



**Statement by His Excellency Chief Arthur Mbanefo,
Chairman of the Group of 77 on the occasion of the flag-raising ceremony
Friday, 7 April 2000**

Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Ladies and gentlemen of the press,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen:

This is truly a moment of pride, joy and symbolism to see the flag of the Group of 77 flying in full majesty. Today marks the culmination of a long and challenging process that has successfully brought us to this spot, on which we have raised the flags of the Group of 77, of the host country Cuba, and of the United Nations. We are extremely grateful and indebted to the people and Government of Cuba for having afforded us this opportunity. With this event today we begin the final countdown to the first summit in the 36 years of the Group of 77. This is perhaps the first greatest historic gathering of leaders of States or Governments in the new millennium. It is evidently the result of the collective efforts of all those engaged in a single and sacred cause, the betterment and dignity of mankind. The Summit is the natural response, as well as the rebirth, of the Group of 77, which is today determined to cut the debilitating chains of the heavy legacy of poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization and a persistent feeling of hopelessness. The countries of the South are desirous of bringing hope through peace, development, growth, prosperity and happiness for all people by seeking new solutions, forging meaningful partnerships and ringing the bells for economic and social justice in a troubled world of deprived nations. The flags we have raised here today represent our wholehearted commitment to serve the most noble of all causes – PEACE – by ensuring the dignity of humanity as a whole and promoting human capacity to work, develop and prosper. The Summit will offer the unique opportunity to search for new paradigms and tools to be used by Governments and civil society for sustaining the prosperity of peoples and nations.

In the coming days, delegations from many nations around the world, and representatives from many walks of life, will gather here in pursuit of a profound mission: to ensure that this compelling and timely moment at the start of the 21st century articulates an animating vision for the Group of 77 – a vision supported by practical and effective measures that can make a real and positive difference in people's lives.

In this we take a step for the future of our children, a step that will assure them of a credible hope in that future, as they will inherit the new century. Let the message go out to the excluded and the deprived, to those seeking justice and dignity, that we shall not fail them. Let it be known that the Group is determined to continue the struggle to create a just world society and to open the doors to a new international alliance for the prosperity and welfare of mankind. When the children of today and those of tomorrow look back on this day, let them say, **there was in April 2000, at the start of this new century, a new beginning in Havana to our right to happiness.**

On behalf of the Group of 77 that I am honoured and proud to lead at this defining moment, I wish us all success in the week ahead. God bless you all.

[Return to the South Summit main page](#)