



**OPENING STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DUMISANI S. KUMALO,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE
BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON
BIODIVERSITY (Montreal, 6-8 November 2006)**

Mr. Executive Secretary,
Honorable Guests,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, let me express on the behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our gratitude to Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, for hosting this brainstorming session. I further wish to thank all of you for your willingness to discuss the important topic of "South-South Cooperation on Biodiversity"
2. The Group of 77 and China believes that this brainstorming meeting can be an impetus to strengthen South-South Cooperation on biodiversity conservation. The meetings in the coming days can facilitate discussion on elements of a plan of action that would enhance implementation of the three objectives of the Convention and the Millennium Development Goals, in particular goal 7. It can also offer a platform for the exchange of experiences and dissemination of best practices among member states of the South. Furthermore it may make recommendations in preparation of an open-ended expert meeting.
3. As you are aware, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Group of 77 and China, on the occasion of the Second South Summit held in Doha in June 2005, expressed their support for South-South cooperation and the need for developing countries to pool their resources and potentialities in the international sphere of development. The recently held Meeting of Ministers of Science and Technology of the Member States of the Group of 77 in Angra dos Reis, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil also discussed South-South Cooperation and provided tremendous impetus to strengthening and deepening cooperation among developing countries in various aspects of sustainable development.
4. The Group of 77 and China attaches the highest importance to the speedy and balanced implementation in a mutually supportive manner of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Indeed conservation, of biological diversity cannot be achieved without the sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefit arising from genetic resources. It is for this reason that 131 countries out of the 188 Parties to the convention on biological diversity are members of the Group of 77. Biodiversity is important to the development of developing countries. To this end, the Group of 77 and China expresses its full support to the recommendation addressed to the 61st session of the General Assembly to declare 2010 as the International Biodiversity Year.
5. Though we have seen immense progress towards South-South Cooperation in the realm of trade and overall economic development, South-South cooperation in the field of the environment and biodiversity in particular has seen limited success. Achievements in the sphere of South-South cooperation and biodiversity will further enable developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
6. In developing countries, natural capital is an important asset for enhancing development and growth. Through these discussions, we can formulate ideas to help developing countries' protect

their natural resources and in turn facilitate poverty reduction in these countries.

7. It is important for us to bear in mind the need for supportive policies and programmes both within the UN system and the wider global environment to complement South-South initiatives. Also, it is and will continue to be part of our approach to include different stakeholders, for example the private sector and civil society, which in our development interests would preferably be South-based.

8. South-South cooperation is an important means of meeting the challenges facing developing countries, and it must be recognized to constitute one of the dimensions of international cooperation for development and preservation of our natural environment. Still we must recognize that South-South cooperation is in no way a substitute for obligations that our partners have in fulfilling the tenets of the Convention. South-South cooperation is always a complement to North-South obligations and that much more can be achieved if we have the full and timely support of our development partners.

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9. Biodiversity continues to be lost at all levels, and most ecosystem services are in decline. This decline is a threat to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the global target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

10. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment which outlines the largest ever international assessment of the world's ecosystems and the consequences of change which humanity is witnessing. The findings of the assessment also show clearly that degradation of ecosystem services poses a significant threat to the achievement of the MDGs. These findings also recommended that significant changes in policies, institutional and governance frameworks to mitigate the negative consequences of ecosystem change is urgently needed as well as the integration of ecosystem goals within broader development planning.

11. Today, a great challenge is to address the causes of the threatening ecological crisis. Climate change is a huge source for the loss of biological diversity as it impacts coral reefs, forest ecosystems, wetlands and migratory species. Efforts must be undertaken to curb climate change as well as mitigate the risks from the biodiversity losses already incurred due to climate change.

12. As the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity explained in the conclusions of The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and I quote, "consequences of biodiversity loss and ecosystem disruption are often harshest for the poor since they are the most immediately dependent on local ecosystem services for their livelihoods" end quote. The reality remains that poor people face limited access to services and if they are deprived of the services of the natural environment surrounding them, they will struggle to find substitutes, most often unsuccessfully. The Group of 77 and China supports the call for a shift towards people-centered approaches that build on poor people's priorities and capabilities.

13. As further reported by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the health of populations is reflected by the health of the ecosystems which they inhabit. The poor citizens of our countries are harmed tremendously by the deteriorating ecosystems as they are exposed to poor sanitation and increasingly harmful pollution. We are meeting today to discuss South-South Cooperation as one of

the modalities to mitigate the risks of biodiversity loss on the livelihoods of the poor citizens of our member states.

14. In order for governments to manage the environment successfully, there is a need to have adequate information on the state of the environment globally, regionally and locally. This information is important as it enables us to devise solutions in time and promptly act at a stage where the opportunity to protect out deteriorating state of our environment is still present. While the loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems are global issues, in practice, it is local actions that have the potential to address the situation.

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15. The challenges facing developing countries in halting the loss of biodiversity and mitigating the risks of biodiversity losses, particularly in least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and Africa in general, demonstrate that South-South cooperation for sustainable development, as a complement to North-South cooperation, remains an important force for the successful preservation of biodiversity. South-South cooperation is therefore one of the key modalities for enhancing the implementation of this vital convention at the service of the legitimate development needs of the developing countries.

16. In conclusion, let me recall that since its inception, the Group of 77 has always attached fundamental importance to promoting economic and technical cooperation among developing countries through South-South initiatives. It is now up to us as member states to continue to work together to ensure that progress made to date in South-South cooperation can be advanced in the years to come in the arena of sustainable development.

17. Finally, I wish to commend the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, under the able leadership of Dr. Ahmed Djoghla for its commitment. We are confident that such initiatives can facilitate a new dimension in promoting South-South Cooperation for sustainable development and preservation of biodiversity.

I thank you.