

Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran), at the closing session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Brussels, 20 May 2001

Mr. President,
Distinguished Colleagues,

We have finally arrived at the finale of LDC-III. Quite a long journey, tremendous efforts by quite a large number of governments and institutions, and above all, hard work and dedication of so many individuals and for so long. All of which cannot but receive the deep gratitude and appreciation of the Group of 77 and China. We are indeed thankful to the European Union for hosting the Conference and the excellent arrangements here in Brussels and to UNCTAD, Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero and his colleagues, for all the preparations and delivery, both organizational and substantive, and also for their long-term service to the cause of the LDCs.

But, here we are, all set to sign off at the closing ceremony of an important international gathering dedicated to the cause of the less fortunate members of our global family. It is, I presume, much easier to utter the words of appreciation and say *au revoir* than to be tempted to make an attempt at reflection and assessment. And perhaps these very last minutes and moments of our long journey together – which will certainly continue beyond Brussels 2001 – are simply not the right occasion for a sober, cool-headed appraisal. A few words, nevertheless, have to be said. And I grant that even the Chairman of the Group of 77, representing the developing countries, would find it rather inopportune to be as realistic and objective as he personally or the Group in its collectivity would have liked or preferred to be.

We have just adopted the Programme of Action and the Political Declaration. And all of us know fully well how much precious human effort; that is, genuine cooperation, hard negotiation, and no doubt, inevitable compromise, has gone into their preparation and made final agreement possible, at long last and up until early hours of this very same day. Well, these are valuable documents. They embody the collective will of the entire international community in its determination to meet the challenge of responding to the plight of the least developed community. The Declaration, by its very *raison d'être*, is supposed to send a clear, strong message and signal from the LDC-III Conference to the bigger world out there, to everybody, and announce the achievements made here in Brussels. The Programme of Action, the compilation of a wide range of policy guidelines, measures and actions in various fields, represents, by its very nature, the very achievements made at the Conference.

Given the high hopes and the grand promises made previously, including those in the opening statements of the leaders and high officials, particularly from the developed North – and just to mention the Prime Minister of Sweden and the President of France – what has finally found its way into the Programme of Action as real and actual commitments, concrete and new deliverables, is not as much as we would have liked to see. The actual outcome, when put in the context of the tragic and dehumanizing dimensions of the reality out there in the world, and more so, when compared with expectations and requirements of the situation, leaves much more to be achieved in the future. It is just a beginning in a far longer journey. This outcome, however judged or assessed, does nevertheless reflect the rather sad state of relations in this world of ever-widening and seemingly unbridgeable chasms. There is only so much on the table now.

But, let's be practical and look at the full part of the glass, which brings us to what lies ahead beyond Brussels; that is, the all important question of follow-up and implementation. I remain confident that everybody here agrees with the assertion that the success in attaining the objectives of the Programme of Action does, in the first place and in the final analysis, depend on its effective implementation, follow-up,

monitoring and review at the national, regional and global levels. The LDCs themselves hardly need to be further reminded of what they need to do for themselves, or at least not to be reminded by their developing fellow-travelers. That leaves us with the regional and global levels, for which we have agreed on a number of measures, including the request made to the UN Secretary-General. We in the Group of 77 and China look forward with anticipation to receive the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly and consider its recommendations towards the establishment of necessary follow-up mechanisms. Full, expeditious and honest implementation of the provisions of the Programme of Action by all the parties, partners and stakeholders is incumbent upon all. Political will made agreement on the outcome possible. It is equally imperative for its implementation.

To conclude, Mr. President, let me express, once again, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our most sincere appreciation to you and the European Union, and to Ambassadors Scarvee, magistad, Kittikhoun and Chowdhury, all the LDC facilitators negotiating on behalf of the Group of 77 and all the negotiators across the board. And a word of special thanks to Dr. Awni Behnam of UNCTAD and all his colleagues in the Secretariat of the Conference. Of course it is simply impossible to mention innumerable names and give credit where it is due.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.