

Statement by Dr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the Twenty-fifth Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77

New York, 16 November 2001

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Administrator,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to see you all here at the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77, whose timing this year, along with the General Debate of the General Assembly and a number of other high-level gatherings, has been impacted by the fallout from the tragic events of September 11. If those tragic events and their equally tragic on-going consequences were to teach us anything it would not but be the reiteration, to the point of certainty, the fundamental and urgent necessity of genuine international cooperation and multilateralism across the board, and not merely in the area of peace and security. Moreover, it should be clear now to the international community in its entirety, much more than any time in the past, that achievement of real, comprehensive, long-term development and effective combating against the scourge of poverty and its associated ills provides the best guarantee against such evils as terrorism.

We in the developing world fully concur with you, Mr. Secretary-General, on the necessity of addressing the root causes; as also underlined a few days ago by President Khatami at the General Assembly. And we stand ready to help you and the United Nations in this enterprise. I suppose this should also be the most opportune moment for me to extend, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our most sincere felicitations to the Secretary-General, and through him, to the Organization, for the well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize. While wishing you every success in your valuable, untiring efforts, particularly now your second term is about to begin, I should reiterate, as I did during the turn-over ceremony, the high expectations of the developing world – the Group of 77 – with regard to the development agenda of the United Nations in the years to come. Success of this unique universal organization in effectively promoting genuine, substantive development on a global scale will certainly make a difference towards a better, more humane, and hence, more secure international environment, for the humankind and the generations to come.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Let me now turn to our immediate business before us. The Meeting's agenda is clearly indicative of the very substantial and substantive work we have on our hands today. As you can see it reflects some of our major activities thus far in the year, a number of important processes we have gone through during the year – including the LDCs Conference in Brussels - as well as some other on-going and future processes. We have had a very busy year, and a very successful one at that. I am sure you share that impression and feeling with me. I do not, however, intend to present a progress report to you here, if for no other reason than the sheer size and importance of the substantive agenda items before us and the few precious hours we have. The agenda has been organized in such a manner to allow us focus on a number of priority areas – under agenda item 4. A number of other reports on some of the other major activities of the Group would be presented by Ambassador Asadi.

The draft Ministerial Statement, for which we are deeply grateful to our Senior Officials, is a good document. As I am informed the New York Colleagues had wished it to be as concise and compact as possible, even shorter than the final agreed text we have before us. It well represents the major aspects of our agenda this

year and addresses our concerns. With the Havana Declaration as the main foundation and framework of our current analysis of and approach to the fundamental issues before the Group and the Havana Programme of Action as our practical platform and action guide, I believe – we believe - the Ministerial Statement can be as brief and focused as possible, lending itself to the areas of urgent and immediate priority.

Having said this, I would start with the International Conference on Financing for Development. As you remember, I wrote to you, back in early August, on the imperative of substantive preparations for this Conference which is indeed the most important multilateral process before the international community, particularly for the developing world – also emphasized in very strong terms by President Khatami in his General Assembly address. As underlined in my communication, given the historical significance of this Conference and the wide range of substantive issues involved, we should take it upon ourselves to ensure that it will have a substantive outcome commensurate with the requirements of the long-term development of the South. I believe that achievement of a substantive outcome in Monterrey is in itself a strategic accomplishment for the process. Also in the same communication, I stressed the importance of achieving coherence and coordination at the national level among all the relevant players and stakeholders. As we draw closer to the Conference, all of us need to ensure that our respective national delegations going to Monterrey will be well-prepared, and more important, well-coordinated, on all substantive issues, particularly systemic issues.

With hindsight, it could now be asserted that the deliberations in the Preparatory Committee meeting last month took us a step further in the process. These deliberations provided us with a better and more nuanced appraisal of the bigger picture and the complexities involved in the successful pursuit of the process. While we look forward to the new text for serious negotiation in January, we need to remain vigilant that important quarters and stakeholders need to continue their full participation and increase their substantive interaction. Also at a more practical level, the last PrepCom makes further articulation by us of a clear, coherent negotiating strategy all the more compelling. Considering that the Monterrey Conference is not the end of the Financing for Development process, we need to devise an appropriate strategy, comprising of both short-term objectives and longer-term vision. As for the short-term; that is, between now and mid-March, we should, as a matter of priority, focus on a number of issues in all six areas of the substantive agenda that could be achieved in Monterrey, which would in turn serve as a solid and reliable foundation for further work and pursual in the future. We shall certainly avoid the rather easy temptation of a long catalogue of demands – legitimate and justified as they might be.

Equally important is the necessity of mustering political support, at the highest possible level, for the Mexico Conference. Active, high-level, and most certainly, universal, participation in this gathering, will serve as an unmistakable message to the international community on the importance and standing of the Conference as well as of the expectations involved. All of us have a role to play in this regard, individually and collectively. And now that I have Mr. Kofi Annan right next to me, let me emphasize that he, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, can make a tremendous contribution in giving the Conference a high profile and placing it on the political radar of Heads of State and Government. I am already informed of his help in this regard, for which I am grateful, and I am sure he will assist the process further.

Next I turn to trade, a very critical issue for all of us in the developing world, and also one of the six major issues on the substantive agenda of the Financing for Development process. As you are all aware, thanks to the excellent work of the colleagues in Geneva, the Group of 77 managed - notwithstanding major difficulties known to all of you - to develop a common position that was presented as an input to the Doha Conference. And it is a matter of great satisfaction that the Conference took place as scheduled in Doha. The Doha Conference has concluded its work and issued its outcome. I suppose we are all aware of the final outcome, and have also heard the news and commentaries on the airwaves. It may simply be too early for the Group of 77 to come up with a considered analysis of where we stand on the outcome and what it really means for the future of international trading system. And I do not venture to present any personal speculation at this stage.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The World Summit on Sustainable development (WSSD), the third major area I would like to address, is, from our point of view, a unique opportunity for a sober reflection and objective-stocktaking. In Johannesburg, the international community should be able to undertake a comprehensive assessment of achievements, constraints and shortcomings of a decade of policy development and policy implementation since UNCED. The Summit should, on the basis of such an assessment, arrive at a holistic, realistic appraisal of the real challenges in the field of sustainable development as understood in Rio, and furthermore, agree on practical ways and means for effective implementation of the provisions of the Agenda 21 and all the international agreements emanating from it. In this particular regard, let me just say how pleased we are that the Kyoto Protocol has become ratifiable. Its entry into force will undoubtedly make an important, substantive contribution to the WSSD. I feel particularly proud that the Bonn Agreements were achieved, as is widely recognized, due to the extremely positive and constructive role the Group of 77 and its Chairman played in Bonn and also just last week in COP-7 in Marrakech. These two important Conferences could not have embraced success without the critical contribution of the Group of 77. Moreover, at the practical level, the Johannesburg Summit should set concrete measures and time-bound targets, particularly with respect to means of implementation. For us, a very tangible measure for the Summit's success lies in its achieving real progress in the areas of priority to the developing world, most notably, provision of requisite financial resources, technology transfer and capacity- building. The developing world can hardly be expected to make a real headway in protecting environment if the other two pillars of sustainable development – economic growth and social development – fail to receive the commensurate attention they deserve. That is exactly why the question of international sustainable development governance needs to be addressed in earnest in the preparatory process leading to the Johannesburg Summit.

Having addressed the Financing for Development process and WSSD, as two major areas of immediate concern and yet strategic interest to the developing countries, let me further underline that their importance is not only due to the substance of the issues involved but equally, and perhaps even more so, because of the serious long-term implications these processes have for the future of multilateralism. I have on a previous occasion drawn attention to the rather sad – and unacceptable – trend of gradual and increasing downgrading of developmental aspects within the framework of multilateral work and activities. Furthermore, the still on-going globalization process which now can be clearly reckoned as to have failed the poor, has made the situation all the more complex and has undermined, even if inadvertently, the basis for international cooperation. Still worse, recent developments at the international level seem to have further shifted the attention away from development to the area of peace and security, particularly when narrowly defined. It is within this unfavourable overall context and global environment that we believe genuine multilateralism and international cooperation for development needs a new boost; morally, politically and no less importantly, in an institutional and organizational manner. And the buck stops here at the United Nations. I dealt with some aspects of this issue in January and do not belabour the point any further now.

Of the two major on-going processes just discussed, let me underline further that the Financing for Development process is the litmus test for the future of multilateral work and international cooperation. The outcome of that Conference will demonstrate, in a very tangible way, whether the North has taken cognizance of the inevitable need for reform in the institutional arrangements established decades ago and also whether they are willing and ready to play in accordance with the real exigencies and requirements of our times. The inclusive and participatory nature of this process, having also managed to bring to the negotiating table such institutional stakeholders as the BWIs, should be able to convince all relevant and involved quarters to work for a substantive outcome. On our part, as clearly demonstrated in the process thus far, we are fully committed to preserve the process and future negotiations as participatory and inclusive as it has been all along. In a more general sense, and beyond the confines of any particular process, we are committed to the further strengthening of North-South relations in general, and with the G-8 in particular, and as a matter of priority. In this context, it has to be mentioned, however, that we expect a more forthcoming attitude and

approach by the G-8 than has been the case. Promotion of cooperation in a manner and to the degree required in the much changed and unfortunately charged current international atmosphere calls for an open attitude and activist, dynamic engagement from the North and the G-8. The real world as we are facing – the whole international community I mean – needs a more democratic and just global governance. Toward this objective, the Monterrey Conference occupies a special place. The international community in its totality, and the United Nations system, should not allow this unique, unprecedented summit to fail. None of us will be able to take the consequences of a possible failure in Mexico.

And a very brief word on the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-III). As everybody is aware, the Group of 77 was fully engaged in the preparatory process as well as in the Conference itself. The Brussels Conference should have achieved more. But, what matters most now is to ensure the full implementation of all the provisions of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action. In this regard, we are looking forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up mechanism. Given the range of views within the intergovernmental body and all the parameters and nuances involved, I rest assured that the report will contribute to a speedy, smooth consideration of the relevant agenda item in the Second Committee and the General Assembly. Now, there exists a distinct possibility to devise a sound arrangement that would further strengthen the Organization's work for the development of the LDCs and yet would not weaken or undermine UNCTAD.

Dear Colleagues,

While the Group of 77 supports North-South relations, even as a strategic policy track, as I characterized it back in January, there could be little doubt that we have always cherished South-South cooperation and we continue to do. Over the past two decades, since Caracas, the Group has adopted numerous policy decisions, declarations and plans of action to further consolidate this cooperation. The latest manifestation of which is to be found in the Tehran Consensus, as adopted by the Tenth Meeting of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCC-X), which was held from 18-22 August 2001 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting, which took place after a hiatus of five years, was attended by high-level representatives of over 100 countries and international organizations. [It was a pleasure to have Mr. Malloch Brown in Tehran as the Administrator as well as in his capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General]. The meeting resolved to move forcefully and urgently towards five strategic objectives: consolidating the South-South platform; building stronger southern institutions at the global level; bridging the knowledge and information gap; building broad-based partnerships; and mobilizing global support for advancing South-South cooperation. For effective and meaningful support, the Tehran Consensus urged the international community, including the United Nations system, to re-examine their development policies and practices and to provide vigorous catalytic support, including the requisite financial support, to all forms of South-South cooperation. The Consensus also lent its support to the ideas of launching an International Decade on South-South cooperation and designation of a United Nations Day for South-South cooperation.

While on this subject, I would like to underline two important points. The first concerns our own performance in this critical area. And I have to be frank about it. Despite the growing pattern of cooperation among developing countries over time, one has to admit that it has not been commensurate with the existing capabilities and capacities in the South nor with the rather comprehensive range of commitments we have agreed in our past documents – including, in particular, the final outcome of the South Summit. We have to do more, on ourselves and by ourselves, individually and collectively, and of course, for ourselves. The second point, intimately related to the first, concerns the catalytic support that the South needs from the international community, as I just referred to, in order to be able to take full advantage of the potentials of South-South cooperation. Yes, we have to do a lot of homework and yes, the international community should be supportive of our efforts, for both of us to espouse realistic hope that successful realization of the huge, untapped potentials of cooperation in the South will help towards narrowing the existing yawning gap

between the developed and developing countries. We simply cannot continue to lament the unacceptability of the situation. We, ourselves, have to undertake to change it.

My Fellow Ministers,
Excellencies,

I cannot end my statement without addressing, once more, the question of unity and solidarity of the Group of 77, a very legitimate, constant preoccupation of us all, and whose faithful preservation and strengthening is incumbent upon all and each one of us. The distinguished colleagues here hardly need to be reminded that the survival of the Group of 77 as the sole universal representative of the developing world has been ensured through strict respect for and adherence to its cherished principles. Principles of universal participation, transparency and decision-making through consensus must always guide the work of the Group of 77 which is the basis of its unity and solidarity. I do not intend to repeat what I asserted in my statement at the beginning of our tenure this year. I just would like to reaffirm them. Only what is acceptable to the Group, in its entirety, merits to be pursued.

Thank you very much for your kind indulgence.