



THE GROUP OF 77
New York
Office of the Chairman

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31 March 2006

Excellency,

The Group of 77 and China would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Co-Chair of the Panel on UN system-wide coherence. We believe that the work of the Panel should be driven by a vision of a stronger role for the UN on development issues, and by the need to implement the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, so as to ensure that the vision contained in the UN Charter is actually translated into reality.

The Group of 77 and China supports the exercise of reform and change in the operational activities of the UN system, with the vision of building a stronger role and a leadership role for the UN in development. We believe that this exercise must be driven and underpinned by this vision of a strengthened role for the UN in development. This role includes coordination of global economic and social issues and policies; research and analysis on global and national economic, social and development issues and policies; assisting Members States in advice on development policy formulation; operational delivery of services on social, economic, humanitarian and environmental matters at national and regional levels.

The Group of 77 and China believes that the UN must develop into the premier international organisation and system addressing economic, social and development issues. This strengthened role should cover the normative, analytical, policy and operational aspects of development. The comparative advantages of the UN system include its universality and legitimacy, and its capacity to be multi-functional and to take up issues in a cross-cutting manner. The holistic approach of the UN should be strengthened so that it can realise the potential role in the economic, social and development fields set since its founding.

From this perspective, we do not believe it would be appropriate to define or confine the UN's role to "niche issues" (such as disaster management, post-conflict reconstruction or the environment), while leaving issues such as development strategies, trade, finance and macro-economic policy to other international organisations. The UN system is more developmentally holistic and provides a diversity of views and approaches that the Bretton Woods Institutions seriously lack.

The Group of 77 and China believes that the exercise of system-wide coherence should not erode the mandate, resources and activities of organisations and units that play an important role in development. In particular, the mandates and roles of organisations that were created by the General Assembly or ECOSOC should not be eliminated, removed or otherwise eroded. It is only through the General Assembly that any change in mandate can be made.

It is especially important that the mandate of UNCTAD is maintained and strengthened and its organisational integrity is upheld. UNCTAD was established by developing countries and endorsed by the General Assembly in 1964. In fact, the Group of 77 and China was established in conjunction with UNCTAD which remains the UN's main organisation for addressing development issues (including trade, finance, technology, macro-economic issues) in an integrated manner.

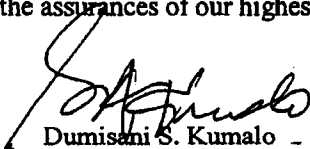
Another organisation, UNIFEM, was also established by the General Assembly, and it has played a very significant role in expanding the role and rights of women. We believe its mandate should be strengthened so that it can be even more active in its role of catalysing and mainstreaming gender concerns in the UN system.

As the work of the Panel continues, there is a need for Member States to be kept informed and consulted, in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, in all phases of the work of the Panel. We believe that there should be mechanisms established that allow ample opportunities at all stages of the Panel's work, for Member States to provide inputs to the Panel and also to be informed about the progress that is being made.

Given the enormity of the task, which includes examining and giving proposals on the UN system's operations at national, regional and international levels, it may be ambitious to expect that a report by the Panel could be completed in a few months. As a result, it may be better to have a comprehensive report that does justice to the range and complexity of issues, than to have a rushed report. The Group of 77 and China believes that thoroughness and careful consideration of issues should not be sacrificed for the sake of meeting an unrealistic timeline.

Lastly, we wish to inform the Panel that the Group of 77 and China will soon join other delegations in presenting a paper that lays out the principles that we believe should guide the work of the Panel as well as the process of the system-wide coherence of the UN.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.


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of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations
Chairman of the Group 77

H.E. Mr Jena Stoltenberg
Prime Minister, Norway

cc. H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan
Secretary-General
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