



**OPENING STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MOSIBUDI MANGENA, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE MEETING OF MINISTERS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE GROUP OF 77 (Angra Dos Reis, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, 3 September 2006)**

Honorable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my honor and pleasure to declare open this meeting of Ministers of Science and Technology of the Group of 77 and China.
2. First, let me begin by expressing our deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the people and Government of Brazil represented by Honorable Minister Sergio Rezende, Minister of Science and Technology for hosting us. I also wish to express our warmest thanks to our co-sponsors, the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) and the Brazilian Academy of Science, for making this meeting possible.
3. We also thank TWAS and TWINSO for the launching of the G77 Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation that will be also based in Trieste, Italy. This Consortium would not have been possible without the generous and valuable support of the Italian Government, which has for many years provided generous support for the science and technology institutions of the South through the Trieste System. The presence today of the representative of the Italian Government, as the special guest of the Group of 77, is proof of the commitment that this Consortium will enjoy for many years to come.
4. In the High Level Conference on Science and Technology held in Dubai in October 2002, we as G77 Ministers of Science and Technology adopted a South-South platform to launch initiatives aimed at promoting knowledge, science and technology innovation for the developing world. We further pledged to strengthen co-operation among scientific and research institutions of the South including the operationalization of the G77 Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation that our Heads of States and Governments had established at the First South Summit in Havana, Cuba in April 2000.
5. As a follow-up, the African Ministers Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) was launched in 2003. This has become the governing structure for the African Platform for Science and Technology Co-operation. Through AMCOST, we have developed Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action, which has 13 flagship programmes. There already are African networks in Biosciences, Laser technology, mathematical sciences, water sciences and space science as part of the implementation of the plan of action.
6. Other examples of cooperation within countries of the South include:
  - The ACP-EU (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific - European Union) partnership has agreed on the development of a Science and Technology Development Programme for the developing world
  - At intercontinental level we have the beginnings of a new Asian-African Strategic Science and Technology Partnership as part of the Asian-African Sub-Regional Organizations Conference (AASROC); and
  - At regional level, Africa and South America are discussing the possibility of an Extended Mercosur - Africa co-operation agreement.
7. Following on the Doha Plan of Action adopted at the Second South Summit, we need to be looking at further possibilities for collaboration and co-operation from the institutional level to the national systems level to the regional level. At the same time, we need to continue to strengthen cooperation between the countries of the North and the South.
8. It is also important to continue to engage the UN system in the mainstreaming of Science and Technology in broader developmental agenda that is crosscutting. We call upon all the United Nations institutions responsible for Science and Technology such as UNESCO, UNIDO, UNEP, UNDP, UNCTAD and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, as well as the Bretton-Woods institutions, to continue to enhance capacity for countries to develop

National Systems of Innovations policies aimed at providing an enabling environment for science to bear economic results of knowledge generation. These systems should produce centers of excellences, networks of knowledge generation and dissemination and could provide a base for the establishment of innovation hubs for our small and medium enterprises.

9. We particularly call on UNESCO to initiate an effective implementation of the decision to establish the South-South Fund for Science and Technology.

10. Secondly, it would be timely to review the implementation and the impact of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the broader context of science and technology.

11. The Group of 77 and China believes that the multilateral agenda is the route to an effective global dialogue on science, technology and innovation development in a globalizing world, hence the need for transparency, democratization of the multilateral institutions, with a view to give more voice and decision-making powers to the poor and marginalized developing countries. In this regard, we welcome the decision of ECOSOC to increase membership of the UN Commission for Science and Technology Development (UNCSTD) as we believe that this will increase the voice of the poor and the developing countries.

12. The challenge for developing countries is providing an enabling environment within national systems of innovations, for scientists to cooperate and collaborate in innovations. We must position our economies on a path of sustainable growth that will make them preferred destinations for research and development investment. As a cornerstone of our national research and development strategies we need to develop a human capital development plan. This must span the spectrum from primary education to the post-doctoral level. It must also encompass the ability to retain people once trained. This means that our countries must have well functioning systems of innovation.

13. We should also make provision for the fact that in an increasingly globalizing world, the movement of skilled people has become the norm. While it is useful to attract the Diaspora back, it is also possible to derive benefit from them where they are. Participation through a virtual arrangement is one of the possible routes that we could explore with a view to promote brain circulation and strengthen collaborative efforts of scientists in the Diaspora.

14. In this regard, there are considerable achievements in promoting networks of scientists abroad, initiatives such as the African Virtual University, United Nations Development Programme's Transfer of Knowledge through expatriates (TOKTEN programme) arrangement of short visits and the strengthening of centers of excellence by utilizing the skilled scientists from abroad. These, I believe should be key strategies for human capital, taking into account the need to increase the knowledge base of youth and women.

15. We reiterate our call from the Dubai declaration for international institutions such as ITU, UNDP, to increase their support for ICT programmes in Member States of the Group of 77. We further call for the acceleration of the provision of core ICT infrastructure, increased access and reduced costs nationally, internationally and the increased connectivity and physical access to ICT infrastructure, including the development and the use of low cost hardware devices and software, especially open source. We call upon those countries that have made significant progress in these areas to share their knowledge and experience on brain circulation.

16. We should not be forgetting the gains made in the field of science and technology and the potential benefits in areas such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, health technologies and water technologies. In this regard, we should continue with knowledge sharing, investment in research and development for poverty alleviation, including the research and development strategies in these key sectors. We should continue to have the dialogue, which speaks for the scientific community, particularly from the South.

17. In conclusion, I wish to reiterate on behalf of the Group of 77 and China our commitment to work closely with the Italian Government and the Consortium for Science, Technology and Innovation to convene the G77 High Level Forum and Exhibition on Science, Technology and Innovation to be held in Trieste in the coming months. This High Level Forum and Exhibition will offer Ministers of Science and Technology an opportunity to review the decisions we may take at this meeting. In fact, I would like to propose that, we, the Ministers of Science and Technology should meet on a biennial basis to exchange views and strengthen South-South initiatives on Science, Technology and Innovation.

18. I believe that there is a wealth of knowledge and information on international cooperation in science and technology that we share among us. We need to translate our experiences with a view of empowering our societies. This is the least that our people expect of us, and of the Consortium for Science, Technology and Innovation that we

are launching today.

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