



Remarks

by

H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

**Commemorative Summit of the 50th Anniversary of the
Group of 77 and China**

New York

14 June 2014

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President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia,
Excellencies,
Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Executive Secretary of the Group of 77 and China
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address this commemoration of the Fiftieth (50th) Anniversary of the Group of 77 plus China. Foremost, to the Government and people of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, I wish to thank you for the excellent hospitality extended to us. And I congratulate the Group of 77 on achieving fifty years of championing the goals and objectives of the Global South!

Mr. President,

My journey to Santa Cruz today, began at my current “home base”, the Office of the President of the UN General Assembly at UN Headquarters Wednesday. On Thursday, I travelled to my home country, Antigua and Barbuda, to perform my civic duty of voting in our 2014 national elections. Today I am here, at another “home,” standing before a group that I had the distinct honour to lead as Chairman in 2008.

This, however, is no ordinary group. This group is a unique and diverse set of nations, with creeds and cultures, habits and customs, topography and geography that are very distinct. Yet when its diverse membership comes together, the whole is greater and more powerful than its individual parts. Comprising more than two-thirds of UN Member States, the Group of 77 plus China is both dynamic and influential, with a proven track record of effectiveness in advancing the issues and interests of developing countries. Within the UN System, as well as within other organizations, this group has set in motion discussions and negotiations on a wide range of crucial issues that affect the economic, social and environmental development of your 133-strong membership.

Since its founding in 1964, the Group of 77 has come a long way. It is today a progressive and dynamic force in the international arena, with an unparalleled voice in the outcomes and conduct of multilateral diplomacy. These fifty (50) years are a tribute to the commitment of the Group's members to remain united despite an international climate that has often been less than favourable. And the expansion of the Group's areas of involvement, particularly at the United Nations, is a testimony to its relevance and efficacy.

Excellencies,

We are here to celebrate the Group's successes, but also to look forward. In this regard, I urge the Group to remain sensitive to a rapidly changing international environment, with a view to ensuring that its responses are relevant and effective. The sad reality of the world we live in today is that far too many countries continue to grapple with hunger, poverty and unemployment and far too many people cannot meet their basic needs.

At the same time, trade inequalities, unpredictable levels of Official Development Assistance and growing debt burdens put the welfare and prosperity of many people in developing countries at risk, especially the most vulnerable and those living below poverty line. Our common threats, poverty, hunger disease and climate change, deserve our united front.

In the face of these and other threats, I would like to commend the important contributions the Group of 77 plus China has made in the area of South-South Cooperation, as a growing and dynamic complimentary tool to North-South Cooperation. While we know that commitments from the North to the South, particularly to the Least Developed Countries, remain critical, the role of South-South Cooperation is only increasing in importance. Countries of the South have also taken steps to help each other advance development in general terms, confront inequality and expand and deepen cooperation between them. This collaboration has grown in significance as an additional

means of addressing current development challenges, as well as for fostering fair and equitable international economic relations.

As many of you are aware, South-South Cooperation is one of the top priorities of the General Assembly, given its intrinsic importance to the post-2015 Development Agenda. I have been working very closely with Member States and the Secretary-General to adopt concrete measures to further strengthen and institutionalize its role in the UN system. In this regard, I am pleased to note that, for the first time in the history of the UN, our Secretary-General recently appointed an Envoy for South-South Cooperation, and notable steps have been taken to strengthen the UN office for South-South Cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With 2015 just around the corner, we are currently at a critical crossroads in our approach to global development. However, we have an enormous opportunity to make better choices for our planet and its people. Many developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries, will not reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their deadline. We must therefore redouble our efforts to achieve the MDGs within the remaining timeframe. At the same time, we must also do our utmost to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are yet to be adopted, are realistic, robust, effective, meaningful and, most importantly, implementable with adequate means of implementation.

As we, the international community, get down to task of identifying development goals and elaborating a post-2015 agenda, we must not forget that meaningful development can be best achieved in the context of stable and peaceful societies. Conflicts, wherever they exist, are an impediment to development. Hence the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding among previously affected countries, will allow the latter to redirect their efforts and resources towards development and poverty eradication. Cooperation, particularly at the regional level, will be crucial, especially in the socio-

economic areas, so as to enhance development and shared prosperity, and promote peaceful relations between countries.

As President of the General Assembly, I have been “setting the stage” for the post-2015 Development Agenda through a number of high-level events and thematic debates. In early September, I will hold a stocktaking event to pull together the various outcomes and provide Member States with a meaningful opportunity to identify inputs for the synthesis report to be prepared by our Secretary-General for the intergovernmental negotiations that will commence during the 69th session of the General Assembly. In this regard, I would like to seize this opportunity to thank delegations of the Group of 77 and China for their support during the six thematic debates and high-level events I convened, and invite them to participate in and contribute to the aforementioned stocktaking event.

Mr. President,

The last fifty years have brought many successes for the Group and I expect even more to come. The Group of 77 and China must continue to pursue its enduring objectives. It must redouble its efforts to catalyse the international community into effectively addressing poverty eradication, climate change, agriculture and food security, the endemic issues of debt, trade and protectionism, and the financial vulnerability of developing countries. It must continue to advocate for a more equitable structures in finance and trade, as well as the reform of the international financial system.

This Group must continue to work for the full participation and integration of developing countries in the globalized world. The Group of 77 and China needs to remain fully supportive of multilateralism as the most effective way to generate change at the global level in the interest of both developed and developing countries. I encourage the Group of 77 and China to emphasize the greater need for South-South Cooperation and North-South dialogue.

As I conclude, I wish to pay a special tribute to Mr. Mourad Ahmia, Executive Secretary of the Group of 77 in New York, for his commitment and continued support to the Group of 77 over the years. I also wish to invite each Member State of the Group of 77 to rededicate itself to the objectives and principles of the Group. I have every confidence that holding on to these noble traditions will bring about progress, justice and equality not only for the Group, and its peoples, but for all peoples everywhere.

Happy 50th anniversary and thank you.
