

11 January 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Handover Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77**

Your Excellency, Prime Minister Winston Baldwin Spencer of Antigua and Barbuda, and  
Chairman of the Group of 77 for 2008,  
Your Excellency Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon,  
Your Excellency, Munir Akram Permanent Representative of Pakistan  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

I would like to begin by commending the Group of 77 for the great efforts to promote the values and principles of the U.N., including the collective economic interests of developing countries.

When I worked within the Group of 77 – in my capacity as Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Former Yugoslavia, a founding member of the Group – its name reflected the number of members. Today's expansion to 132 members is a testament to the long-term relevance of your aims and objectives.

The Group of 77 now accounts for a much greater share of global GDP, trade and growth than in 1964. Some of your members are emerging as the new driving forces of the world economy. Greater self-confidence has inspired many to take charge of their own future.

These tectonic shifts reflecting the dynamic process of globalisation have resulted in unprecedented levels of growth and interdependence.

Growing global prosperity, and emerging regional and economic alignments, such as the G8 + 5, the G20, G24, and APEC now seem to transcend the division of the world into North and South, as it used to be called 3rd and 1st worlds.

Within the United Nations we may begin to ask how this changing landscape of diverse economic interests can best be reflected in the way Member States work together in pursuit of our common development goals.

I am grateful for the Groups strong support to ensure that development formed the central pillar of our work throughout the 62nd session.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that global growth does not come at the expense of rising inequality, and the full realisation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Excellencies,

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan, and outgoing Chairman of the Group of 77, for his skilful Chairmanship of the G77 over the past year.

Ambassador Akram 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 recognising the legitimacy of other positions.

Under Pakistan's Chairmanship the Group of 77 has worked hard to develop unified positions on a number of complex global challenges and aspects of United Nations reform.

During 2007, perhaps the biggest challenge and success for the Group of 77 has been to develop and sustain a common vision on climate change - the 'flagship' issue of the 62nd session – which contributed to a successful outcome in Bali.

On this occasion, I would also like to acknowledge the Group of 77 for their flexibility, prudence and good judgement during the budget negotiations; for working closely with other delegations to renew the three year policy framework for the United Nation's development activities; and, for your cooperative and proactive proposals on Mandate Review.

Excellencies,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you - Mr Prime Minister - for assuming the important position of Chairman of the Group for 2008.

Your Excellency, being myself from a small country, I have full confidence in Antigua and Barbuda's capacity to work 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, as you mentioned in your statement, deepen our cooperation and demonstrate our leadership on complex issues, including, the ongoing reform of this august organisation.

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 of us.

The new dynamism of the Group of 77, and your active and productive contribution has added to the vitality of the Assembly's central role within the United Nations system.

Let me thank all the Member States of the Group of 77 for your support and cooperation during the main part of the 62nd session of the General Assembly.

And now, I look forward to your continued support during the rest of this busy session. Coordinated action by the G77 is essential to the process of renewing and strengthening this institution.

May I take this opportunity to call for the Groups active participation at the Thematic Debates on:

- climate change on the 11th and 12th of February;
- the MDGs on the 1st and 2nd of April;
- and, on Management Reform on the 8th and 9th of April, where in an informal setting Member States will have the opportunity to reach a clearer common understanding of the key concepts and priorities for strengthening the management of the organisation.

I would also like to ask for your active support and collaboration in the six review sessions that form the major part of the Financing for Development preparatory process on the ‘Road to Doha’; on the fresh round of consultations we will shortly begin on System-wide Coherence; and, preparations for the Review of the Implementation of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in September.

May I once again wish you – Mr. Prime Minister - 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.