

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY SULE LAMIDO, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF NIGERIA, AT THE 24TH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF G-77**

**New York, 15 September 2000**

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Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to welcome you all to this 24th Annual Ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and China. I feel deeply honoured to address this august gathering of the Group at a momentous point in its history.

This has indeed been an eventful year for the Group of 77. This occasion therefore provides a unique opportunity for stock taking, particularly on the events of the past few months geared towards the overall development and the well being of our countries and peoples.

Before I continue, let me, on behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, express our appreciation to each and every one of you for your co-operation and invaluable support, in our common and concerted struggle to advance the interest of this Group. As we continue the pursuit of our common goal, I trust that your unflagging support will continue.

I also wish to thank our officials (Senior officials and Experts) in New York, led by Chief Arthur Mbanefo, for their hard work in producing the documents before us. I note that the Ministerial Statement is deliberately silent on those issues already adequately addressed in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Havana Summit. The draft Ministerial statement is therefore concise and focused on up-coming meetings of the United Nations and expectations of our Group.

Your Excellencies.

In the 36-year history of our Group, the historic gathering of our Heads of State and Government at the first-ever South Summit in Havana remains a watershed. It was a defining moment in the life of our Group. Havana Summit launched the Group on an irreversible path to higher goals. Such event taking place at the dawn of new millennium, with radical changes altering the international political and economic landscape is indeed a welcome development.

In Havana, we not only renewed our commitment to the goal of development, we also charted a new path in the journey towards that goal, focusing on issues of contemporary times as reflected in the themes of that Summit; namely globalisation, knowledge and technology, South-South co-operation and North South relations. Our concerns, vision and perception of these issues against the background of an emerging international economic and financial arrangements, at the dawn of a new century, were aptly captured in the Havana programme of Action and the Declaration. We took concrete steps for the realisation of our objectives under Institutional Follow-up in the Programme of Action.

It is indeed gratifying to note that the Group has since Havana achieved some measure of progress; on the tasks we had set for ourselves. Perhaps, we need to remind ourselves what we committed ourselves to in Havana.

Our Summit affirmed that South-South Co-operation will continue to be a crucial tool for development among developing countries; that it is an important way of strengthening economic independence and participation of developing countries in the emerging new global economy. Consequently, we re-dedicated

ourselves to increased South-South cooperation. In addition, practical steps were taken in form of programmes and projects to cement the existing network of links among members of the group, in the area of trade and investment, monetary and financial relations and the TCDC/ECDC programmes. In view of the importance of the Health sector we took practical steps to establish a South-South Health Care Delivery Programme, welcoming the generous offer of Cuba to provide medical doctors and commitment of some member states towards this programme.

The continuous integration of the world and increasing phenomenon of Globalisation also dictated the need for a common stand on key contemporary issues of our time. Hence, we stressed the need to ensure that the international community adopts imaginative ways to extend the benefits of globalisation to developing countries.

We also addressed the issue of declining ODA and called for a commitment to its full fulfilment. We further called for a new path to international co-operation for development to confront the issue of sustained economic growth and development. The objective was to effectively address the problem of poverty eradication, which has become a scourge of our time.

The summit unequivocally concluded that sustained economic growth and development and the task of eradicating poverty will remain a dream without a definitive resolution of the debt problem of developing countries. That position informed our demand for the cancellation of these unsustainable debts.

Other issues we focused on were the demand for the reform of the international financial architecture, for effective participation of developing countries in the management of the new international economic system emerging in an increasingly integrated global order.

In recognition of the inevitability of integration of the world economy and the intricately bound faith of the developed and developing countries, we called for a new collaborative partnership between the North and the South, based on the principle of shared benefits and responsibilities. This new approach, we also stressed was necessary for the creation of a new stable world order supportive of development and prosperity for the peoples of the South. It was in this context that we called for an effective North-South Dialogue and took steps to that effect with our meeting with members of the G8 in Miyazaki, Japan.

The July meeting with the G8 over a period of two days in Miyazaki, focused on the challenges facing the international community especially the countries of the South. On behalf of our Group, I expressed the hope that the outcome of the G8 meeting will look into the concerns of the developing countries particularly against the background of the issues of globalisation, debt, development, finance, poverty, HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases, bridging the digital divide and international cooperation in general.

To give added momentum to our engagement with the major economic powers of the world, in pursuit of the mandate in Havana, President Olusegun Obasanjo in his capacity as President of the South Summit, joined by President Mbeki as NAM Chairman and the then OAU Chairman President Bouteflika of Algeria presented the views of the developing world to the leaders of the eight major industrialised economies at the annual G8 meeting. The Communiqué of the Okinawa meeting as it relates to Development and in particular on the various issues of concern to the countries of the South is a reflection of the possibilities of co-operation and partnership. That meeting agreed to give special attention to issues on debt, health, education, as a spur to economic growth and development.

Before I continue, I think it is pertinent to briefly recapitulate actions that have been taken at the level of the G77 to re-energise the group against the background of the events in Havana.

Following the Summit, the co-ordinating meeting of the Chairmen/Co-ordinators of G77 Chapters was held in Geneva in June this year. That meeting reviewed the progress of the various chapters within their respective spheres of competence, regarding the implementation of the technical aspects of the Havana Programme of Action. Emphasising that a change is long over due, participants at the meeting set up an advisory team to recommend proposals on ways of implementation of paragraph 1 section VI of the Havana Programme of Action. The objective was to close the yawning gap between the present institutional arrangements and structures of the G77 and the new demands, which arose out of Havana. The question of strengthening the G77 Secretariat in New York and enhancing co-ordination among the G77 chapters was top priority, in a non-paper prepared by the Geneva chapter. I hope that their submission will be of use in our collective desire to strengthen the operations of the G77 and the respective chapters.

Steps were also taken in pursuit of the decisions of our Heads of State and Government in Havana, particularly as they relate to a Co-ordinating Commission for the G77. The meeting held in London was in that respect. It was attended by the President of the South Summit, the Chairman of NAM, the Chairman of the OAU, the Prime Ministers of Malaysia and Jamaica. The result of that meeting has since been forwarded to our Heads of State and Government.

As indicated by President Obasanjo at his briefing of members of the G77, during the recently concluded Millennium Summit, the report of the Implementation Group of Heads of State and Government established by the South Summit on the South Co-ordinating Commission, is essentially a document for consideration of our Heads of State and Government. It is basically an initial report. The discussions at that consultative meeting reflect the desire for further consultations of the G77 on the implementation of the decisions of the Havana Summit, including the work of the five Heads of State and Government. The report of that Group will no doubt be useful and contribute to the implementation of the decisions of the Summit.

Your Excellencies

The proceedings and the eventual outcome of the recently concluded Millennium Summit as contained in the Millennium Declaration, confirmed the correctness of the position of the G77 on the need for a fairer global order, as we demanded in Havana. Therefore, let us rededicate ourselves to the goals of our Group and ideals of our founding fathers, for a just world and an international economic arrangement that will ensure the development objectives of our countries in accordance with our national priorities.

I thank you all.