



Remarks

by

H.E. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

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**Formal Handover of the Chairmanship of the
Group of 77 from the Republic of Fiji to the
Plurinational State of Bolivia**

Please check against delivery

H. E. Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia,
H. E. Mr. R. RatuInoke Kubuabola, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International
Cooperation of the Republic of Fiji,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Executive Secretary,
Distinguished Guests,

Good morning and happy new year one and all.

It is my pleasure to meet with you once again and I hope you've enjoyed your holiday break.

Let me begin by congratulating the delegation of Fiji for its successful leadership of the Group of 77 in 2013. Beginning at the highest possible level of your government, you have made yourself readily available to the Group and provided the necessary leadership and guidance during what must have been a very difficult year. I commend you for this and, although the past year was demanding, it has nevertheless been a particularly productive and positive one for the Group and you have played a key role in ensuring that. For this and for your overall dedication to the group you have led, I join with others in thanking you for the excellent job done.

As we begin this new year, we also invoke the time-honoured tradition of passing the baton so to speak from one country chair to another – a ritual with which I am most familiar, having had the personal honour of serving as an Ambassadorial Chair of the Group a long, long, long time ago. I am therefore pleased to welcome the Plurinational State of Bolivia on its formal assumption of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 plus China for 2014. We are honored to have with us, President Evo Morales Ayma, and I extend to him and his government and to his delegation here at UN Headquarters, my warmest congratulations on the assumption of this huge task.

President Morales,

Your country's assumption of the Chairmanship of this group comes at an auspicious time. And the fact that I am the current President of the General Assembly has nothing to do with it. Rather, Bolivia's tenure comes at a time when multilateralism is needed at the international level, and we here at UN Headquarters are well aware of your deep commitment to this issue, and we know that at every level you and your delegation will work to both strengthen relationships within the Group, as well improve its positioning within the UN system. Again, I commend you personally and your entire delegation for assuming the important role of chairing the Group of 77 plus China for 2014.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2014 is an important year for the United Nations, and it is an important year for the G77 and indeed for all member States of our United Nations. It is the year in which we need to work collectively to lay the groundwork for what it is to come in 2015. In short, the next twelve (12) months will determine whether or not we are able to deliver on the promises of 2015. Under Bolivia's watch, the G77 will have an important role to play in the activities and processes that will – as the saying goes – make or break our collective success.

To this end, as I had announced at my election as President of the General Assembly in June of last year, I will be convening a series of high-level events and thematic debates that I believe will contribute definitively to laying the groundwork for the post-2015 development agenda, whose overarching theme is the eradication of extreme poverty. The specific events and their respective timetables, which have been announced, were made available to every delegation and are now posted on the PGA's website. And as you all know, the first of these events will take place next month. To this end, I will soon be posting the initial concept papers for each event/debate on the PGA's website, as a guide to Member States as they prepare for participating in these events/debates. I appreciate

the support and feedback Member States have provided, which have been helpful to my office in the task of shaping and giving greater content to the concept papers. As we move closer to the specific events themselves, these documents will be further elaborated so as to provide additional and more focused inputs to the discussions in which Member States will be engaging.

Throughout the year, we will continue to set the stage for the post 2015 development agenda. In September, a mere nine months away, the Open-Ended Working Group will provide the Assembly with its recommendations on Sustainable Development Goals and the Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing will present its findings. At that time, I will convene a stocktaking event that will allow us to look back and see what we have accomplished and position you, the Member States, to begin the actual process of crafting the post-2015 development agenda during the 69th session.

Distinguished Delegates,

In addition to the list of intergovernmental events I had highlighted in my closing statement to the General Assembly in December, there are also a number of other important events that will be taking place during the second part of the 68th session, which you as a group will need to be aware. These include:

1. A high-level forum devoted to the implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, on the occasion of its adoption;
2. The convening of special meetings of the Assembly and the Human rights Council during the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of racial Discrimination;
3. Finalization of the modalities for the overall review by the General Assembly of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society;

4. Organization by the PGA of activities for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in conjunction with the President of ECOSOC and the bureau of the relevant committees of the Assembly;
5. A one-day special thematic debate at the highest political level possible, to give due consideration to the role of culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;
6. A meeting of the General Assembly, at the highest appropriate political level,, centered on the review process devoted to the theme relating to the issue of poverty eradication; and
7. The sessions of the intergovernmental preparatory committee for the 10-year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During such an important year, it is fitting that you – the G77 will celebrate your 50th anniversary. Over the years, your goals as a group and as individual countries have changed, and your national circumstances have evolved – but your commitment to working together has remained strong. You are an example of the might of South-South cooperation, and a harbinger of greater collaboration that is yet to come. As your countries continue to make an impact on the world stage, you are helping each other solve similar problems in a range of sectors from banking and telecommunications to agriculture and housing. When you work in a spirit of mutual benefit, support and cooperation, you define the true meaning of community.

I once again thank our outgoing Chair and welcome our incoming Chair - the delegation of Bolivia. I look forward to working with you, with the Group of 77, and to 2014 being a great year for the G77, for all of the United Nations, and for the people we serve.

Thank you.
