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**STATEMENT
BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
FOREIGN TRADE
TO THE
SPECIAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE GROUP OF 77 TO
COMMEMORATE THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GROUP OF 77,
SAO PAULO, BRAZIL, 11-12 JUNE, 2004.**

FOUR DECADES OF SOLIDARITY FOR THE SOUTH

Mr. President

Colleague Ministers

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am indeed honoured to speak to you today on behalf of the Members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as together we commemorate and celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Group of 77.

Since its formation, the G77 has proved its effectiveness as a body advancing the issues and interests of developing countries. As the main voice of

developing countries on economic and social issues in the UN system, the Group has created the platform for a more representative and democratic global order. In this context, the G77 has enhanced the negotiating capacity of the South, and has played a pivotal role in the development of an international agenda which takes account of the primary interests of the developing world. This Mr. President is a critical factor in an increasingly competitive multilateral environment. Our Group has grown in strength from a membership of 77 to 132. The common bond that we have forged with China has further added to the strength and prestige of the Group.

The G77 continues to face a number of daunting challenges. Peace, Security and Justice remain elusive, as do equity and a responsive global political and economic order. Far too many of our countries continue to grapple with hunger, poverty and underdevelopment and far too many of our peoples are without the very rudimentaries of human existence.

The past decade has had many pitfalls. Trade inequalities, collapsed commodity prices, declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) and growing debt burdens put at risk the welfare and prosperity of millions of people in the South. The differential impact of globalization has generated economic asymmetries both at the global and national levels and require concerted action to overcome, especially through

specific measures to create a supportive and conducive international environment for development.

The continued collective effort of the developing world will be required to overcome these challenges .

In this regard, we encourage the Group to continue to emphasize the need for greater South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue, reform of the international financial architecture and increased participation of developing countries in global decision-making processes.

We must continue to forge a common vision for the full participation and integration of developing countries in the globalizing world. We must continue to

insist on more equitable economic structures in finance and trade. We must redouble our efforts to promote an international framework which effectively addresses the endemic problems of debt, transfer of resources, financial vulnerability, declining terms of trade in primary commodities and restricted access to developed country markets.

In this context, we have an obligation to engage more actively in shaping the evolving global trading regime. If developing countries are to share fully in the benefits of growth, the multilateral trading system must be tailored to respond to their specific needs. The Group must continue to highlight the existing imbalances between rights and obligations in multilateral trade agreements as well as the adverse

conditions of market access. We must strive to ensure that developing countries can effectively use international trade as a true engine of growth.

The longstanding consensus on differential and more favourable treatment for developing countries must remain a guiding principle and be given meaningful content. In this context, the G77 should remain in full support of multilateralism as the most effective means of generating positive change at the global level in the interest of both developed and developing countries. The United Nations represents a unique Organization with universal reach and the potential to respond effectively to the challenges of hunger and poverty. We, therefore, strongly encourage

the strengthening of the United Nations and its role in international cooperation for development.

Mr. President,

There is great strength in unity. Our Group must continue to build on the elements that bind developing countries in a collective effort to achieve a more participatory and democratic global economic order. These are important challenges that require significant effort on the part of all developing countries.

As we strive to advance the vision of the Group in the coming decades, we need to consolidate our past achievements and move forward to generate new initiatives that can shape as well as respond to the changing global environment. Let us continue to

demonstrate the remarkable strength, determination and aptitude of the G77 to contribute both in the realm of ideas and action and to present to the world a formidable moral and political force.

Our actions must build on but not be unnecessarily constrained by the past. They must be underpinned by a constantly evolving vision, the objective of which is to attain growth and prosperity for our peoples. We must help to create conditions of globalization from which our countries and peoples genuinely benefit. In such a world, the potential for growth and development can only be realised by a common endeavour to make trade equitable, to enhance investment and to create productive and fulfilling jobs.

Members of the Caribbean Community will continue to collaborate with all Member States of the Group to ensure that the goals we shall set as benchmarks for action in the coming years are achieved. As small states we are deeply conscious of the value of solidarity and of the importance of a global, political and economic order that is built on the principles of justice and equity rather than simply the rule of the strongest and most powerful.

Mr. President,

In closing, I wish, on behalf of the Government and People of CARICOM, to extend congratulations to the Group of 77 on achieving *"Four Decades of Solidarity for the South"*. We look forward to being part of many more.

I thank you.