

"UNITY IS OUR FOREMOST STRENGTH"
**INAUGURAL STATEMENT BY IBRAHIM ABU ATILEH, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN,
ON TAKING OFFICE AS CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77 FOR 2010**
Rome, 16 December 2009

On the occasion of taking the duties as G77 Chair, I would like to express my gratitude to the Near East Group for nominating me to this position for the year 2010, and for their trust -which will encourage me to do all my best to handle such responsibility. I also thank all of you for approving the Near East Group nomination.

Here I recognize the effort made by the outgoing Chair, His Excellency the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic, Mario Arvelo. I will be pleased to rely on the cooperation of the new G77 Vice-Chair, who will come from the Africa Group .

As the largest intergovernmental organization of developing States in the United Nations, the G77 -since its establishment on 15 June 1964- provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests, enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system, and promote South-South cooperation for development.

Our Group has been established by signatories of the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva. Although the membership of the G77 has increased to 130 countries, the original name was retained because of its historic significance.

Our countries agreed to sustain and consolidate the unity of tactics and strategies in negotiations within the international system. Our Governments affirmed, correctly, that such unity of principles and actions is essential to promote international cooperation, in order to boost development and eradicate poverty. As it is well known, the developing countries indeed have a common vision on the challenges we have mandated FAO, IFAD, and WFP to face.

The main objective for me as Chair is to bring efforts together through effective coordination. In order to achieve this objective, we must strengthen our communication mechanisms, as well as keep open channels with other countries. There are 81 G77 Permanent Representations in Rome, so coordination and unity in our positions is our foremost strength.

We know that 2009 was a crucial year, in which we approved the process for reforming and strengthening FAO. Reforming the Committee on World Food Security, approving the Program of Work and Budget for 2010-11, approving the outcomes of all Technical Committees meetings and, above all, the outcome of the World Food Summit, were activities in which our position was clear and effective. So I thank the outgoing Chair and all G77 Permanent Representatives.

We will continue our efforts to optimize our positions, either in the implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO renewal, the implementation of WFP's Strategic Plan, as well as IFAD's Strategic Plan. We should keep in mind that the number of hungry people has grown above a billion, and that almost all of them live within our borders.

We should also note that 2010 will be a year of Regional Conferences and meetings of the Technical Committees. The outcomes must be followed and recognized, as we continue our process of coordination in order to reflect our interests. The work ahead for the year will force us to focus our efforts and provide mutual support to each other.

And here I would like to mention that the financial status of the G77 Trust Fund is critical, as we ask all Members to pay the symbolic annual contribution and, especially, to make extraordinary donations to support the long-term sustainability of the Fund.

My tenure, as well as the preceding ones, is at the service of all in general and of everyone in particular, to continue working enthusiastically in support of our common interests.

Thank you very much.