

23 January 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Handover Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77**

His Excellency Ambassador John W. Ashe, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda and outgoing Chairman of the Group of 77,

Your Excellency Dr. Altigani Salih Fidail, Minister of International Cooperation of Sudan,

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad,
Permanent Representative of Sudan to United Nations and Chairman of the Group of 77 for 2009,

Mr. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,
Excellencies,
Friends All,

We meet here today at the beginning of a new year and a new term of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China. We all expect this to be a year of especially difficult challenges and changes. It is also a time when the United Nations, the General Assembly and the Group of 77 have the opportunity to reassert their roles as key protagonists in the global drama that continues to grip the imaginations and the very lives of people around the world.

The plot of the humanity's drama is endlessly complex and full of surprises, disappointments and uncertainties. But I firmly believe we are at a special moment when decisions we take will have unusually long-lasting consequences for the United Nations and the entire international community. If we rise to the many challenges and provide the leadership and guidance that is required, we may defuse some of the crises that threaten the peace and security and development in the current global scenario. And there is no doubt that we must inject the essential elements of solidarity and unity into our work, so as to ensure a more positive outcome in the years ahead.

I have known the G77 since its inception in 1964. Julius Nyerere was one of the first generation of leaders whom I deeply admired and from whom many of us drew inspiration. Since then I have come to know many of you during my diplomatic career. Many of you here today are dear friends as well as colleagues who share a common history of struggle for justice.

The G77, of course, has grown and evolved politically since those early times when all seemed possible. And despite its ups and downs, no one can challenge the fact that the Group has transformed the General Assembly and enabled developing countries to take their correct place at the centre of world affairs. This has not come easily. We have met challenges to our demands for seats at the table

from those who would rather we stay in the kitchen. Because of this continuing resistance, I firmly believe that only the democratization of the United Nations, a priority of my presidency, will ensure that we will finally become equal partners in world affairs.

It is the Group of 77 that has taken the lead to promote the values and principles of the U.N., including the collective economic interests of developing countries. You have been the real protagonists of change over the decades. Now bringing together 130 countries, you represent the fastest growing sectors of the global economy. You possess political and cultural influence that should not be underestimated. Your enormous diversity should be seen as your strength, not a weakness.

Every day in my work as president, I am aware of your influence for good and appreciate your good will and support for my office. With your help, we are now facing head on the multi-faceted challenges that threaten to tip our dear Mother Earth and her inhabitants into disaster. Despite the financial crisis that threatens to reverse the progress that many of our countries have achieved in recent years, our recent Assembly meetings – especially those on the Millennium Development Goals, on the Special Needs of Africa, Small Island and Landlocked States, and Financing for Development -- have served to reinforce the commitments by the wealthier countries to assist those countries in their development. And we were all reminded of the progress we have made by working together with the five-day conference on South-South Cooperation in December.

You have also supported my efforts to bring directly to the Assembly our concerns regarding economic meltdown that still threatens us with a devastating global depression. In Doha, at the International Conference on Financing for Development in December, you demonstrated your commitment to make the Assembly a strong and representative forum for exploring major changes needed in our international financial and monetary architecture.

You have welcomed the Presidential Commission of Experts on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System. And I am counting on you to make the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, expected to bring together world leaders at the highest level towards the end of May, a gathering that will lay the groundwork for profound changes in how we do business in the world. The G77 has the greatest interest in making this a success.

Excellencies,

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to Antigua and Barbuda and His Excellency Ambassador John W. Ashe, its Permanent Representative and outgoing Chairman of the Group of 77, for his brilliant Chairmanship of the G77 over the past year.

Ambassador Ashe commands wide respect not only within the G77 but among the wider membership of the General Assembly. He is known for his ability to clearly articulate his Groups interests in a balanced and forthright manner, while respecting the legitimacy of other positions.

Under Antigua and Barbuda's Chairmanship, the Group of 77 has worked hard, with calm and wisdom during critical junctures, to develop unified positions on a number of complex global challenges and aspects of United Nations reform. I thank you.

And allow me to extend my special and sincere congratulations to the Republic of Sudan, represented today by H.E. Dr. Altigani Salih Fidail, Minister of International Cooperation, and our distinguished colleague, Ambassador Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem. Sudan's early independence in 1956 provided inspiration for other emerging states throughout the developing world. As a founding member of the G-77, Sudan now faces, with all of us, the challenge of contributing to this new generation of leadership to advance the next phase of economic independence within the global economy. In serving the Group at this important juncture, Sudan brings its great known economic potential and emergence as an oil exporting country in the midst of difficult situations and challenges. Sudan is also identified by such organizations as the FAO to be among few countries that hold the potential for helping to resolve the world food crisis, one of the priorities of my presidency. And according also to a recent United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Report, Sudan, together with Angola, tops the list of remarkable economic growth, all the more important as Sudan is, as you know, the largest country on the continent. I am confident that the Chairmanship of Sudan will enhance the Group's commitment to the right of its member countries to pursue their own socio-economic paths.

Your Excellency, I look forward to working with you in the spirit of collective responsibility with the Groups and Members States of the United Nations; and enhance the relevance and vitality of the General Assembly. This is the best way to promote more effective multilateralism, and deepen our cooperation and demonstrate our leadership on complex issues, including, the ongoing reform of the United Nations.

Excellencies,

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made clear, we need to create a stronger UN in which all parties are held mutually accountable for delivering results; for a more prosperous and healthy world; a more just and secure world - so that we truly live up to the high expectations the global public has placed in us.

Let me thank all the Member States of the Group of 77 for your support and cooperation during the first part of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. But there is much more work to be done. I have mentioned the work of the Presidential Commission leading up to the high-level conference. The modalities for this conference will have to be carefully developed in the weeks ahead.

Next month we will embark on historic negotiations to finally bring about Security Council reform. These negotiations will certainly prove challenging, given the number of disagreements Member States still face. There is broad agreement, however, on a key issue: any enlargement of the Security Council should address the glaring under-representation of developing countries. The overriding interest of the G77 as a whole is that this reform take place. So let us be sure that all of us work hard to make this opportunity to democratize the Security Council a breakthrough success.

As well, reflecting the priorities that I outlined at the beginning of my presidency, we will be holding Thematic Debates on the following issues in the months ahead:

- on Transfer of Technology and Renewable Energy
- on Adaptation and Small Islands
- on Democratization and Revitalization of the United Nations
- on Access to Education in Emergency and Post-Crisis and Transition Situations Caused by Man-made Conflicts or Natural Disasters
- on Strengthening Global Health
- on an Action Plan on Human Trafficking
- on the Food Crisis

We will be providing more details on these important meetings in the weeks to come. May I once again wish our dear Brothers and Sisters of Sudan the greatest success in your Chairmanship of the Group. As president of the General Assembly, I wholeheartedly look forward to working with the Group of 77 on our common work programme during the remainder of this session.

Thank you.