



STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONORABLE MR. W. BALDWIN SPENCER, PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA AND CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE 32ND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE GROUP OF 77 (New York, 26 September 2008)

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary General,
Mr. Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme,
Mr. Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my great privilege, as Chair of the Group of 77 to welcome each of you to this Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77. Your presence here today is a demonstration of your commitment to the objectives and principles of our Group. This is a great occasion to assess the current situation and to chart our course over the coming months.

2. Since Antigua and Barbuda assumed the chairmanship of the Group of 77 last January, the Group has continued to strengthen its solidarity and unity in promoting our common interests on vital issues for the advancement of our development agenda. Your constructive support and cooperation have been fundamental in our ability to strengthen our common position within the UN system.

Excellencies,

3. The phenomenon of globalization continues to dominate the world economy. Developing countries are confronted with multiple inter-related and mutually reinforcing crises including a global food crisis, an environmental crisis, a financial crisis, driven significantly by a severely unbalanced international economic system as well as a crisis of confidence in international institutions which failed in providing policy advice and coordination on global issues.

4. The current economic crisis is essentially a development challenge which has arisen fundamentally from incoherence and a failure of the international financial system and trade policies pursued by developed countries over the last three decades. The social impacts of this challenge include a massive rise in unemployment, natural disasters that have thrown millions below the poverty line, and hunger and malnutrition in the South. Much work remains to be done if the development goals and their corresponding targets are to be met by 2015. Indeed, during the past nine months we have continued working on all the issues crucial to development so as to achieve an international climate conducive to development and a global economy that is more equitable and balanced.

5. The recent discussions at the thematic debate on Climate Change were challenging. They provided us with an insight into where the developed countries are in respect of development co-operation that is unfortunately not too encouraging. It will be a tough battle. We however took the opportunity to again reinforce our view that the promotion of sustainable development must be based on its three pillars - economic development, social development and environmental protection. Our Group continued to stress the fact that climate change is a challenge to sustainable development and the three pillars should be promoted in an integrated, coordinated and balanced manner. The developed countries should adhere to the Rio principles in particular the principle of

common but differentiated responsibilities, and fulfil their commitments under the Convention. -In this context we are most concerned that the process put in train by the Bali Road Map and Plan of Action in December last year is not progressing with the sense of purpose and urgency necessary to reach a satisfactory outcome in Copenhagen in December 2009.

6. We are pleased with the successful outcome of the Ninth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-9) held in Bonn from 19 to 30 May 2008. Of particular importance is the adoption of a decision for the elaboration of a multiyear plan of action on South-South Cooperation on biodiversity for development. Our Group which participated at the COP with one voice launched the initiative and we are fully committed to participate actively in the preparatory process for the elaboration of the plan of action by the next COP to be held in 2010 in Japan.

Excellencies,

7. Yesterday as well as during the recent thematic debate of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) we expressed our concerns about the insufficient resources to tackle emerging as well as longstanding challenges to development. We stressed the fact that achieving the MDGs on time represents a fundamental test of the global partnership for development. It is a test of the political will of developed countries to address the imbalances and inequities of the international system. The contribution that developed countries can make through fair trade, development assistance, debt relief and access to essential medicines is decisive in reaching the MDGs by 2015. Without progress in these areas developing countries will face an uphill struggle to achieve the other goals.

8. The failure of the WTO negotiations constitutes another major concern of the Group. The negotiations failed despite all our efforts and good will to reach a positive outcome that would assist many developing countries to increase their earnings from exports. We have called upon the developed countries to demonstrate the flexibility and political will necessary for breaking the current impasse in the negotiations which places development at the heart of the multilateral trading system. We have also reiterated that the accession process to WTO should be accelerated without political impediments and in an expeditious and transparent manner.

9. At the recent substantive session of ECOSOC we supported the creation of two new institutional mechanisms, the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), to strengthen the capacity of ECOSOC. At this occasion I wish once again, to stress the responsibility of ECOSOC for initiating and coordinating action in dealing with global development challenges and for promoting coordination and coherence at the international level within and outside the United Nations system.

10. Therefore, we call on the developed countries, the United Nations and the financial institutions to fully and effectively implement the agreed goals and commitments of the past two decades which remains the most difficult and intractable dimension of the global development agenda. We reiterate our call on the international community to take action in order to increase the provision of resources that have not been fulfilled to the developing countries.

11. In this context, the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Qatar from 29 November to 2 December 2008 represents an important occasion for our countries. This conference will provide a reality check on the implementation of commitments assumed in Monterrey by all parties and a platform to address the 60 odd year old global economic and financial architecture and governance arrangements and assess the progress towards the achievement of goals and commitments and identify constraints to further implementation. It is also charged to consider new and emerging issues which could adversely impact our development.

Colleagues, I must tell you in all candor that the prospects for the Conference are not good. We will have to invest all our collective political will, skills and tactical resources to obtain a meaningful result as the developed countries are showing no will in the negotiations and, objectively, the environment is difficult.

12. In fact most developing countries, including African countries have collectively and individually taken a number of steps to address development challenges in an integrated manner. The Group has urged the international community on many occasions to refocus global efforts on addressing the special needs of Africa. NEPAD's priorities include establishing the conditions for sustainable development by ensuring peace and security, adopting a new policy reform and increasing investment in the key sectors including access to transport systems and infrastructure, health, education, and science and technology. The special needs of Africa are a challenge to the international community. There are sufficient commitments and pledges to assist Africa. At the High Level Meeting on September 22, 2008 we supported Africa's call to the international community to simply focus on implementing commitments already made to Africa. We should hold to that position.

13. At this stage, allow me to commend the effective coordination between the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G-77 through the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC). We will continue to work together with NAM through the JCC with a view to preserve and promote the development Agenda. We will continue to strengthen the coordination and cooperation as well as the formulation of common strategies on economic issues.

Excellencies,

14. The increasing importance of South-South cooperation calls for a more energetic effort to deepen and enhance this form of cooperation including triangular cooperation while bearing in mind that such cooperation is not a substitute to North-South cooperation. We reaffirm the role of South-South cooperation in the overall context of multilateralism as a continuing process vital to confront the challenges faced by the South. As the Group has stressed on many occasions, the current international architecture for development cooperation needs to be fundamentally strengthened in order to respond to the needs of our development.. In this context, we welcome the adoption of the South framework for South-South Cooperation.

15. With this in mind, the High-level Panel of Eminent Personalities met in St. John's in Antigua from 29 to 30 April 2008 to conclude the elaboration of the Development Platform for the South as mandated by the Second South Summit. The meeting provided an opportunity to analyze issues related to South-South Cooperation and evolve recommendations for policy decisions and actions by our countries within the context of the preparations of the United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation. As recommended by Twelfth Intergovernmental Follow-Up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation Among Developing Countries (IFCC XII), the High-level Panel will be meeting before the end of the year in order to provide further elements for the Group's new vision on south-south cooperation and to advise on the substantive outcome of the UN Conference on South-South Cooperation.

16. As you know IFCC XII took place in Yamoussoukro, (Côte d'Ivoire) from 10 to 13 June 2008. The Committee adopted a conceptual framework for South-South cooperation which is based on the concept that South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and as a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives. Its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South and must not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation. Therefore IFCC stressed that South-South cooperation is a development agenda based on premises conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political

context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations and it should deserve its own separate and independent promotion within the UN system.

17. In this context, I wish to take this occasion to recall the request made by the Heads of State and Government at the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar, from 12 to 16 June 2005, inviting "the Secretary-General, in consultations with members states, to take concrete measures to further strengthen the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation as a separate entity and a focal point for South-South Cooperation within the United Nations system as reaffirmed by General Assembly resolution 58/220 of 23 December 2003, so as to enable it to carry its full responsibilities in particular through of mobilization of resources for the advancement of South-South Cooperation including through triangular cooperation". On your behalf, I wish to invite the UN Secretary-General as well as the Administrator of UNDP to take necessary measures to upgrade the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in order to give it the visibility that it deserves as mandated by our Heads of State and Government.

18. In this context, I wish to welcome the emphasis given to South-South Cooperation in the UNDP Strategic plan and in particular the recent adoption by the Executive Board of the Fourth South-South Cooperation Framework of the Special Unit. On your behalf I also wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his decision taken on 23rd July at the meeting of the policy committee to further promote South-South Cooperation in the UN system as a priority and system wide Agenda and by assigning the Special Unit with the lead role in this process. Excellencies,

19. We are committed to participate very actively in the preparatory process of the United Nations High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation scheduled to take place in 2009. We do believe that after 30 years of the Buenos Aires Conference during which our Group initiated the creation of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation as a separate and independent entity, the time has come for us to review the current arrangements of the Special Unit including its current structures, its mandate and budget allocation in order to enable it to respond to the growing needs of Developing countries and to play its role effectively as the main focal point within the UN system with the responsibility of promoting and coordinating South-South Cooperation.

20. Since our Group initiated and promoted the idea of convening of the UN High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation since 1994, we believe that the Conference will give an excellent opportunity to both North and South to assess the progress made in South-South Cooperation. The conference will provide an opportunity to undertake actions to overcome the constraints to its implementation and decide new measures including triangular cooperation. In this context, I wish to take this occasion to pay a special tribute to Mr. Kemal Dervis, Administrator of UNDP for his vision and able leadership in promoting South-South cooperation. I would also like to thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation as well as the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation headed by Mr. Zhou Yiping for leading the preparatory process of the Conference.

21. I am pleased to report that "The Development Platform for the South" mandated by the Second South Summit, was launched by IFCC 12 held in Yamoussoukro (Cote d'Ivoire) from 10 to 13 June 2008. I am confident that the platform will further strengthen the South's negotiating capacity. IFCC XII was also an occasion to launch the South Fund for Humanitarian and Development Assistance as mandated by the Second South Summit which should be operational shortly. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the Government of Cote d'Ivoire for its generous hospitality and support and for making all the excellent arrangements that led to the success of IFCC.

22. In conclusion I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all the members of the Group of 77 and China for demonstrating strong unity and solidarity during the difficult negotiations on a number of critical issues over the last several months. Also, let me take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to our Executive Secretary, Mr. Mourad Ahmia and his competent team for their dynamism and tireless efforts to support our work and their continuing commitment to the Group of 77 as a whole and devotion to the cause of development.

To all of you I say thank you.

