



MESSAGE BY THE HONOURABLE W. BALDWIN SPENCER, PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA AND CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN W. ASHE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE 15TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 29 July 2008)

Mr. Chairman,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the distinct honour and privilege to address this 15th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the Government and People of the Islamic Republic of Iran for their warm welcome, hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for this meeting. Their generous offer for hosting this ministerial conference is a testimony of their continued commitment to the cause of development and to the principles and objectives of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement.

2. Permit me also, Mr. Chairman, to echo your earlier sentiments and thank the delegation of Cuba for its sterling leadership of the NAM.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The profound and rapid changes which are transforming the world compel us to constantly enhance our solidarity and unity in pursuing our collective goals for development and peace. Cooperation between the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 in the common struggle of developing countries for economic development and self-reliance is hardly new. The mandate for such cooperation is to be found in the very foundations of both groups. What is essential is to see what more we can do to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves, and more importantly, what we can do to achieve such goals collectively.

4. There are several negative trends in the world economic relations that impede development cooperation and economic growth in the developing countries. These include intolerable levels of debt and debt service, the decline in ODA, the ultimate failure of the current negotiations at the WTO on the Doha Round of Trade Negotiations, the widening divide between the rich and the poor countries, rising poverty levels in many countries of the South and the continued marginalization of developing countries in international economic decision making.

5. This requires the implementation at all levels of the commitments in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the economic social and related fields. Developing countries have demonstrated a sincere commitment to implement their part of these commitments. Unfortunately, our development partners have taken limited action in implementing their part of the commitments whether in development assistance, and financing, trade, technology transfer and

other areas of cooperation.

6. Dialogue and negotiations with the North have always been a challenge, since some of the developed countries have not shown much enthusiasm for partnership. In addition to the lack of partnership, we are deeply concerned at the growing resort to unilateralism and unilaterally imposed measures that undermine the UN Charter and international law. We emphasize the need to fully implement the global partnership for development in order to operationalize and implement at all levels the commitments in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the economic social and related fields. We stress that all countries should promote policies coherent and consistent with the commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including those systemic in nature.

7. In this context, the Group of 77 and China is committed to undertake all measures to generate expand and deepen a more dynamic relationship and cooperation with developed countries firmly rooted on mutual respect mutuality of benefits constructive engagement and dialogue with the aim of forging compatible or complementary responses or initiatives on global issues. Our common efforts with the NAM are aimed to strengthening multilateralism and promoting equity and development including development cooperation in the UN as well as achieving greater coordination and coherence among the entities in order to avoid unnecessary duplications and overlaps of the funds, programmes and agencies' functions and maximize their efficiency and effectiveness. We will strive to ensure that the views and concerns of developing countries are taken fully into account especially on decisions affecting our progress and the well-being of our populations.

8. The raison d'etre of the G77 and the NAM have at no time been more patently justified than now, when the priorities of the South continue to be subsumed by the imperatives of the North. The G77 and China and the NAM must not remain on the periphery of policy and decision making in the global political and economic system. Our groups must not loose ground in the global arena, but play an equal role in the setting of priorities on multilateral negotiating agendas.

9. We attach high priority to our joint common positions in ongoing negotiations as well as on strengthening UN reform to ensure that the views interests and concerns of developing countries are fully taking into account on relevant issues before decisions that affect them are made. The G77 and China will continue to strengthen the coordination and cooperation as well as formulation of common strategies on economic development and social progress issues with the NAM, through the Joint Coordinating Committee, so ably co-chaired by the delegation of Cuba, so as to advance the collective concerns and interests of developing countries in the relevant international fora, particularly in the context of the UN reform.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Due to the present world economic situation, the question of intensifying South-South Cooperation needs to be accorded priority. We reiterate the importance of the role of South-South cooperation in the overall context of multilateralism as a continuing process which is vital to the development efforts of our countries in advancing economic development, social progress, and promoting and preserving peace and security. We emphasize the need to strengthen South-South cooperation, including through enhancing the capacities of relevant institutions and mechanisms as indispensable means to promote and preserve multilateralism and the multilateral process.

11. The implementation of the Doha Plan of Action adopted during the Second South Summit in 2005 has yielded, among others, the launching of the Development Platform of the South and the South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance, during the 12th Session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordinating Committee on ECDC in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire on June 13, 2008. Mandated by the Second South Summit, both initiatives are valuable tools for strengthening South-South Cooperation by providing new approaches to actions of the South in the international economic arena. They will strengthen the South's ability to assess critically and question the current constructs coming from the North that has been dominant on the global scene. They will also serve as basis for changes that should be attainable through the actions of our countries including through the mobilization of our collective negotiating power.

12. Finally, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the convening of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 62/209. We agreed on the need for the Conference to assess the progress made in South-South Cooperation and undertake actions and initiatives to overcome the obstacles and constraints to its implementation and elaborate important measures for further implementation of South-South Cooperation, as well as tackle the new challenges on emerging issues. In this regard, the Group wishes to acknowledge the leadership of the delegation of Qatar in their capacity as Chair of the UN High Level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

13. In conclusion, given the proven solidarity of Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, I wish to reiterate the conviction of my country in the continued validity and importance of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement as a vital instrument to articulate and promote the collective economic and political interests of the developing countries. Despite our diversity in the South, the two groups remain indispensable in view of the growing inequities of the international economic order and the continuing need for peace and stability. The solidarity of developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean rests on its historical bond and the recognition that, despite their diversity, joint coherent action, solidarity and unity will enable our countries to deal with the challenges of international cooperation.

I wish all success to our deliberations.

I thank you.