



OPENING REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE K.D. KNIGHT , MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE, AT THE MEETING OF THE G77 HIGH-LEVEL PANEL OF EXPERTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM FOR THE SOUTH, THE JAMAICA PEGASUS HOTEL (Kingston, Jamaica, 29 August 2005)

Chairman,
Excellencies,
G77 Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Morning,

It is indeed a privilege for me to be sharing in the launch of this historic process as you seek to prepare a Development Platform which will provide a framework of development options to support effective participation and integration of developing countries into the global economy.

I extend to you all, on behalf of the Most Honourable P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister and the people of Jamaica, a very warm welcome to our country and I hope that your sojourn will be a pleasant, productive and memorable one.

The convening of this meeting is of immense importance as it represents not only a realization of the decision taken at the recently concluded Second South Summit but its outcome will seek to chart a new course for our Group in the face of the prevailing international realities.

This meeting is also being held at a critical juncture - on the eve of the High-Level Plenary of the General Assembly, in September 2005, when we will undertake the mid-term review of the implementation of the outcomes of the Second South Summit. As you are all aware, this process includes the preparation of a Platform for the South and is therefore, the *raison d'être* for your presence here in Kingston over the next two days.

I pay special tribute to the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the South Centre and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the keen interest that they have shown in this process and for the invaluable financial and technical assistance provided which have all combined to make this meeting a reality.

A Platform for the South – Beginnings

You will recall that the Prebisch Report entitled “ Towards a New Trade Policy for Development” together with the outcome of the First United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD I) formed the basis of the first Platform of the South which the newly born Group of 77 adopted as its own.

This was a manifestation of the need for collective action by developing countries to overcome marginalization; to advance new values and principles of democratization and multilateralism; to bring change in an inequitable system born out of the colonial and imperialist era; and to promote a global development strategy that takes account of the interests of developing countries and their peoples.

Since the Group's formation in the 1960s, the international environment has changed significantly. The gap between the rich and the poor, the developed and the developing has widened and global policy making in relation to finance, trade and technology continue to work against the interest of countries of the South.

The G77 is well placed to meet and overcome these challenges as the underlying policy rationale which inspired the formation of the Group has essentially remained unchanged. It has remained steadfast as a coalition keeping focus on the needs and interests of developing countries, it has enhanced the negotiating capacity of the South and has played a pivotal role in promoting an international agenda which takes account of the vital interests of the developing world.

Current Realities

The elaboration of a Platform for the South to take into account current realities is, therefore timely. It will strengthen the Group's capacity to address the prevailing challenges and provide a framework for enhanced collective action, thereby creating the means for improving the lives and welfare of the peoples of the South.

We need to be mindful that the process will only begin here in Kingston. The Platform for the South should be seen as a dynamic, evolving instrument which should be subjected to a continuing process of review in order to maintain the relevance and integrity of our Group in the years to come.

Let me further emphasize that the Platform must be translated into policy action and must impact positively on the lives of our peoples for it to be truly operational.

As Chair of the Group, Jamaica will do its utmost to ensure that the elaboration of a Platform for the South becomes a reality.

The task ahead of you is a significant one and I am optimistic that the fruits of your labour will have a treasured place when the history of the G77 is written.

I thank you.

This Report served as the main background document for UNCTAD I, held in Geneva in 1964