REMARKS

by

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to, first of all, express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Loizaga, President of the High-level Committee, Mr. Zhou and his colleagues of the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation for the opportunity to make a few remarks at this important meeting devoted to the significance of south-south approaches to development, especially for the LDCs, most of which are in Africa. This meeting is particularly timely as the international community readies itself for the September Millennium Review Summit, and to renew its commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

In this presentation, I would like to draw attention to three main developments, which, in my view, gives concrete expression to South-South Cooperation and may also contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. First, there was the Asia-Africa Public-Private Joint Forum held on 24 and 25 May 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, under the auspices of the TICAD initiative, to promote trade and investment between Asia and Africa which was followed by the TICAD Asia-Africa Trade and Investment Conference which was held in Tokyo on 1-2 November 2004.

The Tokyo Conference emphasized “Poverty Reduction through Economic Growth,” as one of the three pillars of Japan’s Policy on Cooperation with Africa, as well as “Asia-Africa Cooperation”. Also at the Conference, senior officials of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and the Japanese Organizers signed a policy document delineating guidelines for mutual cooperation for business promotion in Africa. Both sides confirmed their commitment to endeavoring to promote trade and investment between Asia and Africa. And in March 2005, the AFRASIA Business Council (AABC), a consultative mechanism in support of building sustainable business partnerships between Africa and Asia, was launched in Mauritius as a follow-up to TICAD III, and with respect to the framework drawn by the NEPAD for its short-term action plan. AABC has the potential to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the MDGs by concretizing the appeal for an enhanced contribution of the private sector to sustainable growth made by the United Nations in its Framework of Actions for Business and the MDGs.

Second, the Asian-African Summit 2005 held in Jakarta on 23 April adopted a Declaration on the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP). The Partnership covers three areas, namely, political solidarity, economic cooperation and socio-cultural relations. Also reaffirmed was the spirit of Bandung, which is the spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation through greater multilateralism with a central role for the United Nations in global affairs.

The leaders of Africa and Asia also agreed to address issues of common concern, such as armed conflict, weapons of mass destruction, transnational organized crime, terrorism and the need to promote practical cooperation in areas such as trade, industry, investment, finance, tourism, information and communication technology, energy, health,
transportation, agriculture, water resources and fisheries. Moreover, the Partnership emphasized the importance of promoting human resource development, enhanced capacity building and technical cooperation. This broad agenda holds enormous possibilities for the future of South-South Cooperation.

Third, a number of countries in the South are intensifying their efforts to promote South-South Cooperation in concrete terms. For example, Brazil has taken a number of initiatives to support Latin American and African countries in sectors such as energy, environment and small enterprises. And, through its programme of technical assistance to other developing countries, Nigeria has sent 1,677 volunteers to 33 countries. The country also launched a new African Digital Solidarity Fund in March 2004 to help implement the Plan of Action to be adopted at the second phase of the World Summit on Information Society. India too is emerging as a global market force, especially in the information technology industry. It has a strong programme that provides training for nationals of other developing countries and supports building institutional capacity by committing substantial funding for such projects. China has launched a China-Africa Forum and on its part, Qatar organized the high-level forum on Trade and Investment of the Group of 77 in December 2004 and will be hosting the second South Summit in June 2005. Cuba has continued to provide a substantial number of medical personnel to African and Latin American countries and, in late March 2005, the Government offered to send more medical doctors to assist countries in their fight against HIV/AIDS. These and other opportunities for south-south collaborators should be increased for the benefit of the LDCs, especially those experiencing special vulnerabilities.

Mr. Chairman, permit me to point to three additional areas where South-South Cooperation could promote the nexus between peace and development. These include, first, the adoption by NEPAD of the African Peer Review Mechanism, aimed at assessing, monitoring and promoting political, economic and corporate good governance. Since the review process has begun in Ghana in May 2004, support missions have been fielded to Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Uganda. The number of member countries volunteering to join the peer review mechanism has grown from 16 to 25, demonstrating the willingness of African nations to share experiences and to promote good governance in all its aspects. Perhaps, other developing countries outside the African continent can learn from this peer review mechanism in Africa.

Second, the benefit of South-South Cooperation could be extended to the fight against HIV/AIDS. For example, at the November 2001 WTO ministerial in Doha, Qatar, Member States agreed that the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) was sufficiently flexible to permit poor countries to override patents in the event of public health crises. Hence, those countries of the South, especially in Africa, which lack sufficient manufacturing capacity in the pharmaceutical sector to make effective use of compulsory licensing as currently provided by the TRIPS Agreement can seek help from their better placed counter-parts. In this regard, the Indian lab was the first generic drug producer to try to break the patent monopoly at an international level by offering antiretroviral therapy to charitable organizations and
African governments in February 2001. This is a positive example of South-South Cooperation which should be duplicated.

Through the promotion of joint ventures to deal with other diseases of the poor, such as ebola, African trypanosomiasis, cholera, dengue, typhoid, and typhus fevers by enabling these countries to treat the diseases by importing drugs from other WTO Members under the compulsory licensing rules of the TRIPS Agreement.

Third, there are opportunities for greater collaboration among countries of the South in the area of more effective utilization of mineral and natural resources. In recent years, enormous reserves of oil and gas have been discovered in Africa, especially in the Gulf of Guinea. Moreover, fifty per cent of the diamonds that are produced and consumed by the western world comes from Southern Africa. The transformation of these natural resources into semi-finished and finished consumer goods would increase greatly the financial resources available for development. The appropriate technology to process these countless resources into semi-finished and finished products is, however, lacking in the African continent.

African countries can increase the value-added of these resources by tapping the expertise of countries of the South with similar experiences and learn from their best practices. Moreover, better effective management of such mineral and natural resources can discourage their illicit exploitation to fuel conflicts, as was the case in Sierra Leone, Angola and Liberia. In this regard, countries of the South should participate actively in the Kimberly Process and the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative and share experiences in how best to benefit from the processes.

Conclusion

African countries have been making progress in addressing their development challenges. They continue to reform their macroeconomic policies, improve their regulatory frameworks and promote more effective trade and investment policies. Thanks to these broad-based reforms, and to progress being made in the implementation of NEPAD, Africa is today more open to international trade and investment. There are enormous business opportunities in Africa. Meanwhile, more and more conflicts and wars in Africa are being resolved while democracy and good governance are gaining ground in the continent. As African countries work to boost trade and investment, Africa’s development partners, and in particular the private sector, should be alive to the growing opportunities on the continent. If they are, they will profit – and Africa will move closer to realizing its enormous potential and move closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. All these efforts would contribute to a more prosperous world and a fairer international economic relations - key objectives of South-South Cooperation.

I thank you for listening.