one million hectares of pristine forest to the international community for the modeling of sustainable forestry management practices. This year, the Government of Guyana has made the offer of the conservation of the majority of its forestry resources, the size of England as part of its contribution the mitigation of climate change, and on this basis of economically viable arrangements.

Within the context of such efforts and initiatives at the international level, an integrated approach to rural development is central to the achievement of sustainable development for the majority of developing countries. Agriculture, of course, has a proven comparative advantage in reducing poverty. For developing countries, such as Guyana which is still largely rural with agriculture as the single most important sector—contributing over 30% of the country's GDP, 40 % of its total earnings and where over half of the labour force is employed in agriculture and related activities, rural development cannot be divorced from overall sustainable development. Accordingly, there is urgent need for sustained and higher levels of investment in agriculture, including the enhancement of the security of tenure of small land-owners, improved land use planning and provision of financial services, and the preservation and expansion of agricultural livelihoods.

What the effort of confronting the inter-related challenges of declining aid-flows, climate change, energy crisis, rise in food prices and international economic uncertainty makes clear, if anything, is that even beyond responding to these issues in their own right is the need to deal with many of the pervasive systemic factors that invariable arise in any discussion of sustainable development and which stymie the growth of many developing countries.

The business-as-usual approach is unlikely to lead to the levels of success and progress both anticipated and desirable. Few would argue against the importance of good governance and the power of the market but on the other hand few hold the conviction that total reliance on this paradigm alone represents the totality of a workable model in all situations. It is for this reason that Guyana has consistently advanced the case for a new system of global relationships that takes account of these

realities and particularly of the systemic impacts which prevent consistently higher levels of development by all countries.

Mr. President,

On account of the uncertain and foreboding aspects of the global development landscape there is need for unprecedented collaboration by the international community to forestall the adverse outcome the current crises portend. In particular, the failure to conclude the Doha development round of trade negotiations, in spite of the stated commitment of all sides to this objective, stands as a symbol and at the crux of the unavailing efforts of development cooperation on the whole. Its early conclusion will provide a much need infusion of confidence that could reinvigorate other dimensions of cooperation to be reviewed during this year.

The ECOSOC has a responsibility and the opportunity to begin to address the structural and other underlying causes of the current global situation and to take appropriate action especially in relation to agriculture and rural development in the short, medium and long term to enable all countries to achieve their sustainable development objectives but especially those commonly agreed by the international community. Such actions in our view should take account of the challenges already faced by developing countries and complement their endeavours to achieve sustainable development.

The Economic and Social Council should seize this opportunity to exercise its Charter-inspired responsibilities and galvanize effective action by the international community at this time. In this regard, the convening of the second AMR and operationalization of the DCF suggest that the Council is better equipped to address the myriad challenges now faced by the international community. We wish to assure you that we will continue to utilize our membership of the Council to assist in ensuring that this potential is fully realized.

I thank you.