

# INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY SULE LAMIDO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, AT THE TURN-OVER CEREMONY OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77

New York, 13 January 2000

The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Guyana,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the mantle of leadership of our Group falls on my country at the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, may I, on behalf of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Government and the people of Nigeria extend sincere best wishes for the continued prosperity of all member States.

2. In formally assuming today the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 for the year 2000, I wish to acknowledge, in the most profound way possible, our commitment to the cause that we have espoused and which has ensured the enduring relevance of our Group. It is that commitment that Guyana has symbolized in an exceptional and remarkable manner in the one year at the helm of our affairs. It is, therefore, with special delight, as the torch passes from Guyana, that I wish to pay special tribute to my dear friend and colleague, Clement Rohee, for exemplifying the dynamism and zeal that have always been the hallmark of our Group. Together with his able Ambassador and staff in New York, he has given to the Group dedicated, purposeful and visionary leadership during this past year.

3. Our deep appreciation also goes to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for accommodating this ceremony within his ever-tight schedule. We cherish his presence here today as well as his unremitting support for the objectives of our Group. With his continued support and that of the UNDP Administrator, we believe that developing countries will enjoy greater and broader assistance from the UN system. We hope that such development will promote, among other things, real poverty alleviation, employment generation and sustainable economic growth in member States.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

4. The task before us is enormous. The challenges are immense. Let me assure you that, as we accept these challenges, we will build upon the work already done. We will take account of every achievement that we have made from the time of our inception in 1964 when we were much fewer in number and the issues that propelled our creation were less complex. With your understanding and cooperation, we will endeavour to maintain the solidarity and cohesiveness of our Group so as to move it forward on the new issues as we also actively seek the resolution of outstanding ones.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

5. Let me, as we embark on our collective endeavour, urge that our methods should not be

coloured by desperation. We should continue to approach our task with maturity, serenity and rationality that our cause demands. While we will continue to maintain fidelity to our cause, it is equally important that we encourage dialogue with all in the attainment of our common goals. We will persevere. With unity and solidarity of purpose, we are confident that our vision of a world, devoid of inequity, poverty and disease will be a reality.

6. We shall continue to work assiduously for the realization of our objectives. In this regard, we feel encouraged that the first ever South Summit will take place in April this year. We are particularly grateful, and here I know I speak for all the members of our Group, for the preliminary work already carried out under Guyana as Chairman of the Group of 77 in 1999. It is our belief that the Havana Summit will provide a unique and ideal opportunity for our leaders to engage in an in-depth evaluation of where we are in the pursuit of our goals. They will, I am sure, use the Summit to critically examine the various issues currently under discussion between developing and developed countries, especially the challenge posed by the process of globalization. They will also, I know, deal with the equally important issue of the revitalization of South-South Cooperation and solidarity. In all these, I am certain that our leaders will give due consideration to the strengthening of regional and inter-regional cooperation and collaborative initiatives in the new millennium. Such new strategies, we expect, will also speed up the integration of member States into the global market as well as safeguard them from external shocks and vulnerability.

7. As we strive with commitment to maintain the momentum of North-South cooperation, we are also conscious of the need for progress in all the key issues that divide us. We are particularly conscious of the importance of free and fair global trade for the regeneration of our individual and collective economies. Developing countries, over the years, have put in place, often at great cost to them, measures to facilitate a re-structured and equitable multilateral trading system for the benefit of all countries. It is regrettable that this goal remains largely unrealized. Nothing under-scores this situation more vividly than the failure of the Seattle Conference. The 10th Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD - X), coming up in Bangkok, Thailand next month, calls for active participation by our Group.

Ladies and Gentlemen

8. We shall pursue the agenda of our Group with all the energy and resources available to us. We shall consult extensively and regularly within the Group on all key issues. We shall also, with your mandate, consult outside our Group in furtherance of our goals. We will make every effort to ensure that the interests of developing countries are taken into account in our consultations with organizations such as the G-8 and OECD. We shall also deploy our best efforts to follow up the decisions and outcome of all major United Nations Conferences. In the same manner, it is our hope that our consultations with the Group of 24, will generate high-level commitment and participation in the United Nations conference on Financing for Development scheduled for the year 2001.

9. As we look forward to coordinating with all the G-77 chapters, we hope to strengthen the role of the office of the Chairman as the institutional mechanism of the Group. In the spirit of partnership, we will strengthen our cooperation with the Non-Aligned Movement.

10. The Millennium Assembly together with its own Summit this year will provide our Group a unique opportunity for further cooperation with our development partners. That Summit must be utilized as a forum in which all countries will assess the contribution of the

United Nations in the upliftment of humanity and society in the past half century and plan ahead for its better performance in the 21st century.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

11. Finally, let me say that we have extraordinarily challenging agenda ahead of us this year. We will approach the task with steadfastness, vision and courage. We believe that our Group, at the dawn of the new century has a great opportunity to work assiduously for the attainment of our cherished goals and long-held objectives. In pursuing them, we count on the fullsome support of the personnel of the office of the Chairman, as well as member States and other members of the international community.

I thank you.