

**Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting of the Ministers for  
Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Group of 77,  
New York  
Thursday, 26 September 2013**

**H.E. John W. Ashe  
President of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly**

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Secretary General,  
Executive Secretary,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the Group of 77 and China at its 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers. And though it has been some time now – before many of you in this room were born – I do recall my time as Chair of the Group and all the stresses and strains, the joys and happiness that that task brought me.

I also wish to commend the entire delegation of the Permanent Mission of Fiji, as Chair of the G77, for its leadership of the Group in 2013.

Next year, as the international community prepares to mark the fiftieth (50<sup>th</sup>) anniversary of the founding of the Group of 77, it is perhaps fitting to recall briefly the history of the group and reflect upon the qualities that underpin it and give it its strength. The rationale behind the creation of the Group of 77 is a simple one – that in unity there is strength. Over the years, the group's primary purpose has evolved; born out of a desire to effectively negotiate with countries from the North, the G77 has, over the past five decades, expanded its platform to include maximizing cooperation among its membership for the benefit of development – this is the South-South dimension. In addition to enhancing collective action and bargaining, the Group of 77 has been instrumental in raising awareness of the important and growing trend of developing countries supporting other developing countries with peer-to-peer learning and technology and knowledge transfer.

A central tenet driving these initiatives is the belief that the emerging dynamism of the South provides developing countries with expanding opportunities related to trade, investment and technological cooperation. By substantially increasing trade among developing countries, the South can, in part, respond to the restrictive actions of other development partners. Additional instruments for financial cooperation among developing countries would even further increase the impact of South-South cooperation.

In May of this year, I attended the G-77 High-level Panel of Eminent Personalities on South-South Cooperation in Natadola, Fiji. This Panel stressed that the Group of 77 remains the institutional mechanism within the United Nations that leads and promotes South-South cooperation. The Group continues to enhance awareness of the importance of South-South cooperation in the new context of globalization and interdependence by strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms.

Recently, I had the honour to chair the Intercessional meeting of the General Assembly High Level Committee on South-South Cooperation, which stressed the need to continue strengthening the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) so as to enable it to serve as a coordinator for promoting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation for development on a global and United Nations system-wide basis. It is crucial that South-South cooperation receives adequate and structured financial and institutional support, given that it continues to represent one of the best forms of solidarity and interdependence among developing countries. As requested in many General Assembly resolutions, I am committed to working closely with the Secretary-General and Member States to move this agenda forward.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

A large focus of this High Level week has been about accelerating progress on the MDGs and beginning to map out an outline for the Post 2015 development agenda. Given the magnitude of this great task, amidst previously existing and newly emerging challenges, I have chosen "The Post 2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage" as the session's theme. One of the high level events "Contributions of South-South, Triangular Cooperation and ICT for Development" will be

focused on exactly this topic, as I see great potential for these new forms of collaboration and partnership to greatly contribute to achieving our development goals.

However, let me stress, previous commitments on finance, capacity-building and technology transfer and know-how must also be kept. I therefore reiterate the call on the international community to take the necessary actions to fulfill these commitments.

At the same time, as we are appealing to international solidarity, we should not forego the need for effective actions at the regional and national levels. Calls for alleviating the conditions of the world's poor have greater resonance when they are made against a background of committed efforts at all levels to address the underlying conditions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Far too many people face serious deprivation in health and education, with progress hampered by significant inequality related to income, gender, ethnicity, disability, age and location. More than a billion people live in extreme poverty. We are here because we have taken up the pledge to try and right these moral wrongs, so let us each do our part, and let us continue to support each other on that journey.

I wish all success to your deliberations today and I look forward to working with you in the months to come.

Thank you.