



**Statement by His Excellency Sule Lamido, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the Group of 77, at the opening ceremony of the ministerial segment of the South Summit, Havana, Cuba, 11 April 2000**

Our distinguished host, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to welcome you all to this Ministerial segment of the first ever South Summit. On behalf of my colleagues, I wish to express our profound appreciation to our distinguished host, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque for the generous hospitality and excellent arrangements which have been put in place for the Summit. I also wish to thank the Cuban government, particularly the officials who have worked tirelessly to ensure the successful take-off of this historic meeting.

Excellencies,

Our officials continue to work on the two main Documents before this Summit. The first document will be the Declaration. We expect that the Declaration out of Havana will demonstrate to the entire world our solidarity of purpose and determination to promote and foster development among and within our countries. It should also set an over-arching vision on global economic and social issues as we perceive them in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The second Document is the Programme of Action. This particular document is being deliberately set out in a format that will allow its quick examination. More importantly, we expect it to be strictly in line with the mandate of our Group, that the document should be action oriented, focused, with clearly defined measures, targets and time frame. We expect it to focus on the priority issues before our Group, namely, Globalisation, Knowledge and Technology, South-South Cooperation and North-South Relations. On each of these issues, we expect that the course of action we intend to pursue will be clearly spelt out. These measures and proposals which we shall commit ourselves to at this meeting, will certainly advance the interest of the South within the framework of the priority themes of our Summit. Their faithful implementation will also move us closer to the overall objective of advancing the development of our countries and promoting the well-being of our peoples.

We also expect that the Programme of Action will contain Institutional Follow-up Arrangements in accordance with our mandate to re-energise our Group towards our cherished goals. Of particular importance is the question of the establishment of a Secretariat for the G77. We are all aware that this is an issue we have tried to grapple with in the past without much success. Certainly, the activities which we

shall map out from this historic Summit will most certainly be beyond the capacity of the few hands that currently assist us in New York. We, therefore, need to devote some time to deliberate on how we can put in place an effective mechanism for the achievement of the objectives we have set for ourselves. In this regard, we need to examine, critically and pronounce on this important issue.

Without prejudging the outcome of our discussion, I must emphasise that if we want our Group to be effective, we should be ready to support a well-staffed and adequately funded Secretariat. The current situation of maintaining a skeletal staff in New York places too much burden on the country that assumes the chairmanship of our Group. Perhaps more importantly, it hampers the effective implementation of our programmes.

To ensure that the G77 is able to adequately respond to the challenges and responsibilities which arise out of this Summit, we must be prepared to make some modest financial contributions. In this regard, we should not leave Havana without agreeing on an annual contribution to support the Office of the Chairman and the Secretariat. By so doing, we would have taken a concrete step to make this Summit a historic meeting and a turning point in the life of our Group. Therefore, let us truly make the year 2000 the year to consolidate the solidarity of G77 in our efforts to create a better future for the peoples of the South. Indeed, our Programme of Action should be a call to action, and a clarion call to our governments and entire peoples of the South.

Excellencies,

You will observe that our programme of work for this meeting provides for interactive session. This session will be devoted to the Role of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I trust that we shall use the session for frank discussions and exchange of views on this very important issue.

Before I conclude, I wish to express our gratitude to our officials for the time and energy they have invested and are still investing in the preparation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action. Undoubtedly, these two documents, when eventually adopted, will launch our Group on a new path of development and international cooperation.

In conclusion, I am confident that our Group will leave Havana stronger and more united. Armed with the mandate to be spelt out in the Declaration and the Programme of Action, we can look forward to active participation and involvement in various meetings, particularly those scheduled for this year and targeted at promoting peace, security and development. These meetings include the Millennium Summit and Conference on Financing for Development.

At these events, much would be expected of G77. We wish to assure you that Nigeria will spare no efforts in continuing to rally our Group towards the attainment of our common objectives.

I thank you.