



STATEMENT BY H.E. MR LUWELLYN LANDERS, DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE HANDOVER CEREMONY OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77 (New York, 12 January 2016)

Your Excellency, Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand;

Your Excellency, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations;

Your Excellency, Ambassador Kairat Adrakhmanov, Acting-President of the UN General Assembly;

Your Excellency, Mourad Ahmia, Executive Secretary of the Group of 77;

Excellencies;

It is an honour that I address you on the occasion of the conclusion of South Africa's Chairing of the Group of 77 and China. I wish to convey my Government's sincere gratitude to all Members of the Group for the support, guidance and assistance accorded to our delegation during our tenure.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the G77 Secretariat for its outstanding support and guidance. Their unwavering support throughout the year was vital to the successful work of the Group.

I would also like to thank the former and present Presidents of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations Secretariat as well as the wider United Nations System for their continued valuable support to the Group. We also recognise the cooperation of Developed Partners which reaffirms the G77 and China position that North-South Cooperation remains at the core of the global partnership for development.

Excellencies;

We live in a world in which global economic relations are characterised by uncertainty and imbalances that result in the continued marginalization of developing countries. When we assumed the Chair of the Group of 77 and China we assured you that we would aspire to reaffirm the principles of the Group and strengthen our unity, cohesion and vision of a fair and equitable multilateral system. We also undertook to spare no effort in continuing to ensure that we collectively enhanced the development agenda of the South.

The last year has indeed been a momentous year in the history of the United Nations. As the organisation celebrated its 70th anniversary, it reaffirmed its role as the premier body seized with advancing multilateralism. Over the last twelve months, we as Member States have negotiated and agreed on significant multilateral outcomes which will guide our economic, social and environmental development for the next few years.

In all these processes, the Group of 77 and China played a crucial role in pursuing the interests of the millions of people living in developing countries. It is surely a tribute to the solidarity and collective spirit of our membership that ensured that the Group was able to pursue significant outcomes that protected the interests of developing countries and advanced the development agenda of the South.

Excellencies;

At the Paris Climate Change Conference last December, the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) unanimously adopted the Paris Agreement and a package of supporting decisions covering climate action in the pre - and post - 2020 periods. This historic outcome marks the successful conclusion of a four-year negotiation process under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action.

The G77 and China, demonstrating an unprecedented level of unity and cohesion, played a leadership role in the negotiations that led to this outcome. It is no exaggeration to say that there would not have been a Paris Agreement without the G77 and China's highly constructive contributions on both substance and process.

The strong solidarity within our diverse Group ensured that developing countries remained central in the climate change negotiations until the very end. The ten sub-Groups of the G77 and China in the climate change negotiations agreed to abide by a slogan they coined of "Do No Harm to Each Other and Leave No One Behind". I truly believe that this ought to be a guiding principle for the G77 and China in all its work going forward, as it speaks to the very essence of what this Group stands for.

It is now essential that the G77 and China remains united and firmly focused on ensuring that the Paris Agreement is ratified. There is much work to be done this year and beyond to ensure that the Paris Agreement is fairly and effectively implemented after 2020 and that existing commitments in the pre-2020 period are honoured.

Excellencies;

On 24 September 2015, a few days prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, H.E. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane remarked to the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of this Group that the success and strength of the Group lay in the perpetual forging of alliances between countries of the South. The Minister reaffirmed that, "the Group of 77 and China has made notable contributions over the years to the effective functioning of the United Nations System. As the largest grouping of States within the UN system, the Group of 77 and China has played a fundamental role in crafting international economic policies and relations, narrowing the gap between developing and developed countries. The Group could therefore legitimately claim a large part of the credit for advancing the interest of marginalised people of the world within the UN system".

I couldn't agree with the Minister more as we look at the Group's immense contribution over the past two years during the negotiations and adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda is a blueprint aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms and move the world forward towards the realization of the vision of the United Nation's Charter vision of "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Our Group's resolve during the negotiation process ensured that the 2030 Agenda is built on the Millennium Development Goals and that all three dimensions of sustainable development are equally reflected. We are also pleased that this global development agenda recognises the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment that most of us, as developing countries, continue to face.

Of significance in the 2030 Agenda is the reflection of the Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) which recognises our different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respects our national policies and priorities. Another major achievement for the G77 and China has been the reference to the right to development; and removing the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of people living under colonial and foreign occupation.

The focus should now move to ensuring that over the next 15 years, we work together nationally, regionally and globally to deliver on sustainable development by focusing on the means of implementation of the goals and targets.

Excellencies;

On 16 July 2015, our leaders meeting in Ethiopia, adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The concrete policies and actions outlined in the Action Agenda complement and support the Means of Implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the context of a framework of a revitalized global partnership for development.

The G77 and China constructively engaged in this process and sought a meaningful and ambitious financing for development outcome relevant to the needs of developing countries. We are pleased to note that the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda has ensured that important objectives set by the G77 and China such as the enhanced global partnership for development; the need to further strengthen international commitments towards financing for development; and the full and timely implementation of existing commitments were reemphasized.

Excellencies;

Global inequities in the international trade system continue to impact on the ability of developing countries to accelerate the social and economic development of our people. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of addressing this challenge, particularly through multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Progress was made at the 10th Ministerial Conference of the WTO, held in Nairobi, Kenya, during December 2015, on Least Developed Countries' issues.

It was however regrettable from a broader developing country perspective that there was no agreement on reaffirming the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) as the framework for the continued negotiations. Developing countries were united in Nairobi in reaffirming the centrality of the DDA to the WTO and the negotiations. Moving forward, it will be crucial for developing countries to maintain this unity. It is vital for developing countries that the WTO is a global forum that advocates for the reform of the international trading regime, in response to persisting distortions and imbalances.

Excellencies;

Other significant processes over the last year, where the members of the Group effectively pursued its principled objectives included:

- The adoption of a resolution on the basic principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring;
- The adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030;
- The adoption of Resolution 69/292 on 19 June 2015 pertaining to the development of an international legally-binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; and
- The adoption of the Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Overall Review of the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes.

Excellencies;

A strong and robust multilateral system is in the interest of developing countries, and the G77 and China shares the collective commitment to improving the efficient and effective functioning of the United Nations, in particular through the adequate resourcing of the organisation to deliver on its mandates. Member states recently adopted a regular budget for the UN and a reformed UN common system that is "fit for purpose". We also maintained the current methodology of the scales of assessment, which reflects the changes in the relative economic situations of Member States and safeguards the principle that developing countries should not be assigned to the same level of contributions as developed countries.

In this coming year, the Group will need to build on these achievements and ensure there is an adequately resourced UN system to support the achievement of the SDGs and sustainable development in general.

In closing Excellencies, all that remains is for me to have the honour and pleasure to hand-over the Chair's gavel to His Excellency Minister Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. We wish Thailand great success in leading the Group in 2016 and assure you of South Africa's continuing support during your tenure.

I thank you.