

**Opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador S.R. Insanally, Permanent Representative of Guyana to the UN,
Chairman of the Group of 77 at the Opening Ceremony of the 26th Meeting of the
Chairmen/Coordinators of the Group of 77 Chapters**

Geneva, 6 April 1999

Excellencies, distinguished Chairmen/Coordinators of the Chapters,
Mr. Chairman of the G-24,
Mr. Secretary General of UNCTAD,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the distinct honour and privilege to address this Plenary meeting of the Group of 77 on the occasion of the 26th Annual Meeting of the Chairmen/Coordinators of the Group of 77 Chapters.

At the outset, I would like to express, in my capacity as the Chairman of the Group of 77 in New York, my deep gratitude to the Chairmen/Coordinators of the Group of 77's various Chapters for your presence at this meeting. Your participation is testimony to your commitment to strengthen the capacity of our Group to better serve the interests of our membership.

May I also convey our deep appreciation to the Geneva Chapter and UNCTAD for the excellent arrangements made for the hosting of this meeting. We are especially grateful to His Excellency Ambassador Patrick Sinyinza of Zambia and to UNCTAD Secretary General, Mr. Rubens Ricupero for their personal contribution. And may reiterate our satisfaction at seeking the appointment of Mr. Ricupero for a further terms as head of UNCTAD, an organisation devoted to promoting the cause of our developing countries.

Our thanks are also due to all G-77 Chapters and their support units for their valuable contribution and support in the preparation of this meeting.

I welcome you all to this 26th meeting of our Chapters in the historic city of Geneva, the birthplace of the Group of 77.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting this year coincides with the commemoration of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Group of 77 and the preparations for the tenth session of UNCTAD and the South Summit. As such, in celebration our past gains, we must look to the future to see how these can be consolidated and maximised. To this end, we should strive to harmonize our approaches and positions to ensure efficient and effective representation of the interests of our countries.

The G-77 Ministerial declaration adopted by our Ministers last September represents a solid platform for future action. The Communiqué adopted by our last meeting also embodied many of our concerns. We should review these records with an eye to devising appropriate strategies by which our objectives can be achieved.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting at a time of great uncertainty and expectations as we enter the new millenium. The economic crisis that has affected most of our countries is a major threat to our future stability and growth. We can do no

less for our people than to reflect upon the problems which we face and attempt to find adequate solutions with collective determination and endeavour, we may yet hope to overcome adversity and find a safe road to development.

The obstacles are many and formidable. Yet, by concerted action we may be able to take advantage of those opportunities which may arise for making progress. This year's calendar of activities including the preparation for a forum on financing for development, UNCTAD X, the South Summit and the Millennium Assembly should be fully explored in search of a new and more enlightened basis for international cooperation.

This forum, which brings together annually all our Chapters for a few days, provides for a useful exchange of views on priority issues for the South. It also allows for a meeting with the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of UNCTAD both of whom are closely involved in the development process. Out of our meeting should therefore come fresh and focussed thinking on how we may best fulfill the tasks that lie ahead.

I am now pleased to invite Mr. Abdelkrim Harchaoui, Minister of Finance of Algeria, Chairman of the Group of 24 to address the meeting.

Thank you.