



MESSAGE FROM H.E. AMBASSADOR DUMISANI KUMALO, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, TO THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE IPS SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL MEETING

(Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 21 November 2006)

1. I am honored and privileged to share with you the vision and views of the Group of 77 on the new dimension of South-South and North-South communications. But allow me at the outset to congratulate the Inter-Press Service (IPS) for this important initiative focusing on the New Dimension of South-South and South-North Communications. In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77, I would like to express our appreciation and encouragement for IPS mission in disseminating information with a particular focus on developing countries. I would also like to congratulate the Director General of IPS, Mr. Mario Lubetkin, for his outstanding leadership and dedicated vision.
2. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the strategic partnership that we have developed with IPS over the years especially in the publication of the “Journal of the Group of 77” for which IPS North America has been a strong partner for the last 20 years.
3. As IPS was established the same year as the Group of 77, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate IPS for its forty-second birthday. During the past four decades, IPS has supported the South in reporting and analyzing global processes affecting the economic and social development in general. By promoting public awareness on issues of critical interest to developing countries IPS has supported the Group of 77’s work at the global level. We are encouraged by the tremendous contribution of IPS on issues related to the economic and social growth of developing countries especially in the context of globalization, as well as by its involvement in the debate about the information society.
4. The need for a multi-stakeholder approach to communication and technology reflects the reality of today's global system in which it is required that all partners become involved to create an inclusive information society, people centered and development focused. As a result of globalization, communications have experienced a rapid expansion that has paved the way for various forms of partnerships.
5. The Group of 77 is particularly pleased that it has been acknowledged that Information Communication Technology can also be a powerful tool for development, and that it can offer many opportunities to the disadvantaged sectors of society. Yet for many developing countries, with limited access, this still poses a great challenge. Indeed, the creation of an inclusive and development-oriented Information Society is in the best interests of the international community, because most of the peoples of the world, especially from the developing countries, are confronted by the challenge of exclusion, in the context of the global economy.
6. South-South communications is the tool by which people from the South are improving their abilities and enhancing their capacity. Institutions such as IPS are disseminating information on development issues to empower the South and assist it to create an environment that fosters sustainable development. South-South communication is also enhanced through training, joint venture activities and programmes of exchange in order to provide developing countries with reliable sources of news and information to broaden their wealth of information and develop their knowledge economy.

7. Civil society groups, leaders, and decision makers in the public and private arenas are being well equipped with increased awareness about the impact of their decisions in operations and services for economic development. Through South-South communication as well as North-South communications, developing countries are joining efforts at the global level to pursue the challenge of alleviating poverty and enhancing development and growth. The deepening of communication partnerships continues to fuel the quest for development including among other things, the struggle against dreadful diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the battle against hunger and malnutrition. Topics such as environment preservation and microcredit are shaping the understanding of many populations of the developing countries and strengthening their ability to overcome hardships. Social partnerships in the communications field are strengthening and improving the impact of communications on people's daily lives.

8. Today South-South Communications is an essential vehicle in the consolidation of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries. The combination of South-South and North-South partnership will create an enabling environment for economic growth. During the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar from 12 to 16 June 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 stressed in the Doha Plan of Action (paragraph 32) the need to increase human and institutional capacity in developing countries for information communications technologies, including through the development of technology infrastructure and the expansion of science and engineering faculties. They have also called for the bridging of the digital divide between the North and the South in a manner that would facilitate enhanced access of developing countries.

9. Furthermore, the World Summit on the Information Society has reiterated in its Plan of Action that the objectives are to put the potential of knowledge and information communications technologies at the service of development, to promote the use of information and knowledge for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and to address new challenges of the Information Society, at the national, regional and international levels. In this context, we encourage IPS not only to continue its support but to increase the assistance in order to allow the Southern news agencies to promote a global communication environment aimed at ensuring universal access with equal opportunities for all and also to support the Group's effort to establish a global South Network of news agencies.

10. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the availability of information across the globe has changed all human aspects of life. The ability to adopt and implement this information will transform positively the reality of the people of the South. The role of IPS is to continue to assist the South in these complex transformations and promote actions that will strengthen a South-South partnership for information and communication through the establishment of a Global South Network of News Agencies (GSNA).

I wish all success to your deliberations.