

Handing Over of Chairmanship of the Group of 77 Vienna- 22nd January 2014

Acceptance Speech

Director General Li Yong,
Director General Yukiya Amano,
Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo
Mr. John Sandage of UNODC

Excellencies,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

First of all, let me thank all the members of the Group of 77 for the confidence you have reposed in me to chair this important block of developing countries. I take this opportunity to assure you that I will endeavour at all times, to do justice to this trust and to your expectations of my stewardship.

My journey with you in the months ahead on the path to advancing the shared interests of our Group will manifest a consensual approach, enlightened by the Vienna Spirit and guided by the tenets of Sri Lanka's diplomacy. It will also draw on the legacy of leadership left behind by my distinguished predecessor Ambassador Mamoud Elamin, whom I respect both as a colleague and as an able and inspiring leader. On behalf of the Vienna Chapter of G 77, I thank him for his efficient and dedicated service to the Group. As he leaves Vienna at the end of a more fulfilling mission, let us wish him very well on his next assignment.

Excellencies,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

The year 2014 is a historic milestone for the Group of 77. It is in the month of June, 50 years ago, that the G – 77 was founded by a group of sovereign States to advance the collective interests of the developing world in the trade, economic and development arenas. It has since grown steadily into what is now the largest block of developing countries. The Group nevertheless has passed several phases and faced numerous challenges before it could assert itself collectively, claiming considerable weight in the international development arena. In the past twenty years, or so, it has taken under its purview, a vast array of subjects, of importance for developing

countries. In Vienna, these range from climate change to renewable energy, sustainable development, in particular sustainable industrial development, UN Development Agenda and MDGs, international trade, food security, poverty eradication, prevention of drugs and crime including anti-corruption, piracy, people-smuggling, terrorism, trafficking in and abuse of narcotic and psychotropic substances, protection of cultural property, to peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In fact, the process of reviewing progress of MDGs and setting the Post – 2015 Development Agenda and SDGs is commencing with much intensity this year, which is expected to lead to a possible adoption of an agreed set of SDGs in September 2015. Almost all the matters that we, the Vienna Chapter of the G – 77, deal with are either relevant for the discourse on Post – 2015 Development Agenda, or inter-linked to issues that form part of the discourse on its way forward. The Role of the Vienna Chapter of G – 77 will be crucial in contributing to this process as it commences this year.

The issues that G-77 deals with in Vienna pertain to the mandates of primarily four broad areas or organizations: UNIDO, IAEA, UNODC and CTBTO. We seek to distinctively but holistically address the issues surrounding or arising from the mandates of these entities. Each of these entities is important for the developing countries and the developed countries alike, and it is in finding a common ground, without sacrificing the basic principles that we hold aloft, that the success of our work lies.

The UNIDO, under the inspiring leadership of DG Li Yong, barely two months ago, adopted a historic outcome document, “The Lima Declaration : Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Industrial Development” which clearly advances the development interests of all countries. As the UN intensifies its efforts to negotiate the Post – 2015 Development Agenda, the ISID, which constitutes the central feature of the Lima Declaration, needs to be advanced in a more focussed and coordinated manner, with an emphasis on resilience and equity. ISID, no doubt, is going to define the development discourse in a manner that no other concept within UNIDO has done in

the recent past. This would be so if the momentum provided by the Lima Declaration and the political will, as manifested in Lima, could be sustained. A follow-up process, I believe, will undoubtedly help aspects of ISID being reflected in the Post – 2015 Development Agenda.

For the IAEA, this year, under the able leadership of DG Yukiya Amano, the primary focus of G-77, as in the past, would remain, on furthering the scope and potential of peaceful use of nuclear energy, and on technical cooperation. While nuclear security would continue to be a priority given the risk of nuclear materials falling into unauthorised hands, nuclear safety is a key concern for all countries, although the primary responsibility for both nuclear safety and nuclear security rests with the countries concerned. It is in the interest of all Member States and the IAEA, to continue to address these issues in a balanced manner.

Technical cooperation is vital for enabling developing countries to avail themselves of the advances in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy. This takes different forms including technical assistance, and capacity building, training etc. Improving technical cooperation – and achieving the required balance between the TC priorities and priorities under other areas of the mandate of IAEA in terms of financing, etc., is important for developing countries. It is in this context that the Working Group on Financing the Agency's Activities, now to be co-chaired by the Permanent Representatives of France and Kenya, becomes important. It is in our interest to do our bid to make this process a success.

An equally important arena in which most Member States of G – 77 remain interested is the staffing of the IAEA in professional categories. Often, a reason that is being proffered for the lack of representation of a particular country in the professional staff is that there is no suitable candidate from that country to fill a particular post. Such an explanation, though valid on the face of it, if considered carefully, may imply that the Agency's technical cooperation has not been effective enough to help create sufficient expertise in such countries through capacity

building, training etc. We believe it is not the case, and we look forward to engaging with DG Amano and the Secretariat of the Agency on all these issues.

Regarding UNODC, while all issues addressed by the various mechanisms and conventions are relevant – and mostly important- for the developing countries, some aspects constitute the priority agenda of G – 77. These, inter alia, range from effective and meaningful international cooperation, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice including Mutual Legal Assistance, return of stolen assets, to technical cooperation and capacity building. Funding for UNODC activities in areas, which are beneficial for developing countries, is strongly required, to achieve the objectives of the conventions and mechanisms coming under the purview of UNODC. The Role of FinGov is important in this context.

CTBTO is a goal that will be achieved when all States in Annex II become parties to the Treaty. The Preparatory Commission is doing useful work to assist signatories and others alike, in the area of monitoring and verifying, but specially in the area of sharing advances available under the Treaty, in helping with disaster prevention.

The advocacy role of the Preparatory Commission under the PTS, effectively led by Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, is a significant aspect in seeking to expand the reach of CTBT globally.

We emphasise the importance of Capacity Building and Technical Cooperation under CTBTO, and its continuing role for monitoring and verification as may be applicable to State Signatories.

Excellencies,

I believe that the attainment of these important objectives for the G-77 lies in our collective efforts, co-ordinated by the respective Task Force Leaders of each area of work. In this regard, it is important that we appoint our Task Force Leaders for the year 2014 at the earliest.

We often discuss international organizations in Vienna, in isolation of each other. In an inter-connected and interdependent world, we should not fail to notice the threads which bind such entities together. Technical Cooperation, Capacity Building, Sustainable Development, and UN Development Agenda may be some of these substantive strands that run through all the organizations in Vienna. We need to look for synergy and partnership across these entities while emphasizing the independence of each of them. Further, the G-77 focus needs to extend beyond all these, to also address aspects which may impact on the Vienna organizations as a whole.

A matter that requires to be highlighted in this regard is the Multilateral Diplomatic Committee established pursuant to the decision of 14th General Conference of UNIDO. The objective is to facilitate a good rapport between these institutions and their host, thus ensuring that issues affecting the representations of Member States in Vienna are addressed as satisfactorily and speedily as possible.

While there is a clear manifestation of willingness and commitment to cooperate on the part of the host, which needs to be appreciated, a recent initiative in the name of MDC provides an example of what appears to be an emerging tendency of divisiveness, a subject G-77 needs to take note of.

The regional groups have been informed in writing recently that the Committee, for its next term of one year, should be chaired by a representative nominated by a particular region, and that all regional groups should take a decision whether they should continue with the participation of the two countries currently representing each of them in the Committee. This is far in excess of the authority vested in the MDC. The worst case scenario with this kind of mindset will be further delay in convening the MDC, thereby effectively paralysing its functioning.

While all the regions, which currently constitute the G-77, should realize the downside of this development, it may be appropriate to consider broadening the

remit of the MDC. This, of course, would require initiatives within the decision-making body of each organization.

Finally,

Let me thank Director General Li Yong and UNIDO for financially supporting the Office of the G-77 since its establishment in Vienna. Their continued support has made it possible for the G-77 and its Member States to strive towards achieving their aspirations within the UN system. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Vienna Chapter, to thank Ms. Annemarie Heuls, Liaison Officer of the G-77 for her excellent facilitation and dedicated work for G-77. She no doubt deserves our special commendation.

As the Chair of the G-77, it is my duty to remind you that these and many other challenges that we, as a collective will face, make our tasks clear cut for this year. These are challenges worth addressing, for the collective interest of the Group, of which we are all members.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate that I would very much value your counsel, guidance and stewardship on all issues as we move ahead.