

STATEMENT BY HON. JAKAYA M. KIKWETE, MP, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE GROUP OF 77

New York, 26 September 1997

Honorable Ministers,
Invited Guests,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Twenty-first Annual Ministerial Meeting of our Group. This occasion provides us an opportunity to take stock of activities and the progress made for the year 1997.

Honorable Ministers,

When I was accepting this challenge of chairing this Group, on behalf of my country, I stressed that unity and cohesion of the Group were critical factors in the achievement of the goals of the Group in a multilateral setting. I am grateful that throughout the period of Tanzania's Chairmanship, the Group has worked with the maximum possible unity and cohesion. It has been a very exciting moment in the history of our Group, and very busy one, indeed. It is our earnest hope that this spirit of unity and cooperation will prevail and continue to be extended to my successor.

Honorable Ministers,

This year the Group participated actively and effectively, with a common purpose, in the major international processes of concern to the developing countries. It is pleasing to note that the Group managed to attain successes in our favour in several of the negotiations. While it is not possible to provide details of all the meetings that the Group was effectively involved in, I consider it worthwhile to mention those major negotiations which had wide implications for the developing countries.

Honorable Ministers,

Among the important processes was the Agenda for Development. As you are well aware, development and international cooperation constitute important objectives of the Group of 77 and China. For this reason, the Group has strongly advocated for an Agenda for Development which addresses the legitimate concerns of the developing countries in this area. As we are all aware, the negotiations for the Agenda for Development were successfully concluded in June 1997. Fortunately, critical issues of concern to developing countries were adequately addressed. However, for this Agenda to be meaningful, there is an urgent need for all parties concerned to make sure that the Agenda is implemented fully. In this context, the Agenda must form the basis for restoring development, particularly of developing countries at the center of the United Nations' activities.

Honorable Ministers,

I am sure we all remember the June 1997 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly that was held to review and appraise the implementation of decisions and commitments made at the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil five years ago. I am also aware that you do remember how much we labored as a Group, before and during the meeting, to propose and try to attain what we felt were legitimate concerns of the developing countries. The evaluation done at the Conference came out with the disappointing conclusions

that very limited results have been achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 as agreed in Rio in 1992. Failure on the part of our development partners of the North to meet their obligations and commitments on the provision of new and additional financial resources, as well as on the transfer of technology to developing countries was among, if not the single most important reason for the dismal performance.

It is further regrettable that at the UNGASS in June 1997, the developed countries could not make firm commitments to resolve these two critical constraints. It is evident that there will not be much progress in redressing environmental and sustainable development questions if the critical issues of finance and technology transfer are not urgently resolved. We should continue to appeal to developed countries to honor their obligations and do so the soonest possible. We should remind them loudly that they are expected to lead the world in this respect and that leadership has its responsibilities.

On the other hand, dear colleagues, as we appeal to the North to perform their duties and responsibilities as is expected of them, it is important for us to see clearly the writing on the wall. The message is loud and clear: that we have to take our destiny in our own hands or else we perish. We have waited for five years and have seen what we were able to get. We may wait another five or ten years and get much less. We are the leaders of our people. They expect us to lead them to prosperity, with or without the assistance of the North. I think it is more pertinent now than ever before to give serious thought to the need for thinking and devising ways and means of collectively depending on our own for our development. Maybe we could consider the whole question of collective self-reliance as the main agenda for our incoming leaders.

Honorable Ministers,

The scourge of desertification and drought is another impediment to the development of many of our countries, particularly those in Africa. Recognizing the adverse effects of these phenomena, the world responded to the challenge of containing desertification by agreeing on a framework of joint action embodied in the Convention to Combat Desertification. I am glad to note that so far 108 States have signed and ratified the Convention making it possible to convene the First Conference of Parties (COP-I) on 29 September 1997. The importance of this Convention, particularly to Africa, cannot be overemphasized, especially for its innovative approach in recognizing the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of desertification.

Most importantly, the Convention recognizes the link between desertification⁵ energy needs and poverty, and that to deal with the problem of desertification comprehensively the international community must first address the underlying problem of poverty. To a poor peasant family in a country like Tanzania, woodfuel is the only affordable source of energy. This is why there is an urgent need to redirect technology and resources to meeting energy needs in the developing world, and to the protection of forests and implementing all the other objectives of the Convention.

During the preparations for the First Conference of the Parties, the Group of 77 and China has insisted that for the Convention to be implemented, there is an urgent need to create a financial mechanism. This proposition has always been opposed by the developed countries, but I see no alternative. In this context, the Group will have to continue to press on this issue at the forthcoming COP-I. Once this issue of the creation of a functioning financial mechanism, capable of mobilizing its own resources, is resolved, modalities of its financing should not pose a problem.

Honorable Ministers,

The Group of 77 and China actively participated in the activities related to the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality.

It contributed to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women at the 41st session of the Commission

in March 1997 in the consideration of, among other issues, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system and follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Subsequently, ECOSOC, at its 1997 substantive session held in Geneva, discussed and agreed on the need to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. I wish to reemphasize the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, calling for international support in the areas of capacity building, resource flows and transfer of technology in support of activities aimed at women's empowerment in developing countries, particularly Africa and the least developed countries

I believe that women's empowerment and their full participation in all spheres of society, including participation in economic decision-making processes and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality and sustainable development.

Honorable Ministers,

Our meeting is taking place when the United Nations is once again considering various reform measures contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/227 and the Secretary General's reform proposals contained in his report entitled, "Reviewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", presented to the General Assembly on 16 July 1997.

General Assembly Resolution 50/227 spells out reform measures to be undertaken in the social and economic fields. With this mandate, the Economic and Social Council at its 1997 substantive session started reviewing its subsidiary machinery. So far, ECOSOC has not been able to conclude discussion on this matter and it will continue to examine this agenda at its resumed session scheduled for December 1997.

It is hoped that the ongoing debate in the General Assembly will shed further light on how we should handle properly the discussion on the reform of the United Nations. In this context, the debate is expected to provide guidance on how to handle the reform process, including the Secretary General's reform proposals.

So far it is not clear how the consultations will be conducted after the ongoing debate. In this regard, I should like to propose that in preparation for the negotiations on this important issue, the experts of our Group should convene meetings as of next week to thoroughly examine the Secretary General's proposals with a view to evolving the Group's position on each proposal. Having a clear position on each item will enable our Group to effectively defend its cause, either in the Committee of the Whole (COW) or in the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

What is critical for our Group is to ensure that the proposals give high political importance to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for economic and social development. It is expected that the Group will come up with a common position on this exercise of reform as soon as possible.

Honorable Ministers,

South-South cooperation is our main instrument for cooperation in all fields. It is, therefore, imperative that this important modality should be further strengthened in order to accelerate economic growth and development, as well as increasing technical capacities of our countries.

Last year at our Twentieth Annual Meeting while accepting the Chairmanship of our Group, I stressed that the success of our Group in terms of achieving our goals would largely depend upon having a firm basis of technical and institutional support mechanisms. In this context I would like to commend the good work done by the various Chapters-Coordination in guiding the work of our Group. Improvement in telecommunication

networking such as Internet and teleconferencing facilities, has contributed to enhancing coordination and effectiveness in our work.

Our work was further facilitated by invaluable contributions from the South Centre. I would like to express our appreciation to the Centre for the support it is rendering to the Group. The Center, however, needs further strengthening, especially through providing it with adequate financial resources so as to serve us better. I wish, therefore, to reiterate the appeal to all Group of 77 Member States to a more determined effort to contribute to the Centre.

In the same vein, I should like to express our sincere appreciation to the Third World Network for positively contributing to the work of the Group of 77 and China through such activities as roundtable discussions and articulating the South issues through its publications such as "*SUNS*", *Third World Economics*, *Resurgence*, etc.

Honorable Ministers,

The Committee of Experts of the Perez Guerrero Trust Fund (PGTF) met in August this year to review the programme of work and projects of this fund. So far the Fund has only been able to cover a limited number of projects due to lack of adequate resources. I should like to appeal to all of you to explore ways and means to expand its resources.

Honorable Ministers,

Even though this summary of activities undertaken in the course of this year is not exhaustive in terms of details, it indicates the areas of focus of our Group. Much work remains to be done, especially in the pursuit of our broader goals and aspirations in the areas of development and international cooperation, including addressing specific problems such as poverty eradication, external debt, trade, resources for development, transfer of technology, industrialization, commodities, etc. The Group needs collective action to address these issues if our aspirations, goals and objectives are to be achieved.

I thank you.