



**Closing address by His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the Group of 77  
Havana, Cuba, 14 April 2000**

We have now come to the conclusion of our Summit, and I am sure you will agree that it has been a profound and historic event. The G-77 has come of age with this Summit that is definitely a milestone in the evolution of global order. This is indeed a moment of which can all be proud.

During the course of the past week, we have focused on some of the crucial issues affecting development today, such as globalisation, the key role of knowledge and technology, North-South relations; and South-South cooperation.

We have looked at the debt burden, which indeed constitutes a major impediment to economic growth and development of our countries. We have heard it argued that world trade as it exists is an “instrument of domination”. We have been warned of the apparent dangers in the present “economic recolonisation of the South by the North”. We have realized that while we of the South have a mutual interest in engaging the North, we must also put our own houses in order.

As our great host, President Fidel Castro, inspiringly put it on Wednesday, globalisation is an objective reality underlining the fact that we are all passengers on the same vessel – Planet Earth. But it is a vessel of inequity with too much injustice on board. President Castro eloquently reminded us that it is our duty to rescue this vessel from imminent catastrophe. As a formula for action he urged us to unite and cooperate – or face death.

The manifestations of the globalisation process are increased unemployment, widespread poverty, overpowering disease, deepening ignorance because of poor education, and lack of access to such basic necessities of life as in potable water, adequate and balanced food and health facilities. Moreover, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has assumed global proportions, is continuing to have devastating effects on the human resources of countries thereby placing further impediment to our developmental efforts.

At the same time we are confronted with a glaring paradox which is that despite the growing prosperity of the North, as a result of the spectacular advances in science and technology, and the evident needs of our countries, there has been a conspicuous slackening in the commitment of the industrialized countries to multilateral cooperation towards development, as reflected in the decline of Official Development Assistance (ODA). This situation has made it the more difficult for our countries to tackle fundamental problems of improving life within our societies.

The liberalization of financial markets has also led to increased instability in the global economy, as witnessed in the East Asian crisis and its impact on the economies in other regions. This instability reflects a significant inadequacy in the institutional structure of the existing international financial arrangements as well as the insufficiency of funds available to deal with the phenomenon of capital volatility.

Yet all deliberations on the economic aspects of development and the debilitating consequences of poverty and diseases are overshadowed by the ever rising tide of conflicts, particularly in my own continent, Africa, and, I regret to say, even between member states of G-77. Peace is the bedrock of all human development activities. Without peace and stability, a society does not have any future to speak about. And, of course, peace is indivisible, the pains of our neighbours will invariably become our pains. We of the South have a responsibility to redouble our efforts to promote international peace and security, particularly in our own regions.

In the attempt to formulate responses to these challenges, we had some stimulating brainstorming sessions. The views and proposals that emerged have illuminated our way to concrete and achievable strategies and policies.

Accordingly, we have agreed that a high-level forum be convened as appropriate, and on a regular basis. Such a forum would relate closely with the activities of other fora of the South. In particular, we agreed to enhance coordination between our Group and the Non-Aligned Movement. We have asked the Chairman of the Summit and the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement to consider the best ways and means of achieving this.

We have recognized that globalisation is an unstoppable and irreversible process, but within its dynamics there is a serious threat of marginalisation and exclusion of developing countries, and negative impact on the cultural diversity of our peoples and their civilizations. The challenge is how to harness the potential benefit of globalisation solely and purposely for change and as an agent of sustained growth and shared prosperity.

To this end, we must promote effective South-South cooperation and renew North-South cooperation to include shared management of the globalisation process, democratic and transparent governance of the international financial architecture and international trade organizations, and full respect for the principles of sovereignty, cultural diversity, mutual respect, justice and equity, no matter what the size or shape or ethnic composition of the country.

However, none of this can be achieved without international peace and security, which are pre-conditions for economic growth and prosperity. It cannot be achieved without the necessary political will of all parties concerned, as well as adequate institutional framework. In the context, we affirm the primacy of international law, the validity of the UN Charter which must be made to reflect the reality of today and the promotion of culture and peace. The scourge of war, conflicts and fratricide is of paramount concern to us. And, accordingly, we have committed the G-77 as an institution to become an effective instrument in promoting peace and peaceful solutions to conflicts.

Whilst reaffirming our collective commitment to live up to our responsibility, we are

also calling on our partners in the north to join us in promoting a new partnership for development. To this end we have mandated the Chairman of the Summit and the President of the Non-Aligned Movement to transmit to the next G-8 Summit and other appropriate international fora, including international financial and trade institutions, the results of concerns and interest of developing countries as reflected in our deliberations. The message is that the countries of the South must be suitably represented in any forum for deliberating and deciding on social, economic or political matters which can have effects on our countries – adversely or otherwise, whether individually, severally, or as a group. The Group of 77 will not consider any social, economic, financial or political architecture decided without equitable representation. Notwithstanding such representation, such fora have no authority under international law to take binding decisions that affect us.

To enhance South-South cooperation, we agreed, firstly, to strengthen our collective negotiating capacity, including the capacity for coordination and implementation of decisions, policies and programmes. We have therefore decided to establish a Coordinating Commission utilizing the South Commission outfit to be appropriately located and made up of G-77 Council comprising of:

The G-77 Summit President,  
The G-77 Coordinator,  
The Chairpersons of ASEAN, CARICOM, OAU, NAM, the Arab League,  
and other similar regional organisations of the South.

This Council will coordinate the implementation of South Summit's Programme of Action as well as decisions on South-South cooperation. The Chairman of the G-77 Summit, the Chairman of NAM, the Chairman of OAU, the Prime Ministers of Malaysia and Jamaica are charged with the responsibility for the establishment of the Council on behalf of the Summit.

Let me repeat the obvious to all delegates here present that we cannot talk of any coordination or implementation of decisions, policies and programmes without funding. I hereby appeal to all member states for adequate funding for the work of the Coordinating Commission. Our agreement that each Member State should make immediate payment of 5000 US dollar is most welcome. I am sure it will strengthen our operational base. But surely this will not be enough. Those of us who can contribute more should kindly do so.

Secondly, we agreed to establish a South-South Healthcare Delivery Programme. We welcomed the generous offer of Cuba to provide up to 3000 medical doctors for this Programme. This contribution in the medical sector is a brilliant illustration of what is possible and desirable in South-South Cooperation. We also welcomed the support for the Programme offered by Nigeria, Botswana, Libya, South Africa, China and Algeria. And we will further solicit and welcome the participation of more countries in this programme and the participation of such international organisations as the World Health Organisation, and UNICEF. Let us hold up this Programme as a paradigm for pooling our resources and strength for trans-border South-South cooperation that is urgently needed in other economic and social sectors.

Thirdly, we agreed to strengthen the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for Economic and

Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

And, lastly, we agreed that the time and space dimensions should be built into our adopted Programme of Action so that we are time-limited and time-conscious in our drive to make our achievement easily measurable.

Your Excellencies, the first-ever Summit of the leaders of Member States of the Group of 77 has been a defining moment in the Group's history. We have reached the point of no return in our resolve to re-invigorate our vision of solidarity and unity of purpose.

There should be no doubt that from here we go forward, determined to make a difference to the rapidly evolving global economic and social order. From now on, we will play our part in shaping that order into one that is just, fair, equitable and mutually beneficial to all sides.

As many of us have intimated, it is indeed time to recover our fighting spirit, time to recharge our irrepressible desire for unity and solidarity, and time to infuse cohesion into our common destiny. It is time to fulfil the expectations of our people. It is time to turn South-South Cooperation into a potent instrument of development and progress in our countries.

I thank you very much. Good-bye and God bless.

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