

Statement by H.E. Vinay Sheel Oberoi, Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO, on the occasion of assumption of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China

**(Paris, 18 January 2011)**

H.E. Dr. Abdulrazzak Al-Nafisi, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Kuwait, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

It is indeed a privilege to have been chosen to chair the Group of 77 and China this year, in 2011. On behalf of the Government of India I accept the responsibility, and pledge to work in concert and with commitment towards our common goals. We are indeed honoured - and also deeply aware of the importance of the tasks ahead, of representing the Group and protecting and advancing its interests.

I am grateful to all the members of the Group of 77 and China for the faith that have reposed and for the support extended to India's candidature. To the Asia Pacific Group I would wish to extend a special word of gratitude for their initiation of the process, and the warmth and support extended throughout. The collective endorsement - is heartwarming, and bodes well for the future of our Group. I am confident that we will work together on the basis of shared perceptions towards common goals and in common cause.

I would wish to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Dr. Abdulrazzak Al-Nafisi, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Kuwait and our Chairperson over the past year for his leadership, contribution and commitment and the gentle guiding hand with which he has steered the affairs of the Group. He has been entrusted with challenging and major responsibilities in his country - I have no doubt that he will discharge them with the same dedication, empathy and efficiency that have marked his contribution over so many years at UNESCO. Our good wishes will be with him in his new assignment.

I would also wish to express my gratitude to all members of the Bureau and their Secretariat for their untiring efforts through last year, and seek the same

unswerving commitment and dedication towards the Group's efforts and activities this year.

Now in its fifth decade, the Group has grown by over fifty countries. Over these almost fifty years, the world has grown and in many ways the world has changed. The Group was born in the context of asymmetries. There were inequities in the global economic order and in the framework and practice of international relations. Several of the inequalities remain, and new ones have emerged - the widening digital divide is an example, but there has also been progress on many fronts. Several instances of transformations of economies, of dilution of inequalities and the emergence of cooperative frameworks are testimony to this.

And yet, there are aspirations that are unmet, and opportunities that are missed. The target dates for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals are drawing nearer, and there is as yet much to be done. Sustainable development is as yet, in many fields of activity, a thought and a concept. Poverty and discrimination continue to pose challenges that should have long been eliminated. The architecture of global cooperation - the frameworks of resource and aid flows, the structures of trade and financial cooperation, and the issues of climate change are all important and often troubling concerns.

It is in this context that the Group of 77 and China can and must play a pivotal role. The largest grouping of countries within the United Nations system must articulate its vision and its perceptions - clearly, cogently and with the conviction born out of the principles that bind us together.

We now enter the second decade of the twenty first century. There are issues and problems that confront us and test our skills of leadership and collective functioning. It is therefore imperative that our Group takes forthright positions on the key issues as a collectivity; we must be together and seek solutions to these problems, especially those of developing countries and the LDCs.

Together, we will make this a decade of hope and change, of opportunity and fulfillment.

Once again, I thank you, and seek your support and cooperation in the year and tasks ahead of us.