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**Statement by Ms. Janil Greenaway, Minister Counsellor  
Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the UN  
on behalf of the Group of 77 and China  
During Thematic discussions on Drought  
Sixteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development  
(CSD-16)**

*New York, Wednesday, 7 May 2008*

1. The issue that brings us together today is one that deserves our most serious consideration. Although drought is a natural phenomenon, human activity and anthropogenic climatic variations may exacerbate water scarcity and lead to severe and prolonged periods of drought. Drought is also strongly linked to the other topics that we have on the CSD's agenda for the current cycle, since drought may be a precursor to soil degradation and desertification. In this regard, the Group believes that the CSD-16 review session should include also our review of the JPOI Water Management targets.
2. Around 2 billion people live in arid zones, most in the developing world and usually these are the regions that tend to have lower development rates. Hence drought should be integrated into national, regional and global sustainable development strategies and plans. The support given to developing countries in this regard is crucial.
3. The developing world is particularly vulnerable to drought, especially in those regions that are dependant on climate-sensitive economic sectors. Africa, for example, is a continent that has had to grapple with drought for many, many years, making it a region that needs specific attention and support.
4. Today, drought has become evident in areas never thought possible, and has become a serious problem for other areas of the developing world as well. In some regions of Latin America and the Caribbean for example, drought cycles have negatively impacted food security and crop production, stymieing the fight to eradicate poverty.
5. Indeed, drought is a factor in population movements and food insecurity. Famine and desertification are two of the most serious consequences of

- this phenomenon. Early response interventions and measures are key to prevent severe periods of drought, often a precursor of desertification.
6. Investment in early warning systems, as well as networks and control systems and enhanced international, regional and interregional planning is essential. The International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ISDR) is one such valuable initiative.
  7. Mr. Chairman, the Group would also like to highlight the value of traditional knowledge and practices that are relevant and enrich developing countries' efforts to manage their drought periods, for example traditional methods of water management and conservation, rainwater catchments and storage.
  8. Drought is closely linked to the other issues for this CSD cycle. Strategies for drought prevention and management must incorporate sustainable agricultural practices, soil conservation, water conservation, crop diversification and integrated water basin management, as well as integrated agricultural management to maintain soil productivity and fertility. It is important then to have capacity building and training to strengthen the institutional capacity to both mitigate and respond to drought in developing countries.
  9. There is also a need for further research on drought-resistant crops and seeds, in an effort to sustain those regions of the world that may be at risk of economic collapse and famine after severe periods of drought.
  10. The Group underscores the need for developed countries to honor their commitments undertaken within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, since climate variations exacerbate drought cycles. Also, there is a need for accurate and up-to-date climate and meteorological information to improve our understanding of long term climate variability and thus improve developing countries' plans for drought mitigation.
  11. Mr. Chairman, in our discussions on drought, we should also bear in mind last year's review of the UNCCD, during which we identified a number of constraints, including:
    - difficulties encountered in data gathering and management, and information sharing at national levels;

- weak legislative frameworks to promote sustainable agricultural practices, and lack of institutional capacity for implementation;
- lack of incentives to promote sustainable use and management of rangelands, including the promotion of secure livelihoods in the pastoral livestock sector, research programmes in effective stock breeding and management of pasture lands.

12. Unfulfilled commitments under UNCCD, in particular the provision of adequate, timely, predictable resources and cost effective, proven, and appropriate technologies to developing countries to reverse and prevent land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought remains a primary constraining factor.

13. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, as with all pressing development issues, the means of implementation must be taken into consideration by the international community when addressing drought. The Group calls for a scaling-up of financing and transfer of technology for drought prevention, soil productivity and crop management. We also call for greater efforts to reduce the vulnerability of the agriculture sector to climate variations and extreme weather events, in accordance with JPOI.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.