

15 December 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the South-South Leaders Roundtable on the Occasion of the United Nations Day
for South-South Cooperation**

Mr. President of the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation,

Excellencies,

Friends and Colleagues,

I am very pleased to join you at the opening of this Roundtable of Leaders of South-South Cooperation in which we will address a range of issues relating to the increasingly dynamic cooperation among countries of the Global South.

We meet at a time when economic and financial turmoil threatens to tip the entire world into a disastrous depression. Let us hope that we can stabilize the situation before it becomes a prolonged calamity for all countries and a tragedy for our most vulnerable populations. I would like to address my opening remarks on South-South cooperation as it relates to this ongoing crisis.

I believe we can – and we must -- transform this period of complex crises into opportunities for increased solidarity among developing countries and stepped-up cooperation to create a level playing field among nations.

As so many times in the past, developing countries are paying a high price for the self-serving trade and development policies that have been dictated by the industrial North. Let us take the opportunity of our meetings as members of the General Assembly to explore alternative policies that take the concerns and aspirations of developing countries fully into account. South-South cooperation holds enormous promise for all of us.

Earlier this month in Qatar, Member States reaffirmed the innovative North-South development partnership agreed to in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002. The Doha Declaration of the Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development underscored the official funding commitments of the industrial countries to the development efforts of the Global South.

Doha placed special emphasis on meeting the Millennium Development Goals and addressing the confluence of crises that affect the Least Developed Countries the most. In the face of development

reversals, the reaffirmation of these promises is well received and will have to be monitored closely in the months and years ahead.

And the Doha Declaration also highlighted the commitment by developing countries, especially the middle-income countries, to take the lead in their own development and good governance. Clearly South-South cooperation is an essential ingredient in the new development agenda. We must not underestimate the potential of such cooperation.

The fact is South-South cooperation is flourishing more than ever. This cooperation is vital to finding solutions to the food and energy shortages and climate change that are reversing development gains and creating humanitarian emergencies. We see the cooperation that is helping land-locked countries gain access to international trade. We see the ever-increasing technology transfers among developing countries, as well as innovative regional trade agreements.

We see poor countries, perhaps the most famous example is Cuba, that channel their meager resources and wealth of human talent to education and health programmes that help to transform communities in other nations. This for me has always been an inspiration. And we must applaud and support the efforts by middle-income countries to the benefit of their poorer neighbours. This outreach can be more systematic and sustained.

Let us be clear: South-South cooperation is a win-win situation for all nations. It is not a mere add-on in our development efforts. It must be seen as a fundamental investment in regional integration in a fragmented world. It must be seen as a driving force in our national security and independence. It must be seen as a crucial buffer between our fragile economies and the deeply flawed global trading system.

And we must always nurture the crucial element of solidarity among and between neighbors. Solidarity is a powerful force for creating an economic environment that is equitable and stable as well as dynamic. Let us be witness to a General Assembly debate that brings us together in unity and clarity of purpose around this International Day. We look forward to hear about the range of initiatives that are underway.

Thank you.