



*Permanent Mission of*  
**Malaysia**  
*to the United Nations*

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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Hamidon Ali, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations at the General Debate of the High Level Segment of the 2008 Substantive Session of ECOSOC, New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008**

Thank you, Mr. President,

Let me commend you on the leadership that you have demonstrated which has led to the efficient conduct of this historic substantive session of the ECOSOC and to thank the Secretariat for the support given and the quality of the reports.

2. We are meeting today against the backdrop of two major tectonic movements in human affairs. The first is global inflation related to the increase in prices of food and fuel. The second is the climate change challenge. Further, they are occurring at a time of deflationary threat caused by the problems in the financial markets of the developed world, caused by the sub-prime crisis.

3. As the body charged by the Charter to promote conditions of economic, social progress and development, the ECOSOC has an important role to play in analyzing and addressing these issues. The most pertinent questions that need to be analysed by this Council are the following:

3.1 To what extent do these two movements act together and in so doing exacerbate the present situation?

3.2 While they are indicative of a long-term trend, are we in possession of the tools to address them? If not, are measures to be taken merely ameliorative?

3.3 Will the solutions for one amplify the problems of the others?

4. At present, the majority view is that these tectonic movements caused by the increase in food and fuel and climate change will have long-term effects, especially if remedial actions are not taken. Equally importantly, remedial action to address this issue requires a fundamental change of life-style, economic activity and our overall relationship with the environment.

Mr. President,

5. Malaysia firmly believes that the crises related to climate change as well as fuel and food are due squarely to the unfulfilled hopes and broken promises of sustainable development.

6. It was in Rio almost a decade and a half ago that the human family agreed that we would undertake concerted action to address the sustainable development challenge, based among others, on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

7. All these years on and fully cognizant of the effects of not fulfilling our promises made in Rio, it is opportune that the themes of our present discussions are centred on sustainable development.



8. I believe that the inability to fulfill the promises of sustainable development are five-fold:

8.1 The first is the lack of political commitment, particularly from the developed world. One example, among many others, is the current fixation on the post-2012 climate change scenario. Should not the focus of the developed world be on fulfilling their 2008-2012 commitments and in so doing set a standard for the entire world, rather than on trying to pass the burden of action on the developing world?

8.2 The second is that we have so far not been able to find the right mix, balancing the competing interests of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic growth, social development and environmental protection. This situation is amplified by the rising expectations of our societies due in part to the march of democracy throughout the entire world;

8.3 The third is that we have also yet to find the optimum mix between governmental and private sector action. Clearly, market forces and the private sector have a role to play in achieving the aims of sustainable development. However, the role of the government is critical in terms of providing policy integration and coherence as well as to balance the competing interests of the three pillars as well as among various sections of society;

8.4 The fourth is that while infrastructure development and the transfer of technology are critical elements of achieving sustainable development, at present there is no international framework or mechanism aimed at promoting them. Indeed, infrastructure development is now seen as inimical to environmental interests, when this is not the case. We do have the means of ensuring infrastructure development is enjoyed by all. However, these means are not made available to the developing world. The situation is similar for technology transfer, where pure market solutions are not effective solutions for achieving sustainable development. Government intervention is required if these technologies are to be made available at concessionary rates. Conceptually, if the aims of sustainable development are to be seen as global public goods, the means of achieving them should also be seen as global public goods as well; and

8.5 The fifth is the fact that demographic concerns have not been factored in adequately in policies aimed at achieving sustainable development, not only in terms of population volume, but also in the context of population movements from the rural to urban areas. Connected to this is the lack of emphasis given to sustainable development in the rural areas and to economic activities in these areas such as agriculture. Indeed, development experts have continuously propounded the belief that the path to rapid development lies in industrialization, rather than agriculture, leading to the neglect of that sector, the traditional source of food in the developing world. The agriculture subsidies given to farmers in the developed world have further decimated agricultural production in the developing countries.

Mr. President,

9. The fulfillment of the promises of sustainable development is now a matter of the greatest urgency for the international community. The nature of the obstacles and the means of overcoming them demands that we adopt a coherent and consistent approach. The newly revitalized ECOSOC is the best forum to achieve this. It must now rise to the challenge.

Thank you.