



Statement by
His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali
President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
At the 44th Annual Meeting of the
Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China
November 12, 2020

Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China

His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the 75th Session United Nations General Assembly

His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary- General of the United Nations

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to address this virtual Forty-Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China as Guyana's Chairmanship of this prestigious Group enters its final months.

It was an honour to take up the mantle of the Chairmanship, a position that we were privileged to hold once before. The decision to entrust us, for a second time, with this responsibility is ample testimony of the Group's confidence in our ability to lead the Group along a path that further solidifies its foundational precepts of unity, solidarity and cooperation.

Excellencies,

We are meeting in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has spread to every corner of the world, striking almost every State, regardless of size, population or level of development. The long-term impact of this deadly pandemic will be felt more severely by the most vulnerable populations, including those from within our member states. The pandemic has already begun to reverse and eliminate decades of developmental gains.

Guyana, like the rest of the world, has worked assiduously to formulate a response plan to the pandemic. The Plan is underscored by the need to ensure citizens' health and safety

while mitigating the pandemic's debilitating economic damage. This objective remains the central focus of my government, as I am sure it is for every State represented at this gathering.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing structural problems and laid bare the possibility of a further widening of the gap between the North and the South. If we are to rebound, stronger and better, it is imperative that we internalize the lessons of the pandemic and chart a more inclusive, balanced and sustainable development path. This requires, fundamentally, for us to address issues such as development gaps and high indebtedness and to advocate for greater access to development financing.

Excellencies,

Our Group has acknowledged the vital importance of multilateralism in finding solutions to the multiple crises which have bedeviled humanity. The efficacy of this mechanism cannot be underemphasized at this time. The era in which we now find ourselves has revealed, in stark terms, the pivotal role of international cooperation in responding to extant global challenges.

The rebuilding of our economies and the strengthening of our public health systems will depend in large part on our ability to work together towards developing and distributing COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good. It is imperative, therefore, that the international community enhances its support for institutions that are best equipped to foster this collective effort, particularly the World Health Organization.

Excellencies,

Since its founding, The Group of 77 has continued to meet – even despite the obvious limitations during the past year – to debate and advocate on behalf of our populations. We have maintained a single voice in calling for concerted action to combat the deleterious impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. We have highlighted the disproportionate and unprecedented effects that a warming planet has had especially on small island developing states. These states are already grappling with a myriad of socio-economic factors that limit their responsiveness to natural hazards.

Guyana has made climate action a national priority and it remains committed to working with others to overcome the world's climate crisis. As an example of this commitment, my government, on 29th October 2020, hosted a virtual meeting under the theme, "Maintaining a Low Carbon Development Path towards the 2030 Agenda in the Era of COVID-19". The event brought together more than 170 participants, including Ministers and senior policy makers from developing countries. The forum allowed for advancing awareness and for the exchange ideas with respect to climate action, in the context of COVID-19 crisis and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The meeting also

sought to reaffirm developing countries commitment to key climate change challenges, including climate finance and ecosystem-based approaches.

This meeting did not attempt to rehash what we already know. Nor did it apportion blame for the climate crisis. Instead, it sought to create a timely and relevant space for developing countries to fashion consensus on their current needs and the concomitant short, medium, and long-term actions that must be pursued to address the extant global threats, and especially their effects on developing countries.

It is in this context that I reiterate the call for us to continue to pursue, both through strong advocacy and action, a climate agenda that moves our countries and economies toward a low carbon future. As a Group, we must also strive to uphold the *Paris Agreement* and work with all stakeholders, including bilateral partners, to take urgent action to realize the agreement's ambitions.

Excellencies,

This Group continues to call upon all States to prioritise the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We must not waver in our commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

The pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals will become more critical in the post-COVID-19 era. We are already confronted with the reversal of our development gains which threatens to undermine human development.

Now more than ever, the economic, social and political advancement of the developing world must be placed atop the global agenda. It is imperative that new and innovative measures to sustain action on the 2030 Agenda are developed, considering the unique challenges faced by developing countries, particularly least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small-island developing states and countries recovering from conflict.

The Group of 77 and China has a distinctive role to play in this process through its efforts at deepening South-South Cooperation. Such cooperation has enabled many of our countries to cope with development-related issues, including the fight against poverty.

The 2030 Agenda also requires us to take action to “Conserve and sustainably use the Oceans, Seas and marine resources for sustainable development.” Guyana, during its Chairmanship, prioritised representation of the G77 and China at the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). For our Group, this issue is one of extreme importance because the potential damage to the marine environment from

activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction could harm the economies of many developing states.

Oceans and seas face the threats of marine and nutrient pollution and resource depletion all of which are caused primarily by human actions. The sustainable use and protection of oceans and seas must therefore continue to be highlighted. They are an essential component of our ecosystem and are vital to the development of island and coastal states.

Democracy

Excellencies,

The work of the G77 and China spans the gamut of issues discussed across the various Committees of the General Assembly. However, we believe that a critical issue underpinning our ability to confront myriad challenges is that of the preservation of democracy. It is imperative that citizens' right to participate in the political process is preserved and protected.

Democracy is essential within states and in relations between states. Democracy therefore must become more embedded in multilateral institutions.

The United Nations is one such institution. In its efforts to ably represent the billions of people in the developing world, it is vital that the United Nations, inclusive of the Security Council, become more democratic in the manner in which it is constituted and in its decision-making. The Group of 77 and China will continue to call for reforms to all UN systems, ensuring that the voices of its membership are heard. It is equally important, also, that the unique challenges, faced by are accounted for in the UN's decision-making process.

Excellencies,

As I close, I wish to assure that the Cooperative Republic of Guyana will endeavour to conclude its Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China without relaxing its commitment to the common interests of the developing world.

I also wish to use this opportunity to thank the Executive Secretariat of the Group of 77 for its invaluable support and guidance over the past year. The work of the Chair has been made easier because of the Secretariat's sterling contributions.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The momentous 75th Session of the United Nations has enabled us to reflect, acknowledge and applaud, the work of the United Nations since its founding.

If we are to maximise the benefits of multilateralism, we must reflect and candidly assess the ways in which we have fallen short of the ideals set out in the Charter of the United

Nations. Only then would we be able to forge a path forward that will eventuate with the necessary reforms needed to advance the goals of a more, just, peaceful and equitable world.

The Group of 77 and China will always have an instrumental role to play in this undertaking. We must continue to serve the people of the developing world. The Group of 77 and China must continue its mission, especially in the face of the extant global challenges.

Excellencies,

I thank you, once again, for your support during Guyana's chairmanship of the Group. Allow me now to offer Guyana's congratulations and unconditional support to our imminent successor, the Republic of Guinea, to this most prestigious role of Chair of the Group of 77 and China.

I thank you!