



**WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE W. BALDWIN SPENCER,  
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ANTIGUA  
AND BARBUDA AND CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77 AT THE INAUGURAL  
SESSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL OF EMINENT PERSONALITIES ON  
THE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM FOR THE SOUTH (St. John's, Antigua and  
Barbuda, 29 April 2008)**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Honourable Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as Chair of the Group of 77, I would like to welcome all of you warmly to St. John's and to express to you on behalf of the Government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda our deep appreciation for being here today to join us on this important meeting of the High-level Panel of Eminent Personalities on the Development Platform for the South.

2. Allow me to take this opportunity to recognize the presence of Her Excellency Madam Chandrika Kumaratunga, former President of Sri Lanka, the Honourable P.J. Patterson, and former Prime Minister of Jamaica and Chair of the G-77 for 2005 who kindly accepted the Chair's invitation to join the high-level panel.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,

3. The world has undergone a major economic and political transformation in the last two decades. The changes, particularly in the South, have been more rapid than at any time during a similar span in world history. Relationships within the South and between the South and the North have taken on entirely new dimensions. New patterns of trade, investment and other economic linkages among the countries of the global South are emerging rapidly.

4. These new South-South dynamics have not only enhanced the general sense of confidence in self-development in the more successful countries, but also contextualized the aspirations for interdependence among all developing countries in an entirely different economic context. Nevertheless, South-South cooperation is not aid. It is an expression of South-South solidarity and for two-way learning based on true partnership for mutual development, rather than on traditional donor-recipient relations. The premises are different, the conditions are different, the approaches are different, and the expectations are different.

5. The existing international development cooperation architecture is obviously built, conceptually, structurally, institutionally and operationally, to primarily support North-South cooperation and aid flows. In the absence of enlightened re-thinking and restructuring, this existing architecture will remain inadequate in responding to the new Southern dynamics, thus falling short of helping to realize the full potential of South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation for development.

6. The rapid economic growth of some major developing countries has, indeed, dramatically improved the development prospects of neighboring countries, spurring economic growth, intra-

South trade and investment, as well as technology exchanges. Today, all of the 130 member countries of the Group of 77, regardless of their size or level of development, have accumulated a varying degree of capacities and experiences in development that can be shared on a South-South basis. Many of our countries have developed long-term strategies for inclusive growth and development that can be made available for intra-South peer learning and demand-based application.

7. It is also clear that South-South cooperation cannot replace North-South cooperation, and should not replace North-South cooperation. As our Group has emphasized on many occasions, the North has an obligation, both in their own national interests, but also in the interest of global harmony and equity and development, to fulfill their commitments through North-South cooperation. South-South cooperation, whether through the UN or bilaterally or regionally, cannot mirror the cooperation with the North. The premises are different, the conditions are different, and the expectations are different, which must be reflected accordingly.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,

8. As we prepare for the High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation early next year to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the Group of 77 must take the lead in this transformation by presenting its own new development platform for international cooperation, including South-South cooperation; asserting pressure on donor countries to honor their ODA commitments, rather than using South-South cooperation to supplement North-South flows; and helping to strengthen the role and reshape the architecture of the UN development system in support of South-South cooperation. In this context, I would like to place on record my deep appreciation and sincere thanks to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, former Chairman of the Group of 77 for 2004 and President of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, for his able leadership and vision in the preparations for the UN High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation. May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge Ambassador Milos Alcalay, Chairman of the Group of 77 for 2002, for his outstanding contribution and commitment to South-South cooperation and the South-South agenda.

9. I also would like to emphasize that we must make full use of modern information technologies to promote South-South cooperation. We must be made much more aware and conscious of each other, of our languages and cultures, of our needs and requirements, of our problems and sensitivities, of our assets and potentialities. This information should be produced by us and as far as possible transmitted through our own channels. Indeed, the importance of creating wide public awareness about South-South cooperation is becoming increasingly evident. Our mass media has an important role to play and should be encouraged to do so. We have to make South-South cooperation comprehensive to our people and it must receive their enthusiastic support. It is not only us but our people as a whole who must think South-South and act energetically and with enthusiasm in doing so.

10. Before closing, I would take the opportunity to express my own appreciation to Dr. Yiping Zhou, Director of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, for his continued support to the Group of 77 and for his tireless efforts and able leadership in bringing new dynamism into the international efforts to advance South-South cooperation. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador John W. Ashe, our Permanent Representative to the U.N. in New York, for his able leadership and achievements over the years as well as to his competent team in the Mission for their hard work, commitment and dedication.

Last but not least, my sincere thanks to Dr. Mourad Ahmia, our Executive Secretary, for his continued dedication and commitment to the cause of the South and for the valuable support he provided in the preparations and organization of this important high-level panel.

Once again, a warm welcome to Antigua and Barbuda and my best wishes for a successful outcome of your deliberations.

I thank you.