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Vice President calls on G77 to work towards presenting unified position at next UN climate conference

Georgetown, Guyana (October 29, 2020) Guyana hosted, virtually, a Group of 77+ China ministerial and technical meeting on Thursday (October 29, 2020). And speaking in the session which facilitated ministerial interventions, Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo charged that the outcome of the session must not go over “trodden” ground, but should focus on an outcome that enhances “ambition” relative to reaching targets necessary for decarbonizing economies and “access” to climate financing.

The meeting was held under the theme *‘Maintaining a Low Carbon Development Path towards the 2030 Agenda in the Era of COVID-19’*.

He said, “We are not here to prove the science of climate change. That has been proven and accepted. We are not here to debate the outcome, or the impact, of climate change because most people in this room and across the world have been witnessing and experiencing this first hand...through hurricanes, rising sea levels, droughts and a whole host of other activities.”

Jagdeo stressed that countries, the world over, are facing an “almost existential threat” – where the impacts are already being felt. According to him, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this. “The Paris pledges, as welcomed as they were, were never enough to achieve the outcome that we desire...we also know that even before COVID-19, many countries were not on track to achieving those pledges, although they were inadequate,” he said.

The Vice President added that to date the pandemic has forced half a billion people into unemployment, billions into “absolute” poverty and hundreds of millions are facing starvation – an impact that will likely exceed 100 trillion dollars.



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Jagdeo alerted global leaders to that fact that it has been recognized that the economic strains caused by COVID-19 may be used as an excuse to weaken ambition, relative to target for decarbonizing economies, and weaken financing. “We are extremely worried now because of COVID-19 and because of its widespread impact....the fear is that because of the impact on the economy, this will be used as an excuse to weaken ambition and weaken financing,” he said, noting that this has happened before in the mid-2000s when the global financial crisis hit.

The Vice President said, “Many countries, particularly in the developed world, used that as an excuse not to raise ambition, nor to raise the financing or meet the pledges that they had already made.”

He made clear that, notwithstanding COVID-19 and its economic impacts, countries must not lose sight of the importance of climate change action.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

On that note, the Vice President stated that the G77 is a powerful group and as a block – even with countries that have varying interests and priorities – there is strength in numbers.

He said, “This Group is made up of disparate set of countries – from Small Islands States to some very large developing countries, and each of us may have our own priorities and often in climate change negotiations we contradict each other, but if we can find an outcome that accommodates the concerns of all of these countries then we can go forward from a position of strength

“...if we are to go to COP (the UN Climate Change Conference) next year in Glasgow, this engagement today is to say that we have to find some level of solidarity in this Group if we want to achieve higher levels of ambition and dedicated and adequate financing....we have to find consensus to address the centrality of why we are here, which is to address



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ambition and financing...as we move forward, this Group must work to build a sense of solidarity.”

Jagdeo also called attention to the fact that several agencies, including the World Bank, are sitting on funds that could be made available to countries. “Where there are pools of resources at various institutions that are intermediating climate funds, they are just sitting for too long on these resources. There has to be a speeding up of these resources to be intermediated to the countries, particularly countries with limited capability,” he said, adding that countries in need of financing for adaptation and another climate change-related action are reduced fiscal capacity and debt burdens caused by a need for diversion of resources to respond to COVID-19.

Jagdeo also said, “We need financing at scale now, not in the future, but now and there are already pools of money where pledges have been made that we have to work as a group to unlock. We will need the solidarity of the Group and the bigger countries in this Group to help us to do that.”

The G-77 Group is the largest negotiating Group of developing countries in the United Nations.

GUYANA’S PRIORITIES

On Guyana’s priorities, the Vice President told the gathering that despite now being an oil-producing country, the commitment to climate change action has not changed. “In Guyana, we have a national scale model on climate change for decarbonizing the entire economy and adapting to climate change...but we have recently become oil producers...does this change our position on climate change? Carbon pricing? Or say the removal of subsidies from fuel? The answer is no. Although we would be an exporter of oil, our position has not changed...we have to find a livable outcome,” he posited.

Jagdeo reminded of the need for sustainable medium-term economic country plans. “We have to use this period to plan for the future...a lot of countries have great plans for decarbonizing their economies, but they need financing...this group has to help each



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other,” he said, reiterating the need for a strong focus on increased ambition and access to financing in response to climate change.

Notably, the objectives of Thursday’s (October 29, 2020) meeting were:

- To provide a space for awareness, partnership building, knowledge sharing and lesson learning among the G-77 and China’s membership on climate action amidst the COVID-19 crisis while recovering towards the 2030 Agenda;
- To reinforce the Group of 77 and China’s position on key issues in the Climate Change discussion including climate finance and ecosystem-based approaches while also contributing to maximizing SDG co-benefits; and
- To produce a Communique that highlights the main concerns and actions of the Group.

In November 2019, Guyana was elected as Chair of the G-77 Group. The 134 Member States of the Group elected Guyana by acclamation without preconditions at a November 22 plenary. The period is for one year, commencing January 2020.

The Group of 77 (G-77) was established on June 15, 1964, by 77 developing countries signatories of the “Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries” issued at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva.

The Group of 77 is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations, which provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system, and promote South-South cooperation for development.