



STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE K.D. KNIGHT, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE OF JAMAICA, AT THE HANDING OVER CEREMONY OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77 (New York, 25 January 2005)

His Excellency Jean Ping – President of the General Assembly,
His Excellency Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Qatar,
His Excellency Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General,
Mr. Zephirin Diabre, Associate Administrator of UNDP,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and privilege for me to be here today to accept, on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, the mantle of Chairmanship of the G77 and China during 2005. This is a tremendous responsibility which Jamaica undertakes with a deep sense of humility, optimism and a determination to dedicate ourselves to the task.

I wish to express to the members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group and the wider membership of the G77 our profound appreciation for the confidence and trust that they have demonstrated in electing Jamaica to the Chairmanship.

I would like also to pay tribute to the State of Qatar for its outstanding stewardship in coordinating the work of the Group during 2004. We express our profound appreciation to their Government and to the delegation here in New York for the work they have done in advancing the interests of the Group throughout the numerous deliberations and negotiations, especially during the substantive session of the ECOSOC and the 59th Session of the GA. Special mention also has to be made of Qatar's hosting of the High Level Forum on Trade and Investment last December which helped to identify new areas and openings for the mobilisation of South/South Co-operation.

Jamaica looks forward to continuing to collaborate and work closely with Qatar during 2005.

I also welcome the President of the General Assembly, our Secretary-General and the UNDP Administrator, whose presence here today underlines our shared commitment and common purpose to strengthen the role of the UN in advancing economic co-operation to promote development and to advance the welfare of our peoples.

Role of the G77

We recall that the formation of the G77 in 1964 was a manifestation of the need for collective action by developing countries to overcome marginalization; to advance new values and principles of democratization and multilateralism; to bring change in an inequitable system born out of the colonial and imperialist era; and to promote a global development strategy that takes account of the interests of developing countries.

Against the background of increasing wealth and increasing poverty, evolving political and economic alignments and growing dominance of major power centres, the underlying policy rationale which inspired the formation of the Group of 77 and China has essentially remained unchanged, and has been reconfirmed by the events and developments of the past 40 years, most vividly in the 1990s.

The G77 has remained steadfast as a coalition keeping focus on the needs and interests of developing countries. As the main voice of developing countries on economic and social issues in the UN system, the Group has created a platform for a more democratic global order. It has enhanced the negotiating capacity of the South, and has played a pivotal role in promoting an international agenda which takes account of the vital interests of the developing world.

In the current global economic situation, the broadening dimensions of globalisation are increasing the complexity of the challenges facing us. We cannot afford to be left behind and must exert all efforts to share in the benefits of global economic expansion. Our development has to be driven by us and we should seek and exploit all available opportunities for advancement. It is for us to shape our own destiny and therefore we must aim to grow through self-reliance. At the same time, we must not relent in our struggle for equity in the international economic system. From market access, to technology issues and financial flows, we need fairer rules and arrangements which provide better opportunities for the developing world. For the vulnerable, disadvantaged and those with special needs, there should be special arrangements. Poverty, hunger and disease are the common enemies of mankind. They must be addressed by the global community within the framework of international co-operation and through the commitment

of the necessary resources to ensure their elimination.

Prospects for 2005

The year 2005 presents many challenges and opportunities for advancing our development agenda. Several international meetings are scheduled to take place which will demand the sustained and collective focus of the Group. These include the reviews of the implementation of outcomes of major Conferences and Summits, such as those on Social Development and the Millennium Declaration which will be at Summit level. In all of these deliberations and processes we should strive for action-oriented proposals and for significant decisions and substantive outcomes. Special attention must be paid to implementation and the creation of mechanisms to ensure that concrete results emanate from the decisions taken.

G77 Priorities

During the period of Jamaica's Chairmanship, we hope to advance the following as priorities:

(i) Increasing the Flow of Resources to Developing countries

Many decisions have been taken over the past few years; at Copenhagen, the Millennium Summit, Johannesburg, Monterrey, all of which held out the promise of significant flows of financial and other resources to developing countries. Although taken within the consensus framework of a partnership for development, what was agreed has not been fulfilled. We therefore feel the need to renew the focus on implementation and expect that especially within the context of the Five-year Review of Implementation of the MDGs at the forthcoming 60th Session, serious decisions will be taken not only on the mobilisation of new resources but on the creation of monitoring and implementing mechanisms to advance this objective. Of course, we should not think solely in terms of traditional sources such as ODA and private investment but should continue to explore

new and innovative sources which should be additional and complementary to these traditional financial flows. We also should seek ways to increase the effectiveness of technical assistance, especially through the reduction of transaction and administrative costs. We also must express concern at the increasing range of conditionalities imposed on development assistance, especially from certain bilateral donors, which has now crept into the programmes of multilateral financial institutions.

(ii) Improvements in global governance

In the interest of developing countries, it is also imperative that we address systemic inequities in the international economic system to redress the balance that has for so long worked against the interests of the developing world. Global policy making in relation to finance, trade and technology is firmly within the control of the dominant powers in the North. In light of the current imbalances and disequilibria leading to increasing disparities between rich and poor, there is need for corrective measures. We have to insist on having a greater voice and increased participation in global policy-making. There is also need for better management of the global economy, so essential during this era of globalization, and for better arrangements within the multilateral institutions for co-ordination and for the formulation of policy guidelines to ensure coherence. For all of this, there is no better place than the United Nations. Global policy co-operation and macro-economic management would help to stabilize the system and avoid the recurrence of crisis. As it now stands fluctuations in financial flows, instability in currency markets and the volatility in commodity prices can generate a crisis having a global impact. It is therefore in the interests of all to promote better arrangements for global economic management and we also believe that we should seek to empower the Economic and Social Council to fulfill this role.

(iii) Formulation of a Development Agenda

Third, we believe it is time to formulate a common agenda for the Group which will define the kind of world economic order we should promote in this era of globalization. The elaboration of such a platform would serve the purpose of identifying in a coherent structure what are the policies and institutional arrangements which would cater to our economic interests. Such a platform would also serve to strengthen the bonds within our membership and maintain the cohesion which is critical to our continued vitality and effectiveness. Solidarity between us in this Group must always be maintained and during the Jamaica chairmanship it will be our endeavour to increase its strength.

(iv) Enhancing South/South Co-operation

Later this year, we will be holding the Second South Summit which the Government of Qatar has graciously offered to host in June. It will review the Havana Programme of Action to determine what additional measures or initiatives

should be adopted to give further impetus to strengthening cooperation between the nations of the South. While the links have been expanding, there is need for increased momentum, particularly in trade and investment relations. Contacts between counterpart institutions and business entities have to be actively encouraged and promoted. Governments should be seen as being integral in this process.

(v) Disaster Management and Relief

The disasters following the recent earthquake and tsunami which devastated islands and coastal states in the Indian ocean have dramatically demonstrated how vulnerable states can be overwhelmed by a sudden calamity. Apart from the grief and sorrow occasioned by the loss of life, the economic loss from the destruction of infrastructure and the means of livelihood are an enormous setback for those affected, especially when they are all developing countries. In our own Caribbean we live under the constant threat of hurricanes and recurring cycles of destruction and recovery. Many in our Group have to also contend with potential disastrous consequences from climate change. Disaster Prevention and management and recovery efforts should now be recognized as being of such dimensions as to require global solutions. We believe that new mechanisms should be explored particularly to improve prevention and to cope with relief and reconstruction efforts.

Relations with other Groups

Turning now to our operations in 2005, I can assure the Group that we will continue to maintain close co-operation with the Non-Aligned Group through the Joint Co-ordinating Committee. We also intend to work closely with the South Centre which provides valuable inputs into our work.

We will also continue to work constructively with our partners in the North to advance development co-operation in the broadest sense and especially to reduce poverty and its attendant maladies. Our co-operation must reflect a partnership which preserves the rights and interests of all parties. The terms on which co-operation is conducted should not endanger sovereign rights or restrict the development options available to developing countries. The enforcement of conditionalities and coercive measures should never become accepted as the price for economic co-operation. Diversity in economic and social systems is part of the reality of our world. For such diversity, different models emerge anchored in their own cultural and historical experience. Within the Group of 77 and China, we respect diversity and the right of each state to determine its own social, political and economic system. These principles are dear to the developing countries and under Jamaica's chairmanship everything will be done to safeguard them.

In closing, let me once again reaffirm our determination and our dedication to work to advance our common objectives in 2005 and to make progress towards a more equitable and inclusive global economic system.

Thank you.