



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. LUWELLYN LANDERS, DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE HANDOVER CEREMONY OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77 (New York, 8 January 2015)**

The President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia Mr. Evo Morales Ayma;  
United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon;  
The Acting President of the United Nations General Assembly, Ambassador María Cristina Perceval;  
The Executive Secretary, Mr. Mourad Ahmia;  
Excellencies;  
Distinguished delegates;

On behalf of the Government and people of South Africa, I humbly accept the responsibility entrusted to us by members of the Group of 77 and China to take over the reins of Chairing the Group for the coming year. South Africa accepts the responsibility to Chair the Group of 77 and China on behalf of the Africa Group that nominated us for this position.

South Africa thanks the members of the G77 most sincerely for placing its trust and confidence in us to assume this prestigious responsibility to represent the development needs and aspirations of the developing world.

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia Mr Evo Morales Ayma and Ambassador Sasha Sergio Llorenty Soliz and their team, for Bolivia's outstanding stewardship of the G77 and China during 2014. We are grateful for Bolivia's tireless efforts in promoting the development agenda and interests of the countries of the South.

We can assure you, Excellencies, that we will spare no effort in continuing this legacy by ensuring that we collectively enhance the development agenda of the South.

Last June, our Leaders adopted the Santa Cruz Declaration, which incorporates the views of the Group on a wide range of global economic and social matters and which emphasises that the original rationale for the creation of the Group 50 years ago remains valid, namely to "strengthen and expand the struggles of the G77 and China in all fields towards greater achievements and for the betterment of the lives of our people."

By forging alliances between countries of the South, and by leveraging the South's collective bargaining power and negotiating capacity across many different negotiation tracks in the UN system, the G77 has ensured that we collectively work together to articulate and pursue our collective and individual economic and social interests. The G77 has played a critical role in promoting South-South Cooperation for development as well as successfully strengthening economic and technical cooperation among ourselves as developing countries.

I wish to reiterate that while the primary responsibility for our development rests with us as developing countries, we must recall what was said at the Groups first Ministerial meeting in Algiers in 1967: "In a world of increasing interdependence, peace, progress and freedom are common and indivisible. Consequently the development of developing countries will benefit the developed

countries as well." This is even more relevant today, than it was in 1967, as we have to deal with the consequences of the global economic crisis.

Excellencies,

This year will prove to be a crucial year in which the various envisaged development processes would demand that we, as a Group, remain even more steadfast in promoting the interests of developing countries.

2015 is the year in which the United Nations celebrates its 70th Anniversary and it is also the year in which the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be reached.

The MDGs, adopted in 2000, set bold targets for development and were key in forging a global cooperation framework for development. Foremost in our efforts this year will be the evaluation of the progress made in reaching these goals and the negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda.

In less than a fortnight member states of the United Nations will begin the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. As we begin this process, it is important to continue to recognise "poverty eradication" as the overarching objective for the realisation of sustainable development. The importance of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and the importance of the Rio+20 principles, in particular the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (where it is recognised that countries have different starting points as well as national and regional circumstances), must be the point of departure for a global discourse on the post-2015 development agenda.

These intergovernmental negotiations, must, however not detract from the ongoing urgency to achieve the MDGs, which continue to remain relevant. The full and complete implementation of the MDGs must, of necessity remain the central priority for the UN development agenda.

As members of the G77 have consistently been stating, intergovernmental processes, which were open and transparent, need to be fully preserved and should not be re-opened or re-negotiated. Therefore, the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals must - as the General Assembly has agreed - form the main basis of the intergovernmental negotiations. We thank the Secretary-General for his Synthesis Report, which emphasises the status of the SDGs as the foundation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

In order to meet our development aspirations, the Means of Implementation, supported by a strengthened and expanded global partnership for development, remain critically important. In this regard, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development that will take place in Addis Ababa later this year is significant. This Conference must build on the Monterrey Consensus of 2002 and the Doha Declaration of 2008. To achieve progress, the Conference should focus on the implementation of commitments already made on financing for development, particularly by our development partners.

We would also reiterate that the United Nations should deal decisively with the challenge of the debt burden on developing countries and the need to establish a debt restructuring mechanism. The General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring and on External Debt Sustainability and Development are welcomed.

The G77 should continue to play an active and constructive role in these intergovernmental negotiations so as to ensure that our interests are taken into account.

Excellencies,

Climate Change threatens to reverse the development gains that we as developing countries have made in the recent years. Members of the Group of 77 and China are likely to suffer the most from the effects of climate change, despite the fact that we have contributed the least to the pollution of the atmosphere.

We welcome the outcome of the COP20 in Lima last month and congratulate the Peruvian Presidency for a successful conference. The new legal agreement that we are currently negotiating under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action must be one that addresses both the climate challenge, as well as the developmental priorities of developing countries.

It is our view that the Paris agreement that we aim to adopt later this year must serve as an instrument to enhance the multilateral rules-based regime under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This agreement must be fair, respecting the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities with the high level ambition that will respond to the demands of science to ensure that we remain within safe limits of global warming.

The G77 should remain united in our call for developed countries to take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and by providing finance, technology and capacity-building support to developing countries. The international community must be assisted to transition to low-carbon economies and build resilient societies and to be able to adapt to climatic changes in a manner that will enhance our sustainable development. We will continue to promote the principles of transparency, openness and inclusiveness in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations.

Excellencies,

In relation to the efficiency of the United Nations and its Budget and Administrative issues, the 70th Session will be both a Budget Year and a Scales of Assessment Year. None of our objectives will be achieved without adequate funding, both for existing and newly created mandates. South Africa cannot over-emphasize the unity of the Group in this endeavor - unity is our strength in ensuring that the mandates created by us are sufficiently funded to achieve what they were designed for.

The Group of 77 and China will continue to be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and constructive international dialogue in the pursuance of the universal respect for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Universal Period Review Mechanism of the Human Rights Council, which reviews the performance of all States in fulfilling their obligations under International Human Rights instruments that they are party to, is an example of such an approach.

We wish to underscore however, that we cannot talk about the promotion and protection of human rights without addressing the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and inequality, which continue to impact developing countries more negatively than developed countries. In this context we will continue to call for the implementation of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development that seeks to place the 'human person' at the center of development. As a Group, we must also ensure that the specific needs of people living under foreign and colonial occupation are also addressed.

Excellencies,

South-South Cooperation, which is what the G77 and China embodies, is pursued, inter-alia, as a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance for countries of the South, by countries of the South. The challenges that require our collective action, and the opportunities that South-South cooperation present, means that South-South Cooperation is key for international cooperation and partnerships for development. This is especially in terms of global, regional and country-level efforts to achieve balanced sustainable development. We must reiterate that South-South Cooperation is not intended to be a substitute for the obligations and responsibilities of the developed North.

Over the last few years, several developing countries have become the key drivers of global growth and their development is having a significant impact on the world economy. Growth and economic development in the South has significantly altered the strategic balance of power towards the countries of the South.

The realities of differing economic interests and levels of development within the G77, however, means that a key challenge that we will always need to address is how the Group leverages its differences and its collective negotiating power to get the best possible outcome for all developing countries, while continuing to ensure its unity and cohesiveness. The South Summit planned for later this year will provide an excellent opportunity for us to consolidate our unity.

Excellencies,

The G77 remains a champion for a more legitimate and accountable global system of governance. For far too long, developing countries have not been at the centre of global standard-setting and decision-making processes that impact on our development. It is critical, therefore, that the countries of the South continue to push, through the G77, for the reform of the global governance system, in particular, for the enhanced voice and representation in the decision-making structures of International Organisations.

In conclusion, South Africa wishes to emphasise that after 50 distinguished years, this Group remains all the more relevant, specifically at this important juncture when the international community is considering our collective development aspirations beyond 2015. From our own experience, it is clearly evident that the G77 is most powerful when it is most united. Today, January 8th, 2015 is the 103rd anniversary of the African National Congress of South Africa, which as the ruling party of South Africa is the oldest liberation movement in Africa and led South Africa to victory over apartheid. As a country we are also celebrating 20 years of democracy. We know that we would not be where we are today without the role played by this Group in galvanising the countries of the South in supporting the plight of the people of South Africa during our struggle against the oppression of Apartheid. As we begin this year of 2015 we must continue in this same united spirit of international solidarity in addressing other key development challenges for the people of the South, including the rights of the people of Palestine. Let us harness the diversity of our group to fortify our unity as we brace ourselves for upcoming key negotiations.

I thank you.