



**OBSERVATIONS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ABDULLAH M. ALSAIDI,
AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF YEMEN TO THE
UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77 FOR THE YEAR 2010,
AT THE HANDOVER CEREMONY OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP
OF 77 (New York, 12 January 2011)**

Mr. Ban-Ki Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Mr. Hector Timmerman, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Argentina
Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator of the UNDP
Mr. Zha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by welcoming you all to this important meeting in which the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China will pass from the Republic of Yemen to the Republic of Argentina.

I have asked that my [statement](#), detailing the tasks accomplished during Yemen's chairmanship of the Group, be circulated; in lieu of that, I will offer some personal observations. I beg your indulgence, however, if I meander here and there.

It is not a hyperbole to argue that the Group of 77 and China is the largest and most important constellation of States, working in pursuit of common interests. But, it is equally true that, in appearance, it is the most cumbersome to manage: just imagine attempting to forge a common position between 131 states on any given issue. Many a time, a mere exchange of views veers into the acerbic. The fainthearted might, therefore, surmise that a common position is many light years away, if not impossible. Arriving at a consensus position in a heterogeneous group is, therefore, expectedly laborious.

The Group of 77 and China is made up of states whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are as varied as their levels of development. Some have made great economic strides, yet others remain on the infamous list of the bottom billion. Some are worried that the phenomenon of climate change poses a mortal threat to their survival; while others are worried that their development will be adversely impacted.

In such a milieu, it is most prudent for the Chairman to adhere to the principle of transparency, which in turn endows one with the trust necessary for compromises to prevail. I, testify to the fact: during negotiations for the outcome document on the MDGs, delegations opted to go along with what is common to all of the members of the Group and forego national interests that might derail an overall compromise package. It is in cases like this that the argument that diversity enriches the group rather than weakens it, attains its veracity. When compromises are made, the Group, invariably, achieves better negotiating deals: a case in point is the system-wide coherence and the establishment of the gender entity: U.N. Women. Here, the Group was most efficacious in obtaining a good resolution and a board that is fully consistent with the principle of geographic distribution. Major donors from developed and developing countries will also freely compete for membership in the Board of the U.N. Women.

It is not extraordinary, in this regard, to observe that, however sharp are the differences among members of the Group of 77 and China, they pale in comparison to the magnitude of the

differences with the partners. A case in point is climate change. Yet, in the rare cases where compromise within the Group proved rather elusive, I felt that the overall interests of members are, to a large degree, protected by the positions adopted by sub-regional groups. Dynamics intrinsic to negotiation, nonetheless, evolve overtime.

It is interesting to observe, that in the course of laborious negotiations, particularly in climate change, there develop what sociologists call in-groups: in-groups members consult and express solidarity with each other and interestingly take common positions, notwithstanding national dispositions. Yet common positions arrived at in these settings are helpful; though, in some cases, they elicit counter reactions. But, overall, the implication thereof is positive: differences are narrowed, thus allowing the Chairman to make the necessary summary for the Group to move forward.

But that as it may, Unity is a supreme objective of the members of the Group of 77 and China; it is, obviously, the overriding goal of the Chairman. For unity is the sine qua non for achieving better deals for the developing countries. Believe or not, the cohesion of the Group serves also the interest of the partners, although some of them might not see it that way. The fact remains, that negotiations with one group is better managed and easier to succeed than negotiating with a multitude of groups with conflicting interests.

Unity of purpose is cardinal for successful chairmanship. Since the Republic of Yemen was honored with this task, it has worked tirelessly to enhance unity of the Group and overcome the legacy of Copenhagen. If we succeeded in advancing the interest of our countries, it was because we had the cooperation of the member-states and the Executive Secretariat of the Group of 77 and China, particularly Mr. Mourad Ahmia. Therefore, permit me to pay tribute and convey profound appreciations to the Executive Secretariat and to each and every one of you. Allow me, moreover, to ask you to be as understanding and cooperative with Argentina, our Chair for the Year 2011.

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