

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE G-77 AND CHINA VIENNA CHAPTER
H.E. AMBASSADOR LAURA GIL,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF COLOMBIA**

- Your Excellency, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Director General of UNOV and Executive Director of UNODC,
- Your Excellency, Mr. Gerd Müller, Director General of UNIDO;
- Your Excellency, Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of IAEA;
- Your Excellency, Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of CTBTO;
- Your Excellency, Ms. Aarti Holla-Maini Director of UNOOSA;
- Your Excellency, Ms. Anna Joubin-Bret, Secretary of UNCITRAL;
- Distinguished Ambassadors, members of Permanent Missions, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honor for the government and the people of Colombia to occupy during 2024 the Chair of the most diverse, most comprehensive and most impactful group of nations in multilateralism – the Group of 77 and China. The Colombian commitment is straightforward: to ensure that the common positions adopted by the G-77 resonate in the United Nations in Vienna, that is, to guarantee they are heard, they are considered, and they are taken into account in decision-making by United Nations bodies, thus securing the stand of G-77 as a game changer in international relations.

I thank all of you for the trust you deposit on Colombia, and I send a special greeting to my region, the Latin American and Caribbean Group – Grulac – for the nomination.

Let me begin by recognizing the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan for his endeavors. Filling his shoes will be far from easy; receiving the baton from ambassador Aftab Khoker makes the chair ever more challenging. He leaves a legacy of dialogue, dialogue, and more dialogue, and, when things reach a stalemate, still more dialogue.

Like our predecessor, Colombia pledges to maintain channels of communication permanently open and active, because Colombia believes there is only one way to practice diplomacy: persuasion through conversation.

The government I represent has a banner: we call it Total Peace. Total peace at home, total peace among countries and peoples, total peace with nature. We repudiate violence in all of its forms, we stand by the weak no matter the costs and we defend human dignity always. We are convinced our commitment to Total

Peace incorporates the founding pillars of the G-77. What if not solidarity is the defining trait of this Group?

A shared history of colonial domination and international peripheralization unites us; a present of prolonged armed conflicts, endangered international institutions and norms, and persistent unilateral coercive measures demands from us coordinated and decisive action. We were born as a counter-weight; we are called to continue acting as counter-weight.

Distinguished Ambassadors, Directors, Colleagues, we are living difficult times, and it is time for this group to maintain its unity. Unity means strength; division, weakness.

The practice of consensus has become an institution in Vienna, and the upholding of institutions is a responsibility of all. Yet, we all know consensus is at risk. Consensus, as a working method, re-establishes in these salons the powerful socio-economic asymmetries of the outside world. Discarding consensus implies defeat: it will make the strong, stronger; the weak, weaker. We need to protect consensus here, there, and everywhere, including within our group.

For that, we must re-signify, re-value the meaning of silence. With every every single position, we all gain some; we all lose some. There cannot be a “winner takes all” in our approaches vis-à-vis each other. Remaining silent in the face of that we do not fully and firmly agree but has substantial support among others does not mean abandonment, resignation, cowardice, giving up or giving in. On the contrary, it embodies leadership, principled and collaborative leadership. In our group, we should not sanctify the practice of turning consensus into a right of veto.

This chair sustains we should build on what brings us together and not what differentiates us. Ambiguity and creativity in language, no doubt, constitute useful resources in the toolbox of any diplomat. Still, let me argue for clarity. How are United Nations directives to understand our mandates if we couch them on obtruse wording that even we do not clearly understand? Our voice matters most when we speak clearly, succinctly, and loudly.

This brings me to the following point. This chair will refuse to see our words gone with the wind and will work on making every single declaration meaningful, following up and using it for incidence in safeguarding our common interests. Every declaration must be used to changed realities, no to be put away until next year.

The program proposed for the year is simple: one, to work on the formulation of common positions, and two, to act before the United Nations on the decisions adopted.

As of tomorrow, I will be meeting the coordinators of each task force to prioritize with the membership our lines of work. Let this be the opportunity to thank outgoing coordinators and welcome the new ones:

- Mr. Marco Martinez from Chile for UNIDO matters
- Mr. Mohammed Moussaoui from Algeria for IAEA matters
- Mr. Carlos Sanchez Del Aguila from Peru for UNODC matters
- Mr. Hasan Abbas from Pakistan for COPUOS matters
- Mr. Nortin Titus from Namibia for CTBTO matters
- Mr. Erik MANGAJAYA from Indonesia for UNCITRAL matters

As we organize our work, let us also find space for celebration. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the G-77. There is much to applaud and celebrate we will.

This is the first time ever that Colombia will lead the Vienna chapter of the G-77. This responsibility we are taking on today demonstrates the engagement and commitment of our country with the nations of the Global South.

We will respond in Colombian style: continuous work, efficient delivery, skilled professionalism, and amicable temperament. We will work hard and will bring good spirits to hard work.

Please count on the team of the Embassy and Permanent Mission of Colombia to work for the benefit of the G-77.

In the end, I urge each and everyone of you to remember the final beneficiary of our work: the human being. If what we do here does not bring change to our countries, improved livelihoods and sustainable development, we would have failed. Foreign policy should stop being viewed merely as high-stake geopolitics. The people, the people. Everything is about people, their lives, their hopes, their dreams, their challenges.