



STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE K.D. KNIGHT, QC, MP, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE OF JAMAICA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE HANDING-OVER CEREMONY OF THE GROUP OF 77 (New York , 12 January 2006)

Salutations

Minister Nkosazana Zuma, Chairman-elect of the Group of 77 and China
His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly
His Excellency Mr Kofi Annan, Secretary-General
His Excellency Mr. Kemal Dervis, Administrator of the UNDP
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

2005 was a year of continuous and intensive activity for the Group of 77 and China. We engaged in lengthy discussions and negotiations on important fundamental questions related to development co-operation, its place within the United Nations system, the institutions and focus of global management, the international policy environment, the flow of financial resources and institutional reform in the international system.

Last year when I spoke on assuming the Chairmanship, I identified some of the areas in which we would seek to achieve change and make progress for developing countries. I had specially mentioned increasing resource flows, improving global governance, formulating a development agenda, enhancing South-South cooperation and increasing global attention to disaster management and relief. We pursued these efforts in our participation in the examination of the High-Level Panel Report, the Millennium Project Report and the Secretary-General's recommendations for reform and emphasized the position of the Group that development should be given priority as a major pillar of the United Nations. We made no secret of our disappointment with the High-Level Panel Report's treatment of development issues; but found that the Millennium Project Report has had a very positive orientation, producing very valuable source material and policy proposals for strengthening international economic cooperation.

Advancing a development agenda within the UN reform process in preparation for the High-Level Plenary was long and arduous. Members will recall the extensive meetings, protracted debates and negotiations in which our Group sought to strengthen the content of development co-operation in the outcome of the High-Level Plenary in September. The result was not as substantive as we had hoped but it was enough to constitute a working agenda for promoting implementation. Of particular importance were the commitments for the increased mobilization of resources in relation to ODA as well as for debt relief which should significantly increase resource flows to developing countries.

The outcome, however, was not sufficient for significant change in relation to systemic issues and policy reform in the areas of trade, finance and technology, and in relation to the democratisation of global economic governance. The reality was that among our developed partners there were mixed responses and negative approaches which resisted change on these significant development issues. This made it difficult for any advance to be made on certain issues. In many respects, it was even difficult to get partners to reaffirm previous commitments to which they had agreed. The extent to which the Outcome Document will be considered successful will depend on the degree of its implementation and that must be a constant preoccupation of our Group in the foreseeable future.

With regard to reform of the system, it is of particular importance that the strengthening of ECOSOC be given major attention and for the Group to take a more forceful position in the reform process. The Outcome Document has provided a good framework but it requires serious and committed action to get the ECOSOC better placed to play a prominent role in the formulation, monitoring and coordination of international economic policies.

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

Within our own movement we embarked on significant initiatives during the year, chiefly in relation to South-South Cooperation. In March we held the XI th meeting of the IFCC in Havana, Cuba. New projects were proposed to enhance or deepen South-South Cooperation and some of the outstanding issues which needed attention were seriously addressed. One of them was the issue of the proposed South Trade and Development Bank. It was agreed

that a technical meeting should be held in May to determine the basis for further development of the proposal. From this meeting held in New York, the results of our analysis and deliberations suggested that the Group was not yet in a position to begin negotiations for operationalisation as a result of continuing difficulties over financing and institutional arrangements.

With regard to the G-77 Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), there remained a significant critical problem which has stalled its operations. We considered the Report of a Group of Experts which concluded that what was needed was a reform of the Charter of the Chamber and made appropriate recommendations. After consultation with the main stakeholders, we have proposed a special meeting of the General Assembly of the Chamber to deal with this issue.

In June the Second South Summit was held in Doha, Qatar. Following extensive negotiations, in the preparatory process, the Summit adopted a Plan of Action and Declaration to guide the overall policies and operational activities of the Group for the next five years. Of particular importance was the emphasis on South-South Cooperation seen as not just a minor accompaniment to North-South relations but as having greatly expanded potential for advancing our collective interests. We welcomed the announcement by the Emir of Qatar during the Summit for the establishment of a South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance and we expect that it will become fully operational in the near future.

I take this opportunity once again to express on behalf of the Group of 77 and China our deep appreciation for the generous and hospitable arrangements undertaken by Qatar in hosting the Summit. It constitutes a very significant contribution by the Government of Qatar to support the interests and needs of developing countries. In order that we achieve the maximum benefit, it is important that the South-South projects that were proposed during the Summit be elaborated further in order to develop partnerships and provide the basis for appropriate financing so that they can become operational as soon as possible.

THE WORK OF THE ECOSOC

2005 was also an active year for the Group in the work of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. The annual meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the UNCTAD was for the first time appropriately titled to take account of the full and important role that the UNCTAD plays in fostering discourse on development issues within the UN system. The exchange at the annual Spring meeting provided an important input to both the High-level Dialogue which was held in June as well as the separate meeting on Financing for Development which was held in the context of the High-level Plenary meeting in September. Our hope is that the outcome of both the Spring meeting and the High-level Dialogue can become more substantive in nature and provide more concrete policy guidance on international economic issues.

I should also highlight the significant 10 year reviews which were undertaken by both the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, in which the G77 was particularly active. I wish to make special mention of the able leadership provided by Ambassador Kumalo who presided over the work of the Commission for Social Development during this important review.

The strong need to empower the ECOSOC was reinforced this year in light of the failure to reach a substantive negotiated outcome for the High-level segment of the Council. This difficulty notwithstanding, we were able under the very active and energetic leadership of Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, to secure some important outcomes through special events as those convened on the Avian Flu and Food Security in Africa and to make a valuable contribution to the High-level Plenary process.

WORK OF THE G77 IN MAIN COMMITTEES

The work of the G77 was equally challenging in the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Committees in which the Group was very involved. As with previous years, the Group was able to maintain its strong position on issues of primary concern to developing countries – social and economic development and the overall management of the UN system.

It was particularly challenging to secure these objectives in an environment in which our developed partners were more interested in advancing security and human rights concerns at the expense of development issues. The Group will have to remain vigilant in its efforts to prevent such actions from prevailing. With respect to natural disasters, the need for increased global attention to disaster management and relief became even more critical in 2005 in light of the significant levels of destruction and suffering caused by natural disasters which occurred during the year. Through the General Assembly we kept on the UN Agenda the particular relevance of focusing not only on providing immediate relief but also for the critical need for the strengthening of countries' capacity for disaster management

and sustainability following natural disasters. The adoption of a G77 sponsored resolution in that regard is encouraging and now requires implementation by all states with the support of the UN system.

STRENGTHENED/IMPROVED INTERNAL COORDINATION

In the course of 2005 arrangements were made for improving working relationships with various Chapters of the Group. Throughout the year, there was ongoing collaboration with the Geneva Chapter during the preparations for the High-Level Plenary, a special consultation with the G-24 in Washington on financial and monetary issues and we co-ordinated on environmental and human settlement issues with the Nairobi Chapter. However, much more needs to be done to improve the flow of information for more effective coordination and consultation. As part of this effort, during the year we installed video conferencing facilities in the G-77 Office to facilitate better co-ordination.

In particular, we believe that closer collaboration with the G-24 in Washington is desirable as we continue our endeavours to influence decision-making in the Bretton Woods Institutions. At some point there will be need to review the membership of this Group of 24 to ensure the involvement of all members of the Group of 77 in its work. This could be done at a future meeting of the IFCC.

During 2005 we also sought to develop further the technical basis to improve policy coordination among developing countries in negotiations. The question of the formulation of a Development Platform for the South was discussed at a Group of Experts meeting that was hosted in Kingston in August. The meeting agreed on the overall framework for a Platform and further work needs to be done to complete the project. We see this as a matter which is important for promoting internal cohesion and co-ordination in international negotiations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today we pass the baton to my friend the Foreign Minister of South Africa. During 2006 there will be many follow-up matters to be pursued and new challenges to be faced. Most immediate are those relating to UN reform for which significant negotiations will be held during the first half of this year. It is essential that we remain positively engaged in that process, resist coercive pressures and ensure that whatever reform is achieved will result in the strengthening of the UN, the mainstreaming of the development agenda and increasing efficiency in the overall management of the Secretariat. It is of great importance that nothing happens that will lead to any marginalisation of developing countries in the future evolution of the system.

As for our internal processes, I have already mentioned the expansion of South-South Cooperation, the further development of South initiatives and more effective cooperation between institutions of the South. During 2005, we developed a good working relationship with the South Centre. Particular attention, we believe, should also be paid to the Third World Academy of Science and Trieste System for the promotion of science and technology in developing countries. Within the UN system, an institution of continuing importance for us is UNCTAD. We should ensure its continued vitality as a principal agent of policy support for development and to maintain its distinctive orientation on issues of development policy to provide ideas to be fed into the system in order to promote reform and change in support of development. The promotion of broad policy options and policy space and equitable arrangements in the system and the means for achieving these objectives must constantly be the focus of research and creative thinking.

These are significant challenges in the way ahead and we rest assured that they are in the very safe hands of Minister Zuma, Ambassador Kumalo and the South African delegation. They and their country have earned our confidence by prevailing in a struggle which in many ways defines the essence of our aspirations and interests. The same fighting spirit forged in the struggle over injustice and inequality is needed today to overcome inequity in international economic relations. In this they will need our collective support. Unity is strength and the maintenance of solidarity will be critical in the struggles ahead.

In the course of 2005 Jamaica benefited from the strength of solidarity within the movement in helping to meet the challenges throughout the year. We thank delegations for their support and particularly those who volunteered as co-ordinators and Chaired working groups. We also enjoyed the support of a number of individuals. In the Secretariat, we received significant cooperation from Under-Secretary-General Ocampo and the DESA, the UNCTAD and the UNDP especially from the Unit for South-South Cooperation under the energetic leadership of Mr. Yiping Zhou. We also benefited from collaboration with the South Centre on various development matters.

I also take the opportunity to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for its assistance, as well as the OPEC Fund and the UNDP which assisted us in some projects.

I must express our deep appreciation for the work done by the technical Secretariat headed by Executive Secretary

Mr. Mourad Ahmia. It is a small group but it has heavy responsibilities and they worked very hard in 2005. I make special mention of Mr. Arturo Lozano who was tireless in his efforts and made an exceptional contribution. I thank also Mr. Vincent Wilkinson and Mrs. Marcelle Alexandre for their assistance and spirit of co-operation.

All of these individuals and institutions gave us great help in a year of very difficult negotiations. We hope that we have been able to make a meaningful difference through our Chairmanship and hope to leave a legacy on which our successor can build. As we handover to South Africa, we pledge that Jamaica will remain active, committed and reliable in support of the Chair and in advancing the interests of developing countries.

Thank you.

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