

**THE OPEC FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
(OFID)**



Our shared responsibility

Statement of the Director-General of OFID
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to

the *40th Meeting of the Chairmen/Coordinators
of the G-77 Chapters*

Opening Ceremony

Vienna, Austria
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Mr. Chairman, Ambassador OTERO;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to begin with a note of appreciation: I want to thank the G77 as well as His Excellency Ambassador Kumalo (of South Africa) and Members of the Vienna Chapter for their kind invitation to me to be part of this gathering. I am equally honored by the opportunity to address this *Opening Ceremony*. I will try to be brief.

Mr. Chairman:

It is always a delight to join eminent groups and bodies of developing countries (such as yours), in assemblies of this nature. As you may be aware, the OPEC Fund is the development finance agency established back in 1976 by Member Countries of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), to pursue solidarity among developing countries and extend financial resources to said countries to assist social and economic development. In 1980, Member Countries converted the Fund into a permanent international institution.

I should relate here that OFID is currently negotiating with the UN System to obtain *Observer Status* with the world body. We are hopeful that these negotiations will make swifter progress in the months ahead. Which brings me to an important matter: The OPEC Fund or OFID is not to be confused with OPEC, *per se*, as an organization. While OFID is engaged in the field of development cooperation; OPEC is charged with coordination and unification of the petroleum policies of Member States and with ensuring the stabilization of prices in the international oil

markets. Thus, OFID works with the membership of the G77, in a common quest to bring social and economic advancement to the South.

Mr. Chairman:

Is it not amazing how many of the issues and problems of development [which first surfaced in the mid-1960s] are still with us today? My first personal encounter with some of these issues dates back to 1964; when, as a student at the University of Cairo, I was exposed to *development studies*. Four years later, in 1968, I had the privilege, as a young civil servant, to be appointed to the delegation which represented my country [the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] at UNCTAD II, in New Delhi, India. I attended the meeting of the First Committee on Primary Commodities. And the issues on the agenda of that Second UNCTAD Conference ranged from commodity prices; to buffer stocks; and the transfer of technology. Many, if not all, of these matters are still with us today.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

OFID has been engaged in development cooperation for *30 years*. Just as the G-77 celebrated, only two years ago, its 40th Anniversary; the OPEC Fund is, this year, marking its own 30th Anniversary. I recall that, in celebrating your 40th Anniversary, the G77 “reaffirmed the vitality and cohesion of its members, and stressed the clarity of its vision. It also urged “the need for unity in the implementation of action plans devised to create a more equitable world.” Likewise at OFID, our 30th Year of Operations provides an opportunity to reflect and build on past performance; learn from best practices; and reiterate our commitment to our peers. We are also charting a course [hopefully a dynamic course] for the future.

Over 30 years, OFID has built [what we hope are] bridges of trust and understanding across the world; working with a record one-hundred-and-twenty countries; most of them members of the G77. OFID is proud of this record; but is also grateful for the opportunity for such cooperation, as offered by those we work with; including, indeed, the G77.

It is important, by the way, to keep in mind that OFID Member Countries are, themselves, developing countries: which means they closely understand the aims and aspirations of fellow-developing countries. I should equally mention the uniqueness of OFID, as the only development finance institution which assists, not its own Member States, but, indeed, non-Member States. OFID financial resources are earmarked for non-OPEC developing countries.

Mr. Chairman:

As the largest developing-country-coalition in the United Nations System, the G77 provides a key channel for the developing world to articulate and defend collective economic interests. The G77, as we know, works to enhance negotiations capacity and create a common platform on major issues. Certainly, the emergence of the G77 was a major political development of the mid-20th century. For the first time, the world's weaker nations found a common voice in protecting their interests and encouraging transparency as well as justice in the international system. This was the case with the OPEC Fund in the field of commodity-trade relations. OFID is pleased at its record of support to the likes of the *Common Fund for Commodities* and the *International Fund for Agricultural Development*, in whose establishment we played a key role.

Today, the membership of the G77 has reached a-hundred-and-thirty-two countries. Together, with one voice, these countries are urging implementation of various commitments made (by the international community) to speed up industrialization in the South; enhance peace and security; and fight poverty. These are outstanding challenges. They should be *common and shared responsibility*.

Mr. Chairman;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

We also notice that an important plank in the work of the G77, today, is a drive toward the accomplishment of the *Millennium Development Goals*, considered (by all) as the way forward. This is also *shared responsibility*, which requires innovative approaches and political will.

At the OPEC Fund, the accomplishment of the *eight* millennium goals remains a priority. The Fund is building infrastructure; funding education and health programs, worldwide; and engaging with partners to make a dent on poverty figures. We will continue to cooperate with all partners, to ensure that these millennium target-dates do not slip by, with nothing to show for our efforts.

Let me conclude, at this point, Mr. Chairman, by also extending our greetings to the Management and Staff of our neighbors - UNIDO; the United Nations Office in Vienna; and the Atomic Energy Agency. We have worked together with them on various projects over the years and hope to continue to do so in the next 30 years. I wish you much success with your deliberations today and tomorrow.

Thank you everyone.
