

**UNODC Executive Director's Remarks
Handover Ceremony of the G-77 Vienna Chapter
Wednesday, 26 January 2022
11:00 a.m**

**Ambassador Azzeddine Farhane, Chairperson of
the Group of Seventy-Seven, Vienna Chapter**

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to join you today. At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Alejandro Solano Ortiz of Costa Rica for a successful tenure as Chair of the Group of Seventy-Seven and China, Vienna Chapter, and thank him for his able leadership during challenging times.

I would also like to congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Azzeddine Farhane of Morocco for taking on this important duty.

The Group of Seventy-Seven and China has always been a staunch supporter of multilateralism, and a defender of developing countries.

Today the Group's membership stands at 134 Member States, making it an irreplaceable voice of the developing world.

As we fight unprecedented crises, that voice is more important than ever.

Recent years have seen developing countries lag behind, held back in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by inadequate financing, mounting debt, and threats to security, stability and prosperity.

The COVID-pandemic has added another layer of complexity to an already dire situation.

Around 11 percent of people in low-income countries have received vaccines, compared to almost 70 percent in high-income countries.

The world's economies are recovering from the pandemic at a deeply unequal rate.

While developed economies are on track for an almost full recovery by 2023, developing and transitioning economies are not projected to return to pre-pandemic growth and output rates even by then.

Some developing countries have lost up to a decade's worth of progress in eradicating poverty.

The true and full impact of the pandemic, however, is yet to be fully seen.

Organized crime and corruption are feeding on the consequences of the pandemic, and exploiting vulnerable people, while corruption undermines the health response and curtails efforts for a fair and effective recovery.

Meanwhile, instability and conflict threaten many developing countries around the world, including in Central Asia, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel, fuelling cycles of violence and lawlessness.

The Group of Seventy-Seven and China has a leading role in protecting the developing world from these dangers, and the Group's chapter in Vienna has always been an active player.

Last year, this Group made important contributions to the Vienna-based United Nations fora, including the Drugs and Crime Commissions, as well as the ninth Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption held in Egypt.

This year, I look forward to once again joining hands with the Group, under its new leadership, to pursue the interests and priorities of developing countries and all Member States.

UNODC and UNOV remain committed to supporting the Group's interests around the world.

The membership of this Group includes most of the countries where UNODC provides technical assistance and support. We need your guidance and cooperation to make sure that we are delivering to your needs.

Last year, UNODC launched a Strategic Vision for Africa, shaped by our dialogue with stakeholders across the continent.

This year we will launch a Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean, to better respond to regional priorities, and will count on your continued feedback in shaping and implementing this document.

We are also working to support the global response to the situation in Afghanistan, which may amplify terrorism and drug-related threats in Central Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.

We have developed the Strategic Stability Grid, a focused framework for our interventions in and around Afghanistan.

Your support for this framework, and your assistance in mobilizing resources for it, will make a great difference in its success.

We will also count on the crucial role of the Group and its members in supporting our intergovernmental processes.

This includes the ongoing process to elaborate an international instrument on cybercrime, and efforts to carry forward the outcomes of the ninth CoSP, including on issues such as asset recovery and anti-corruption in times of crisis.

In parallel, we are working to improve geographical representation in the composition of our staff, so that our Offices better represent the diverse countries they serve, including the members of this group.

In the past three years, the percentage of staff from less represented regions has increased, and I will continue to give this issue my utmost attention, to keep moving in the right direction.

In the meantime, my door will always be open to you, Ambassador Farhane, and to all of you, distinguished Ambassadors and colleagues, and I welcome your commitment to advancing the interests of developing countries and meeting their needs at this critical time.

Thank you, and I wish you a successful and fruitful year ahead.