

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BAGHER ASADI, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77 (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN), AT THE INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE NEW PROPOSALS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP-6) TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

New York, 21 April 2001

Mr. President,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure, and yet quite a challenge, for the Chairman of the Group of 77, the largest bloc in the universal intergovernmental body with a very diverse constituency, to address such a distinguished and certainly demanding audience, particularly under very uncertain circumstances now surrounding the discussions on and around the Kyoto Protocol and the continuing COP-6 process. I might as well have emulated the words of Mr. Cutajar yesterday evening and called it a “crisis.” However characterized, the situation under which we have gathered here to engage in initial, exploratory informal consultations on Minister Pronk’s new Paper is rather peculiar. The very future of an almost decade-old and tortuous negotiations for the development, adoption and finally entry into force of the instrument for the realization of the objective of the Climate Change Convention seems to have been thrown in total jeopardy.

Mr. President,

Let me say, at the very outset, that from our point of view, the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol are valid international instruments. And the Protocol is not to be renegotiated. Its fundamental principles, as guided by the Convention, should be respected and remain intact. Simultaneously, work on the operationalization of its provisions, as agreed by all in Kyoto back in December 1997, should continue. Within this framework it hardly needs to be underlined that the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” – as enunciated at the Rio Summit almost ten years ago as well as in the Convention - is as valid and to be equally respected. And furthermore, it should be quite clear that the developing world will not undertake any new commitments.

Over and above immediate negative impact on the continuing COP-6 process, to which I just alluded, we in the Group of 77 are very much concerned about the unsettling repercussions of the United States policy pronouncements on the Kyoto Protocol for multilateral negotiations and processes in general. We find unilateral approaches to multilateral processes and withdrawal from commitments unacceptable. The message from the new Republican Administration to the international community cannot but be considered sad and indeed disappointing.

Turning to the immediate matter at hand; that is, the “New Proposals by the President of COP-6”, let me first of all express our deep appreciation and gratitude to Minister Jan Pronk for his tireless and dedicated efforts in the entire COP-6 process and also for the preparation and presentation of his new Paper. We are aware that a lot of effort has gone into its production, for which we commend Mr. Pronk and his assistants. The Group of 77 and China is fully cognizant of Minister Pronk’s genuine desire to move the process beyond the impasse at the end of the session in the Hague. We are sure that our informal consultations today on the New Proposals, initial and exploratory as they inevitably are, will help all of us in the intergovernmental body to arrive at a better understanding of the relevant issues involved and take a step forward. And I presume that we all agree that we are dealing with intrinsically very complex and difficult issues in this process.

It is a fact that it has not been long since the President’s New Proposals became available to parties, and

hence, most of us in the Group of 77 have not yet had the opportunity for an in-depth study and analysis of its content. That is exactly why I termed the approach to the Paper at this stage initial and exploratory. Nevertheless, the Group met yesterday afternoon and discussed in very broad terms the content of the Paper. The Group is appreciative of the fact that some progress is discernible in certain areas in the Paper, for example, as regards financial mechanisms, but does not find the tenor of the Paper favorable to its positions, concerns and interests. In the eyes of our membership, these concerns and interests have not been addressed adequately, even some fundamental principles and concepts in the Convention and the Protocol appear to have been downplayed or neglected. As for the Group's negotiating platform, the positions presented in the Hague by the Group on various issues still hold.

Mr. President,

Moving from an initial assessment of the New Proposals to what lies ahead, let me say, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, that we remain committed to a firm, active and yet proactive pursuit of our stated goals and objectives. To this end, and despite the current state of uncertainty, the Group remains committed to the continuation of negotiation towards completing the unfinished work of the COP-6. It is our genuine hope that what is called the current "Policy Review" within the US government will soon result in their joining the negotiating table in earnest and in a spirit of constructive dialogue. "Come back to the family fold", as the President said. It should be underscored, however, that our support for the validity of the Protocol and disposition to continue active involvement in the process depends, first and foremost and in the final analysis, on the good faith of all the negotiating partners and ultimately on their political will in actuality to work for meaningful progress in the areas of interest and priority to the developing world. As always and as in all circumstances, it takes two to tango.

And a very brief word on procedure. Looking back at the Hague experience, it should be clear that agreement on the sensitive issues we are dealing with can only be achieved through a fully participatory and transparent process. It was reassuring to hear President Pronk underline that. Regardless of any other extraneous factor, we believe that prior to the meeting in Bonn in July the negotiating text to be subsequently presented by Mr. Pronk needs to be discussed at the expert level with open-ended participation. It is our understanding that the new negotiating text will be based on the texts of the subsidiary bodies, as presented in the Hague, taking into consideration the results of political consultations by Mr. Pronk. I should thank Mr. Pronk for the reconfirmation he made of this point in his introductory remarks.

To conclude, let me just add that today's exercise is a valuable and I grant a quite costly effort. It needs, however, to be complemented by further opportunities of exchange of views where every interested country would have the chance to participate and engage in the process.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.