

Statement by Dr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the Turn-over Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77

New York, 11 January 2002

In the name of God, the Compassionate , the Merciful

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Administrator,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A year ago, on January 12, 2001, in a similar occasion in this very hall the Islamic Republic of Iran was honoured by the Group of 77 with the mantle and the mandate of its one-year chairmanship. We accepted that great honour with a deep sense of pride and humility and equally with a sense of determination to serve the common interests of the developing community. Today, at the end of the journey we trekked along together, we are here to hand over the helm and the torch to its next bearer, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. And it is indeed a distinct honour for this solemn occasion, for myself and my colleagues, to have the presence of President Hugo Chavez amongst us.

Distinguished Colleagues,

When Iran was elected in September 2000 to chair the Group of 77 in the year 2001, given the circumstances around the question of the follow-up to the South Summit outcome, I emphasized the importance of a number of overriding considerations. It was underlined, inter alia, that at the first ever Summit of the developing world, our Heads of State and Government reaffirmed our commitment to the principles and objectives that have guided the Group from the start as well as to the strengthening of its unity and solidarity in pursuit of its declared objectives. From our point of view, the most important challenge facing the Group at the time revolved around the question of how to proceed with the implementation of the Summit outcome. It was further asserted that the all Group's undertakings towards the follow-up and implementation of the Havana outcome, inclusive of the Programme of Action and its Institutional Follow-up and the Other Decisions, should by necessity and as a matter of priority comply with and be guided by the principles and objectives of the Group. The centrality of decision-making through consensus as a well-established and much cherished practice and time-honoured tradition of the Group was also underscored. It was as well reckoned that the future of the Group of 77 - as the sole universal intergovernmental voice of the South in pursuit of development - and the successful pursuit of the long-term interests of the Group and its members, big and small, depended on sincere and faithful respect for openness, participation and consensus as the fundamental overarching working principles of the Group. Moreover, I reaffirmed the full commitment of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the principles and objectives of the Group and as well as to endeavour in earnest during its term of office to uphold and promote them. The same overriding concerns and considerations were reiterated, once more, in our statement last January at the turn-over ceremony.

That was how we looked at the Group of 77 and its unique status and role and the challenges confronting it. Having myself served as the Permanent Representative here in New York a few years back and also having observed the work of the Group close up for a number of years, we knew it was quite a challenge to brace for the Group's chairmanship; and more so, to be able to deliver, and deliver good. We decided, nevertheless, to rise to the challenge, without hidden agenda or grandiose schemes. Now, here we stand, at the end of the one-year journey. Speaking before this august assembly just a few minutes away from saying farewell to all of you, I find myself in a position to affirm, with confidence and of course with a sense of satisfaction, that the

Iranian chairmanship has endeavoured, in good faith and to the best of its ability, to remain faithful to its commitments and to uphold, in practice, the established, time-honoured principles of the Group and to strive towards their further promotion and consolidation as well as towards achieving the objectives of the Group.

As I alluded in my statement at the Annual Ministerial Meeting back in mid-November, it is not easy at all to present a comprehensive report on the activities, endeavours, and achievements of the Group, and its chairmanship, in a single statement. As you all know, much better than me, the Group of 77 has had an extremely full plate this year, a number of major conferences and special sessions, here at the United Nations Headquarters and elsewhere, not to mention numerous regular meetings of a large number of intergovernmental bodies and the major part of the 56th Session of the General Assembly. All of you have been directly involved in all the activities of the Group and the travail and the exertions of the Chairman and his team of experts. Before going any further, I should take this opportunity to express, on my own behalf as well as on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, our deepest and most sincere gratitude and appreciation for the support you have given Ambassador Bagher Asadi and his team, enabling him and his colleagues to lead and represent the Group of 77 and China in all those meetings and conferences. I am fully aware of the excellent, dynamic, mutually trusting and truly functional relations between our team and the Group in its entirety, and of course, of their performance throughout the year - of which we are proud.

Distinguished Colleagues,

This farewell statement, cannot, by definition, be an exercise in substantive discussion or argumentation. On the Group's analysis and positions on major global and development issues and challenges we face, including the still unfolding globalization process, we have the Havana Declaration and Programme of Action, and such more recent documents as the Tehran Consensus on South-South cooperation. The Ministerial Communique which was adopted less than two months ago also addresses the most prominent issues, processes and challenges before us. Equally important are so many statements that have been prepared in the most transparent manner and delivered on behalf of the Group during the past year on all the issues and processes the Group has had to tackle. They are live documents and reflect the state of the art analysis, positions and demands of the Group. Moreover, the outcome of all those activities is physically captured in documents of all sorts, which, I am sure, G-77 experts will continue to devour for inspiration and knowledge, for the next round of negotiations - and no doubt for polemics. The full text of this statement is distributed; I read a shortened version only. Even if the full text were much longer and more detailed, I have to admit, it could have hardly captured the expanse, depth, richness or the diversity - much less the actual dynamics and drama - of the activities we have collectively gone through during the past year. What I intend to venture instead is to reflect on a collective experience, particularly from the vantage point of what it portends for the future of the Group, and needless to say, in so far as the principles and objectives of the Group are concerned - as I alluded to a while earlier.

Looking back, I can say that the Group of 77 and China in the year 2001 actively participated in more areas and fields, and more so, in a substantive manner. Active and proactive engagement in all phases of the work of sessions and processes, including at the level of articulating the common positions of the Group, whether in the form of a general statement or preparation and presentation of positions papers and negotiating texts, are among the hallmarks of the work performed. This approach and performance was the case on all issues and in meetings and processes, in New York and elsewhere. However, it deserves to mention a few areas such as the Financing for Development (FfD); climate change and the Kyoto Protocol; International Environmental Governance (IEG); World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD); Least Developed Countries Conference; Habitat Conference; desertification; forests; the issue of Human Resources Management; the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003; and the operational activities for development.

Apart from active participation and engagement, as the necessary condition for a meaningful engagement of

the South in the work of the United Nations and multilateral processes, we undertook during our chairmanship to lead and represent the developing community as a credible negotiating force and partner. It has been our considered view - as an active member of the Group of 77 before and particularly during the chairmanship - that the Group of 77 is neither a poor man's charity-seeking club nor merely a long catalogue of demands and wish lists - legitimate as they might be in the eyes of the developing community itself. Rather, to pay homage to the vision of late Raul Prebisch almost four decades ago when the Group was founded, developing countries constitute a potent force with "a concept of life and human values" which can make a valuable contribution to the common enterprise of the global community inclusive of everybody on both sides of the development divide. And also, on that basis, the South can act as a dynamic, united force - despite its beautiful diversity and quite numerous and varied constituencies. Furthermore, that it can, as a consequence, perform as a relevant and engaged negotiating partner - with the inevitable openness and flexibility albeit in a principled manner. At a more conceptual level, our approach, I have to add, was premised on the concept of dialogue and the need for mutual understanding as the prerequisite for meaningful interaction and fruitful, result-oriented negotiation. And of course, it should not come to you as a surprise that the concept and paradigm of the Dialogue among Civilizations - as proposed and pursued by President Khatami and supported by the Secretary-General and the United Nations - has inspired and nourished our approach and actual conduct while chairing the Group.

Having laid out these overall considerations - far from being exhaustive, though - let me now move from the conceptual level to the rather practical work on the ground. On the basis of the approach and conduct just outlined, I stand here as a witness that the Group of 77 now enjoys a more respected status and a stronger position and negotiating clout as the representative of the developing community, here at the United Nations and equally in other multilateral processes in which the Group has been engaged. This is not just our positive judgment - prejudicial as it might somehow be considered - rather, it is the kind of message that we have been receiving from others, both within the ranks of the developing community and also from a wide range of quarters - even unlikely quarters - among developed negotiating partners. And this is not just limited to the Bonn meeting in late July and the Marrakech Conference where the fate of the embattled Kyoto Protocol and the ultimate achievement of consensus on its ratification came from the extremely positive and equally detrimental role played by the Group of 77. A similar conduct and performance by the Group and its chairmanship in quite a number of areas and processes has received widespread recognition. The whole point here is that we believed all along that the Group of 77 - the South - should make a difference in actual terms in the course of negotiations on multilateral issues and processes. And now we can attest that it has approached that status and position - thanks to the dedication and hard work of our team and the full, generous and reassuring support they have received from the Group of 77 and China in its entirety. Yes, we are pleased with what has been brought to the table this year, and we are truly humbled by the expressions of support. But, let me hasten to add, a word of caution; that what has been achieved is just a beginning, and certainly, no cause for celebration, much less for complacency.

Having been convinced of the Group's tremendous potentials, we assumed the chairmanship with the goal, inter alia, of helping it realize, to the degree possible within the existing institutional constraints, of such potentials. We, therefore, undertook to facilitate the Group's active, meaningful engagement in the actual negotiation in a manner commensurate with its true weight and stature. This very forcefulness, while bearing clear substantive as well as political gains, has also been quite catalytic for the internal relations within the Group. It has as well taught us a unique, valuable lesson; that a higher level of mutual understanding and consequent internal cohesion is achievable through confronting challenging situations and overcoming internal centrifugal currents - most notably as was the case in the Bonn meeting on the fate of the Kyoto Protocol and in the Second Committee on the follow-up to the LDCs Conference. With the benefit of hindsight, one could discern that these challenging situations reflect the real parameters of internal cohesion and unity of the Group, thus requiring a well-nuanced, dynamic understanding of and approach to the rather particular concerns and interests of our varied constituencies. Judging from actual experience, I can nevertheless tell you that we leave this chairmanship very happy with the level of internal cohesion and unity

that the Group has achieved as a result of active and proactive engagement in difficult processes involving internal discussion and even dissention.

This brings me to the question of the follow-up and the implementation of the final outcome of the South Summit, the crux of which finally boils down to the familiar questions of internal cohesion, consensus, participation and finally, the unity of the Group. Having followed with keen, personal interest this aspect of the work of the Group, I am indeed very pleased with the work of the Ad-hoc open-ended Working Group of the Group of 77 during the year 2001, as presented to the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 on 16 November 2001. The Working Group, as clearly indicated in various statements from the floor during the Ministerial Meeting and also as reflected in the Ministerial Communiqué, has proved its extreme usefulness and efficacy towards the operationalization of the provisions of the Havana Programme of Action. Its record of work this past year, particularly in the actual implementation of various provisions and measures of this Programme of Action, is very positive and encouraging. Within this framework, I find very reassuring the deliberations and recommendations of the Working Group's final meeting in mid-December, particularly the recommendations calling for the Working Group to continue its work, including with respect to the comprehensive examination of the content of the final report of the Group of five Heads of State and Government.

Closely related to the continued work of the Working Group is the question of the institutional strengthening of the Group of 77 - as provided in Section VI of the Havana Programme of Action (Institutional Follow-up). Taking into consideration all the deliberations within the Group, at all levels, inclusive of communications at the level of Heads of State and Government, with respect to the actual follow-up of the Second Decision of the Other Decisions of the South Summit, it should be evident to all of us that the mainstream of the Group of 77 is in a position to fully support the implementation of the provisions of the Institutional Follow-up in a forceful and expeditious manner, and not other un-negotiated proposals. As reflected in various paragraphs of the Section in question, there are two distinct and yet functionally related aspects involved; institutional strengthening of the Office of the Chairman of the Group of 77 in New York and strengthening of coordination between New York and the Chapters of the Group. As I am informed, practical, tangible progress was made during the year 2001 in the area of coordination. However, it needs to be further addressed and followed in earnest. An optimal utilization of the potentials of the Group of 77 both here in New York and in the Chapters remains dependent on and subject to the institutional strengthening of the Office of the Chairman in New York and its conversion into a compact executive secretariat - as recommended by the Havana Programme of Action.

On the perennial question of unity and solidarity, I would like to share with you another considered observation. The achievements of the Group of 77 in the year 2001, here in New York as well as in all other processes elsewhere, proved, once and hopefully for all, that New York is the center of gravity of the Group of 77. Here is where the heart of the developing world beats and here is where universal participation of the membership of the Group of 77 finds a practical, tangible and forceful meaning. And that's exactly why there is so much genuine support within the Group for the institutional strengthening of the Office of the Chairman of the Group of 77 in New York. This center of gravity is irreplaceable, its undermining, under whatever guise, should be unacceptable. Grandiose ideas aside, real articulation of well-thought-out proposals and measures, particularly to be practicable and do-able, require sober expert analysis and scrutiny. History and shared experiences tell us that it is exactly through expert deliberations and negotiations - painstaking and even exasperating as they may prove to be - that the Group has managed to arrive at hard-won consensual analyses and positions which have shaped and formed all our documents - the very solid basis for the Group's unity, sense of purpose and direction. Let us be very clear on this point that the unity and solidarity of the Group is the very *raison d'être* of its existence and that is where its real strength lies; departure from which will not but weaken the position of the Group as a whole, its mission and its individual members. All of us and each one of us should therefore undertake to lend our helping hands to make sure that the Group and its institutions are strengthened towards a better, fuller performance and delivery. No member of the developing

community, no matter how well-intentioned, should be found wanting in this enterprise - even inadvertently.

On the major on-going processes before the Group this year, as you may recall, at the Ministerial Meeting in November I paid particular attention first to the Financing for Development and then to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. I reiterate the same approach and analysis in both cases and emphasize, once more, the imperative of the Group's full-fledged, active continued participation in order to ensure their success and substantive outcome. With the Secretary-General with us here, I would nevertheless feel tempted to seize the moment to underline, once more, the historical significance of the Monterrey Conference for the whole international community and for the future of multilateralism and effective, meaningful international cooperation for development. It is a fact that this process is so close to our heart in the South and we have invested in it so much and for so long - for over two decades - and, for obvious reasons, we have very high expectations. I would like to renew the plea I made to the Secretary-General on this process back in November and thank him sincerely for all he has done so far. On a related point, let me further emphasize that FfD and WSSD processes are running on separate, independent tracks and are not linked in a substantive manner. However, it so appears to us in the South that achievement of a genuine, substantive outcome on Financing for Development will pave the way for meaningful progress in the area of sustainable development. As I underlined in mid-November at the Ministerial Meeting, international cooperation should take place across the board and not just in the area of peace and security. Failure in Monterrey, it should be clear to everybody, cannot but inevitably lead to another failure in Johannesburg. And the international community in its entirety, inclusive of the United Nations and the person of the Secretary-General, should make every effort to preclude such an eventuality.

Before concluding, I turn to the question of responsibility for development. I have addressed this issue previously on a number of occasions, even before Iran's chairmanship, but as recently as in the statement at the Ministerial Meeting in mid-November. Our analysis of and approach to the all-important questions of multilateralism, international cooperation for development and North-South relations are fully known to the Group and adequately reflected in my previous statements. Let me echo the words of President Khatami in his message to the IFCC-X in Tehran last August, that "development for us, genuine, long-term comprehensive development, cannot but start in our midst, by ourselves in our respective societies and through ourselves." While addressing the implementation of the provisions of the Havana Programme of Action, President Khatami emphasized in the same message the elements of realism, objectivity, future-looking determination, creativity and a certain degree of boldness. Here, I would like to attach particular importance to the element of boldness in our understanding within the Group, henceforth, of the concept of development in its broad, dynamic and ever-evolving sense and how we undertake to achieve development, individually and collectively, including in terms of our expectations from ourselves and from others. We need to start asking ourselves a number of probing questions, and quite major questions at that. More importantly, we need to start telling ourselves that it is not enough to lament the unacceptability of the situation in our respective societies and in the developing world in general. We, ourselves, have to undertake to change it. There is nobody out there to do it for us.

With the helm being now transferred to Venezuela; another committed, active member of the Group of 77 with a long record of service to the Group, I remain confident that a year full of success awaits us. It is with great hope and enthusiastic anticipation that we look forward to the future - this year and years ahead - to be guided, as in the past, by the cherished principles of the Group in all our common endeavours and enterprises. And with you Mr. President, so committed and enthusiastic about the work of our dear Group of 77, with Minister Davila, Ambassador Alcalay and his colleagues, we rest assured that the principles of unity and solidarity, participation, transparency and consensus will be guarded as jealously in the future as they have been in the past.

Dear Colleagues,

