

## **Opening Remarks at the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Conference**

Durban, 19 August 2004

Chairperson of the Conference  
President of the General Assembly  
Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations,  
Your Excellencies:

I would like to welcome everybody back to Durban and wish this important meeting a success. I think that we are all of us of one mind with regard to the principal challenges that face our Movement, I agree very much with the remarks that have been made by the Chairperson of the Conference.

We are preparing for the 50th Anniversary of the Bandung Conference, next year. I believe that this anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect once again on the challenges that face the developing world and to look, once more, at the question of what we should do to respond to those challenges.

Obviously we do not want to repeat things about which we have already agreed and I think indeed it would not be a fitting tribute to the initiative that was taken by our leaders almost 50 years ago merely to say the things about which we have agreed. But I do think that the 50th Anniversary presents us with the challenge to say what do we do next.

Amongst others, we have three principal challenges:

- One of them is the challenge of poverty and underdevelopment, which continues to afflict billions of our people across the globe.
- The second is that we have the continued challenge of peace and stability. The issue of international terrorism to which our chairperson has referred to is part of the challenge to ensure the achievement of peace and stability, which we need.
- The third challenge we face is the restructuring of the global exercise of power - of political power, of economic power, of military power and of social power.

Indeed as we strive to meet these challenges - of the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment, securing peace and stability, restructuring power - we can only do these things within that global context. And therefore the manner in which global power is exercised impacts very directly on the things that we have to do. Part of this direct impact is that in our own situations, in our own context, the debate and discussion about multilateralism versus unilateralism have been answered and is answered practically everyday.

Certainly on this continent it is a reality. And I am sure that our friends and colleagues who come from outside of Africa will have seen that as we confront those challenges of poverty and underdevelopment, of peace and stability, we are doing all of this within the context of the co-operation of the continent as a whole, that is, within a multilateral context. And we do this because indeed there is no other way in which we are all able to overcome those problems except within the context of our acting together as a united continent of Africa.

And so with regards to everything that we are trying to resolve whether in the Cote D'Ivoire or Burundi or Sudan or the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and so on, there are peace initiatives that are taken on the basis of the co- operation and the intervention of the Continent as a whole. We view the problems that face our peoples in these various countries as African problems that can only be solved within an African context.

We've taken the same position with regard to the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment that confront us. In practise amongst us there can be no question about the need to ensure that we strengthen the relations amongst ourselves, that we work together, that we seek the common solutions together of the problems that we face. This multilateral co-operation amongst equal countries in pursuit of mutual advantage has got to be the only way by which we proceed.

And I believe the matter that has been very fundamental to the Non-Aligned Movement from the Bandung Conference to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. Thus the strengthening of South - South relations has to be addressed with even greater vigour. I believe that the steps that have been taken to strengthen the cooperation between the various regional organisations is an important step in this regard.

And so certainly on the African continent, we look forward to decisions aimed at strengthening the relations between the African Union and ASEAN as an old established system of co-operation between the African Union and the Arab League. The African Union took the decision that we needed to strengthen our links in a systematic way with CARICOM and similar steps have been taken with regard to our relations with MERCUSOR.

I believe, Chairperson, that we have the possibility and certainly it is necessary to ensure that we practically look at ways to strengthen these links amongst the countries of the South within the context of what has been a long standing perspective of the developing countries. Through our perspective of South - South cooperation, it becomes possible for us to get the results that we seek. I think that if we look at what has been happening with regard to the negotiations of the WTO, it is quite clear what can happen, if we do indeed act in the accepted manner which our chairperson spoke.

This becomes particularly important, given again the matter of globalisation to which we have referred. And again - as all of us know -it is the process of globalisation that has gone with the concentration of power or the further concentration of power in the world - it is a direct outcome of what of course has been the growth of the instinct towards unilateralism and towards the practice of unilateralism. This expedites the need for us to meet the challenge of concerted action amongst the developing countries with the Non-Aligned Movement which is our principle representative of that concerted action.

The principal challenges that are facing all humanity can only in fact be solved within the context of multilateralism. The question of Palestine, a solution to which is long overdue, requires that we should be involved in the pursuit of the solution to this question to see what do we do as a Non-Aligned Movement, what does the world as a whole in the multilateral context do and not surrender the fate of the Palestinian people to a selected few as if the rest of us have nothing to contribute to a resolution of that particular conflict.

I believe the same would hold for the situation in Iraq to say what it is that we do as a Non-Aligned Movement and I would like to emphasise that I am talking about ourselves acting together - not simply as a protest movement to protest what somebody else has done - but to bring our considerable strength to the resolution of these problems.

I would say the same thing about the outstanding issue of Haiti: what do we do we to contribute to this movement, to help resolve the problem that has evolved in Haiti? In this regard, we need to find the commonly agreed positions as very ably represented this morning by our chairperson. How do we proceed from this position to elaborate the concerted action that we need, to bring the united weight of the Non-Aligned Movement to finding a solution to these problems?

It is a good thing that the Secretary-General of the United Nations will indeed be addressing this issue (with the matter that has been referred to of the various conferences and the decisions that are to be taken later). Perhaps we should ourselves, as a Non-Aligned Movement, to make our own assessments of those conferences and ask the question: what is it that we do and what it is that we need to do to

ensure that the principal results of those conferences have a bearing on the future of the billions of people that we represent.

What do we do about those particular resolutions, about the particular decisions which everyone has accepted to represent a global international consensus. I am quite certain that it is possible for this conference to address these questions and to give us some direction as to what it is that we need to do.

Amongst those of course would be the results of the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Development Goals that we agreed to. It is perfectly obvious that it is not going to be possible to meet those Millennium Development Goals for people all over the world without the transfer of resources, from the richer to the poorer -without this the development goals cannot be met.

Many people, including people from the developed world, would stress that the Millennium Summit indeed made the correct point that the resources do exist within human society to meet those development goals. The question is how to do this, what action needs to be taken to make sure that these resources are actually released so that those millennium development goals are met. I think it is a question that we should try to answer ourselves and it is a question that only we can answer because obviously to depend on those who are richer than ourselves to answer the question on how they should transfer resources from their hands into our hands would be hoping for something very difficult to be achieved.

We need to answer the questions ourselves not only to say that this is what is desirable, but to say what the practical steps are that can be taken to ensure that this resource transfer takes place so that indeed the global consensus with regard to the Millennium Development Goals is translated into reality.

Of course all these matters are all very interrelated. It relates to the matter of the global exercise of power, because the people who have those resources are the same people who exercise that respondent power in the world which enable unilateral actions to take place. So it is fundamentally in our interest that there must be a restructuring of these institutions, multilateral institutions in which we are represented, multilateral institutions that are supposed to address the interest of humanity as a whole.

The restructuring of the UN clearly has taken too long. It has dragged on for a very long time and we can see the consequences of the manner in which it is structured and the manner in which it works. These consequences are not necessarily positive for us, developing countries, and therefore practically what shall we say about this. What shall this conference do in order to move that restructuring process forward in our own interest? And that would also apply in terms of the Bretton Woods institutions. There seems to be a global consensus in this regard, to see what it is that we do to put consensus to the practical benefit for our own people.

Nobody is going to answer this question except the Non-Aligned Movement. Those who are powerful do not want to answer that question. It is not in their interest to answer that question, but certainly it is in our interest that we answer it.

We therefore have no choice but to look at the question of what it is that we do in the Non-Aligned Movement to become this powerful instrument that we must use. I know that this question has been discussed repeatedly and of necessity, but I think we should not tire at looking at this question.

To see what it is that we do to strengthen this movement, to see how we are able to address these objectives we share, the objectives of the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment, securing peace and stability for ourselves, ensuring a democratic inclusive situation. We have no other global political instrument except the Non-Aligned Movement to help us to address these goals. What does the Non-Aligned Movement say we should do in order to meet all of these goals?

We need a place like this, and I trust that your colleague, the South African Foreign Minister, will have an opportunity to take you outside of this conference centre, outside of this city centre of Durban and the

hotels in which we stay, to some parts of Durban where you will see the kind of poverty and underdevelopment to which we are accustomed to in all our countries.

We need to address the issues that produce social instability, that produce insecurity amongst communities, conditions that de-humanize people so that we could be able to relate the work that we do here - in what might appear to be rarefied air- conditioned conditions - to the reality out there, to improve the lives of these ordinary people.

The matters we are discussing and deciding here have a very direct relevance to many of our people across the globe and I think the immediate awareness and consciousness of that responsibility is important. As we begin this important conference we must aim at that every end.

The people in the townships of Durban, the people in Gaza and people elsewhere in the world must be able to say that the Non-Aligned Movement has given us hope, that indeed we are on the way out of the terrible conditions in which we live in.

And I am quite certain that our leadership is quite capable of rising to the challenge.

Best wishes for a successful conference.