



**Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe**

**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**

**General Assembly**

**Opening of the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the**

**High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation**

**New York**

**19 May 2014**

*Please check against delivery*

Excellencies,  
President of the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the High Level Committee on South-South Cooperation,  
Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is good to be back on familiar territory at the Opening of this 18<sup>th</sup> session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. It was just one session ago, your 17<sup>th</sup>, that I had the honour to serve as President of this Committee – an honour for which I am truly grateful. And on that note, I wish to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh on his election as President of the Committee and I wish him and the incoming bureau a very successful session.

This meeting takes place at a critical juncture in the deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda, and its theme, namely, “*The contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda,*” is indeed timely. And your deliberations thereon come at a time when we are seeking to reengineer the global development agenda to more effectively deliver sustainability and poverty eradication. I fully expect that the work of this session will be an invaluable contribution to the deliberations on the shaping of the emerging development agenda, which is of critical importance to the millions of people across the globe who live in poverty, the majority of whom are in the global South.

Excellencies,

Let me refer briefly to the latest report of the Secretary-General, which is before you for consideration. I am particularly pleased to see the enormous support for South-South and triangular cooperation within the UN family in general and from UNDP in particular, which has identified this area as one of its core areas in its Strategic Plan 2014-2017. I

commend the Administrator for her leadership on this truly transformative effort, and for her added efforts to provide the UN Office for South-South Cooperation with the policy guidance, institutional space, operational outreach and financial means to enable it to serve as a system-wide coordinator for South-South Cooperation.

I note in his report our Secretary-General has proposed a set of measures to further strengthen the UN Office for SSC. In my capacity as President of the General Assembly, I fully support these important measures, which I believe will help the UN Office for SSC to continue its dynamic and innovative work on South-South and Triangular Cooperation as the international community gears up towards a world that we and our future generations want in the post-2015 era.

I am personally delighted to learn that, as an indication of the importance the SG attaches to SSC, he has appointed Director of the UN Office for SSC, Mr. Yiping Zhou, as his Special Representative on South-South Cooperation. Congratulations, Sir, you deserve it!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, I personally believe in the great potential of South-South cooperation. In fact, on Wednesday and Thursday I will host a High-level Event on the Contributions of North-South, South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for Development to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. I trust that your session and my High-level Event will truly define the role(s) that South-South and triangular cooperation will have in the post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

With the approaching deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) less than 600 days away, we are able to look back and appreciate nearly fifteen years of progress related to issues of poverty and hunger, health and disease, equality and education. As we work to eliminate the scourge of poverty, its underlying causes and

devastating effects, the gains achieved speak to the power of international collective action. They also challenge us to strengthen and enhance the collaboration that has brought us here and must be deployed to take humanity closer to a life of full dignity, which can only be realized through the application of the principles and objectives of sustainable development.

When the MDGs were launched, some countries of the South were beginning to emerge from decades of low development and stunted growth. Now, a decade and a half later, we see a revitalized South that holds larger shares of world GDP, greater percentages of global trade volumes and stronger industrial capacities than could be conceived in 2000. According to the 2013 Human Development Report, the emerging economies of the South are [quote] “collectively bolstering world economic growth, lifting other developing economies, reducing poverty and increasing wealth on a grand scale.” Consequently, the global south, particularly countries with large emerging economies, are wielding new influence in the multilateral system and many of them are enjoying a social, cultural and economic renaissance – a renaissance that can be shared and scaled up for other countries of the South.

Equally, important in the strengthening of the South-South cooperation, is the fact that in the face of shrinking ODA, which I encourage development partners to ensure remains at healthy and useful levels, countries of the South are increasingly being asked to help find and fund their own development solutions. At the same time, they still face formidable development challenges. According to some estimates, middle-income countries of the South are home to 70-80 percent of the world’s poor. These shifting economic realities mean that a number of Southern countries have become both recipients and providers of development assistance. Therefore, the goals and targets we select must be responsive and relevant to the needs of these people of the South, particularly those trapped in extreme poverty.

Distinguished Guests,

Within the multilateral system and development organizations we must also ensure that we are using the best and most efficient vehicles of cooperation. In any new multilateral framework for development, South-South cooperation is an essential component that will complement the more traditional North-South Cooperation. By emphasizing solidarity among nations, South-South Cooperation fosters stronger regional relationships and a virtuous cycle of mutual learning, and it strengthens national ownership. With many countries of the South facing similar challenges, these models of cooperation allow them to share and implement strategies and solutions grounded in common experience and circumstances. However, the need for developing countries to have their voices heard in all arrangements for global governance remains.

Increasingly we see examples of South-South cooperation being brought to bear in a variety of areas that are critical to development, including in the areas of health and food security. Infrastructure is central to development and it is no less so in the South where South-South cooperation and triangular collaboration present new windows of opportunity to improve the provision of public goods, which are critical to boosting the productive capacities and economic potential of many countries, particularly in Africa. Regional development banks and the export-import banks, in countries such as China and India, have taken much of the lead in infrastructure development. As a result, we see ambitious joint initiatives such as the recently launched arrangements by which East African countries are working to revamp and extend the East African railway system to better connect countries in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is evident that appropriately structured and targeted South-South cooperation based on equality, mutual benefit and respect for national sovereignty can and does deliver tangible benefits to Southern countries, particularly in strategic areas for development.

As we look ahead to the post-2015 development agenda and ways to implement its forthcoming goals, objectives and targets, it is up to us to begin crafting a vision for a

more effective approach to South-South and triangular cooperation and to determine how and where it will be located in the emerging development framework.

The voices of the South must be heard; the respect for independence, sovereignty and mutual benefit must be recognized and upheld; and the most vulnerable and disadvantaged must be the beneficiaries of our efforts. It is within this context that I look forward to your fruitful discussions.

Thank you.

\*\*\*