

Statement by H.E. Dr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of the assumption of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 - 2001

New York, 12 January 2001

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Your Excellency Minister Lamido,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Administrator,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I should take the opportunity to offer, on behalf of the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, our most sincere greetings to you all for the New Year, the beginning of the new Millennium and the new century. A better common future, a more humane world order, a tomorrow free from fear and want for all, is what all of us hope and aspire. Making this a reality should be the guiding light and the driving force of our collective enterprise, both at the level of the entire international community as well as of the developing world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the assumption of the chairmanship of the Group of 77 for the year 2001 a great honour and takes pride, with humility, in having received the trust and confidence of the collectivity of the developing world. It offers us a unique opportunity to serve the purposes and objectives of this important grouping, the sole universal representation of the concerns, interests and demands of the developing countries. It will as well present us with a daunting challenge, which we embrace with enthusiasm, realism and determination. Over and above Iran's traditional deep attachment to the cherished principles and ideals of the Group of 77 and active participation and engagement in its affairs and activities, successful chairmanship of the Geneva Chapter during the year 2000 should be a further indication of our commitment to full cooperation with the entire membership towards the realization of the Group's objectives.

I cannot continue before paying tribute to the excellent work and stewardship of the outgoing Chair during the past year; a year overloaded with major events and the concomitant difficult negotiations, not to mention the first ever Summit of the South. The tireless, valuable efforts of the entire Nigerian team; Your Excellency Minister Lamido, your distinguished Ambassador here in New York and his capable and hard-working colleagues, all of you, deserve to be warmly commended. It was a difficult and exacting year, a trying challenge. However, the sweetness of the outcome of these endeavours should pale the difficulties and moments of hardship faced along the way.

While expressing appreciation for the work done last year, a special word of thanks is due first to the Government and people of Cuba for hosting the South Summit. The generous Cuban offer couple of years back to host the conference and the unwavering commitment and tremendous sustained efforts on a national scale over an almost two-year period made it possible for the Group of 77 to see the actual realization of the long-awaited and much-aspired Summit. It was indeed a commendable feat of great proportions, seasoned with judicious political astuteness. In the same breadth, special tribute is to be paid to President Obasanjo of Nigeria for his effective leadership of the Summit and also for the endeavours ever since for the implementation of the first decision of the Other Decisions as well as towards the implementation of the second Decision. On this, I will have a few more words later in the statement.

Before moving on, let me seize the opportunity to say how pleased we are to have with us today the distinguished Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, a genuine believer in and an ardent supporter of the cause of the South. I find his presence in the turn-over ceremony, in itself as well as symbolically, very reassuring and I am sure his statement in a few minutes time will make that more so. Equally pleasing is the presence of Mr. Malloch Brown, the distinguished Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the best and the closest friend of the South in the whole UN family. I am confident that the Administrator's statement will also take us a step further in our ever-expanding relations. And I will come back to this in a while.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

What was achieved in Havana last April is of historical proportions and import. The Group of 77, comprising of almost four-fifth of the world's population and poised between the achievements of the past and the hopes and expectations of a yet uncharted future, succeeded, at long last, to meet at the highest political level and agree on two negotiated texts; that is, the Declaration of the South Summit and the Havana Programme of Action. Together, they embody the long-term vision and the strategic perspective of the Group in a rapidly changing world, with all its disquieting uncertainties. These two negotiated documents are rich and comprehensive, and carry a potent message. They portray a realistic - albeit grim - picture of the situation of the South in the world today. The analysis of

the world economic situation and what it entails for the bigger part of the human community is sobering, whether in terms of the persistence of endemic poverty, widening gaps at different levels among and within states, or the increased marginalization of a large number of developing countries. The globalization process, rampant as it currently is, has been rightly diagnosed as a principal culprit for the further exacerbation of the situation and intensification of disparities and the inherent instabilities of the world system. Its potential opportunities are yet to be realized.

The Havana Declaration reaffirms the deeply cherished principles and objectives of the Group, including the imperative need to act in close unity for the primary purpose of working for a peaceful and prosperous world. It asserts full commitment to the Group's spirit to pursue a common and constructive course of action for the protection and promotion of our collective interests and genuine international cooperation for development. Furthermore, the Declaration represents the Group's collective reflection on the changing world economic situation and the emerging challenges facing the South in the economic and social spheres. It is a solemn invitation to all of us at the dawn of the 21st century to act decisively to map out a better future for our countries and peoples and to work towards the establishment of a just and democratic international economic system. It underlines, in very clear terms, that development is the best contribution to peace and calls for collective and peaceful solutions for the global problems affecting the world today.

The Havana Declaration further reaffirms that development for the well-being of our peoples will always remain the focus of action of the Group of 77. Within this context, it addresses the wide range of economic and development issues on the agenda of the Group of 77 and advances the Group's collective analysis and position on each and all of them. Given the Group's expanse and diverse composition, it as well addresses the particular concerns and interests of the variety of groups and sub-groups within the developing community.

In our view, the Declaration's comprehensive coverage of the range of issues and problems we have been grappling with in our continuing quest for development, and particularly given the level and degree of articulation achieved in their formulation, rises to the challenge of our predicament and time. Moreover, the fact that we met at the Summit just eight months ago and discussed and negotiated these two documents renders unnecessary any further attempt at analysis of the situation or advancement of position at this stage. And I for one will not do that.

Instead, what remains for us, for the Group in its totality, is to exert every possible effort to translate the Declaration's strategy and vision into action and reality. For which we have the second negotiated outcome of the Summit; that is, the Havana Programme of Action. The thrust of the Programme of Action is to lay the foundations for a more effective system of international development cooperation, and at a more practical level, to pursue a sharply focused action-oriented agenda. Framed as such, the Programme of Action has accorded high priority to five areas; that is, globalization, knowledge and technology, south-south cooperation, north-south relations, and institutional follow-up.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe all the decisions and actions in each area of high priority in the Programme of Action are forward-looking, creative and simultaneously realistic and practicable. They all deserve to receive the undivided, commensurate attention of the Group in its entirety. And we all need to pursue them with enthusiasm and vigour. This brings me to the challenges ahead of us, and more specifically, to what lies before us in the year 2001.

Implementation of the provisions of the Havana Programme of Action is of utmost urgency and immediacy. We will certainly take stock of what has already been accomplished in this respect by the outgoing Chair and build on the achievements. As we all know, the 24th Annual Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 decided to establish an ad-hoc open-ended Working Group of the Group of 77 to discuss modalities for the implementation and follow-up of the Havana Programme of Action and Other Decisions. It is indeed a matter of great pleasure that some preliminary discussion has already taken place here in New York, particularly in so far as the all too important question of the Working Group's terms of reference is concerned. Expedient establishment of the Working Group should be accorded the requisite high priority it deserves. Equally important and imperative is the necessity of the active participation and proactive engagement of all the members of the Group in this process in order to ensure its inclusiveness and success. Achievement of consensus, as early as possible, at the level of the whole Group on the practical modalities of implementation is of utmost urgency in order to ensure commencement of the actual process of implementation and its smooth, coordinated and successful continuation.

In so far as Havana's Other Decisions are concerned, let me reiterate that we are deeply grateful to the distinguished President of the South Summit, and also the distinguished Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, for the full implementation of the first Decision in transmitting the results of the South Summit to the G-8 Summit in Okinawa and other follow-up meetings during the Millennium Summit. All of us in the Group of 77 are very pleased to see that as a result of the Havana Summit the state of liaison between the developing South and the developed North has been further elevated and institutionalized. As the current Chairman of the Group of 77, and as clearly mandated by the Havana's Programme of Action, the Islamic Republic of Iran will take the necessary steps to convey the concerns and interests of the Group to its developed partners, including the forthcoming meeting of the G-8 in Italy a few months

down the road.

With respect to the implementation of the second Decision, I deem it necessary to pay special tribute to the untiring efforts of President Obasanjo and the other four distinguished Heads of State and Government for all their endeavours to this end. Given the significance and the sensitivity of the question of restructuring of the management of the Group of 77, as involved in the Second Decision, and also the necessity of thorough consideration by the members of the Group of 77 of the rather sophisticated arrangements and machinery proposed in the first report of the Group of 5 (London Report), as you all know, the 24th Annual Ministerial Meeting decided that the mandate of the ad-hoc Working Group would also include preparation of recommendations on the proposals in the reports of the five Heads of State and Government. As I gather, the honourable members of the Group of 5 intend to meet shortly in order to finalize the report under preparation on the implementation of the second Decision. We look forward with anticipation to receive the report and register our deep appreciation to the five distinguished Heads of State and Government upon successful completion of their task towards facilitating the implementation of this important Decision of the Havana Summit. Once received by the Group of 77 here in New York, it is incumbent upon the ad-hoc Working Group to undertake consideration of its proposals with expedition and diligence and prepare its report as requested in paragraph 5 of the Ministerial Statement.

Turning now to the work programme of the Group of 77 for this year, it is glaringly obvious that we face quite a tall order and a challenging vista. In the year 2001, in addition to the multitude of routine meetings and sessions in New York - a quite substantial and substantive load of work in itself - the Group of 77 will also have to deal with the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries; Habitat II; World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; Ten-Year Review of the Children's Summit; Resumed Session of the COP-6 of the Climate Change Convention; and Special General Assembly Session on HIV/AIDS. Moreover, and as you all know, we will be fully engaged also with the preparatory process for the International Intergovernmental High-Level Event on Financing for Development and the Rio+10 Review Conference, both to take place during the first half of 2002. Forests and energy are also among other important issues before us this year. All of us in the Group of 77 are fully and intimately aware of what is on the table in each of these events and conferences, and more specifically, what is at stake for the South and for the Group, both in terms of our general, thematic and cross-cutting concerns as well as of particular and sectoral interests.

In addressing the challenges in front of the developing world in all these areas of urgency and priority, as I mentioned earlier in the statement, the Havana Declaration and the Programme of Action reflect the state of the collective vision, analysis, interests, positions and demands of the South, and certainly needless of any further elaboration, let alone repetition. Beyond articulation and advancement of position, it is a matter of great contentment and also a source of confidence and inspiration - at least as far as the incoming Chair is concerned - that the Group of 77 and China enjoys the collective experience, capacity and capability to rise to the challenge, struggle for its interests and pursue its objectives. And I remain confident that in the course of the activities in the year 2001 the Group will continue to raise, pursue and insist on its traditional and all-too-familiar concerns with regard to financial assistance, increased investment, market access, debt relief, technology transfer, and capacity-building, to name only the most prominent of a rather long catalogue, and also on the particular objectives and targets pertaining to each meeting and event. Therefore, we, and I mean the Group in its entirety, should be able to muster and mobilize our collective potential experience and capability and bring them to bear in all the Group's activities, here in New York and elsewhere, in every meeting and major conference, towards achieving our concrete and specific objectives and demands in each and every occasion. With these in mind, I merely suffice to draw attention to a number of overarching considerations.

The biggest challenge facing us today relates to the unenviable position of the South in the global arena; endemic and pervasive poverty and increasing marginalization in the real world on the one hand, and peripheral role and weight in the international, multilateral arena on the other. This overall setting is further complicated and made much worse by the rapidly changing situations, priorities and agendas. Changing this setting has always been among the major and much-aspired ideals and objectives of the developing world, and has been pursued by its sole universal deliberative body, the Group of 77. It is still the same predicament we face now, as in the past, and still the same challenge we have to overcome. The question is not whether, but how.

Sitting next to the Secretary-General, let's start with the United Nations. I am sure the Secretary-General shares our serious concern that in recent years a general trend towards downplaying of international cooperation for development on the agenda of the international community, including at the United Nations, has been at work. The buck stops here at the UN, the only truly universal intergovernmental body and the one with clear, well-defined, and Charter-based obligations and the necessary structure and means to work for the promotion of genuine and effective international cooperation for the development of the developing countries. Notwithstanding this overall trend, let me hasten to add that the Millennium Summit and its final outcome can be considered - with a certain degree of guarded caution and wait-and-see attitude - as a modest rectification in the right direction. "The collective responsibility to uphold the principle of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level" as enunciated by the Millennium Declaration and also its undertaking to "free the entire human race from want" and "to create an environment- at the national and global levels alike - conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty" are indeed welcome pronouncements and music to the ears and hearts of billions of people around the globe. They await, however, to be translated into action and become part of the everyday reality in the bigger part of the human community. Would it be too much to ask the Secretary-General, on behalf of the

developing world, to lend his personal attention and support as well as organizational authority and means to the effective pursuit and actual implementation of the requisite measures, actions and projects towards the ultimate realization of these lofty objectives? I suppose not. Actual pursuit of this agenda throughout the UN system, or in other words, mainstreaming the development agenda in the system, certainly needs more than the blessing and support of the person of the Secretary-General. It requires allocation of requisite budget and active engagement of the all-relevant departments, principally the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), as well as the engagement of its Funds and Programmes and Specialized Agencies. As far as the Group of 77 is concerned, every effort will be made in the current year to further expand and strengthen the existing close working relations between the Group and all these departments and bodies.

With the Administrator here, I should turn to the UNDP, which, as I said a little while earlier, has always been the best friend of the developing world. That's how we look at the UNDP and that's how much we expect from it, particularly in these trying times of changing priorities and diminishing core resources. The structure and institutional and human resources capacity of the UNDP, both at the headquarters and the field offices across the developing world, accords to the principal actor in UN operational activities the necessary potential to be in unique and unrivaled position to make the most possible contribution to the developing countries, particularly in such areas as capacity-building, economic and technical cooperation, and in more general sense, South-South cooperation. Let me add right here that I find particularly welcome the Administrator's emphasis in his letter of October 31st on seeking the political support of countries and groups for the UN operational activities. For our part, we are determined and fully prepared to actively engage in this process and explore all the possibilities for a higher level and much more vigorous cooperation with the UNDP.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ever since the inception of the Group of 77 almost four decades ago we have always accorded South-South cooperation a special place in the Group's activities and regarded it as an avenue towards achieving the ever illusive self-reliance. There is little doubt that it has become all the more imperative in this age of globalization, when, among others, multilateralism is under attack and instead unilateralism and at best bilateralism flourishing. In this connection, the Havana Programme of Action provides us with a very clear and focused blueprint for action. It contains a wide range of measures and actions in various areas of South-South Cooperation, which, in our view, are realistic and achievable. But, as we are all ruefully aware, the problem has not been due to lack of adopted measures and decisions, rather, active follow-up and implementation of the agreed decisions and measures. Therefore, what we need today is how to devise practical mechanisms for follow-up and implementation. In fact, the section on Institutional Follow-up in the Havana Programme of Action should, once implemented, provide for a strengthened support structure in this regard. We consider this as an important provision of the Programme of Action and I fully agree with Minister Lamido on the necessity of its urgent follow-up as a matter of high priority for the Group.

We consider North-South relations and cooperation as a strategic policy track for the developing world. We fully subscribe to the overall vision of the Havana Programme of Action in this area and are committed to the full implementation of all the related actions and measures. During our term of office, we will strive to promote North-South dialogue based on a spirit of partnership, mutual benefit and genuine interdependence. To this end, strengthened international cooperation in the economic, financial and environmental spheres, including in particular fulfillment of the commitments of developed countries undertaken previously, is imperative. Equally imperative is the objective of restoring the focus on development in existing international relations as well as a credible and meaningful movement towards the correction of existing systemic imbalances. While we are committed to the promotion of consensus on key issues of international economic relations and development and this overall principle will guide our approach and policy in the course of our intergovernmental deliberations and negotiations, I deem it necessary to underline that we consider compliance with agreed commitments a very tangible measuring rod for the health, success and continuity of the North-South dialogue.

Excellencies,

To conclude this statement, I would like to turn to the question of unity and solidarity of the Group of 77. In our view, respect for the unity and solidarity of the Group is a fundamental principle for the entire membership and its preservation and strengthening is incumbent upon all of us. It lies at the very heart of all our activities. It has been rightly and duly emphasized in all our documents from the very inception of the Group, including in the Declaration of the South Summit. We believe that all our current and future undertakings towards the follow-up and implementation of the Summit outcome, inclusive of the Programme of Action and its Institutional Follow-up and the Other Decisions, should by necessity and as a matter of principle comply with and be guided by the principles and objectives of the Group. It hardly needs to be mentioned that the process of decision-making in the Group of 77 through consensus is a well-established and much cherished practice and time-honoured tradition. As I underlined in my statement at the Ministerial Meeting last September, the very future of the Group of 77 as the sole universal voice of the South and the successful pursuit of the long-term interests of the Group and its members, big and small, depend on sincere and faithful respect for openness, participation and consensus as the fundamental overarching working principles of the Group.

I would like to seize this unique opportunity to reassure the entire membership of the Group of 77 that the Islamic Republic of

Iran is fully committed to these principles and will endeavour in earnest during its term of office to uphold and promote them. This is our greatest asset and we should seek to utilize it to the best in the course of our activities and common endeavours towards realizing our common ideals and objectives, including in the implementation of the Havana outcome. We believe a united, solid, dynamic and proactive Group of 77 is what we should all strive for. Nothing less should be acceptable, and no member should be found wanting in the pursuit of such a noble objective. The enormous potentials of the developing South should be harnessed through unity and solidarity towards achieving a more solid negotiating position at the global table we share with the developed North. The current chairmanship; myself, Ambassador Asadi and his team, will do our utmost to help the Group in this enterprise.

Thank you very much for your patience and indulgence.

