

Statement by Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (M&ER), Ministry of External Affairs at the 39th Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 on September 24, 2015

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Let me at the outset convey our deep gratitude and felicitations to you and to the South African team for the outstanding leadership of the Group over the past year.

Let me also extend our warm congratulations to Thailand for taking over the Group's Chairmanship for the year 2016. Our colleagues in the Thailand Permanent Mission can rest assured of our steadfast and active support in their endeavors.

Mr. Chairman,

It is said that pressure and adversity reveal true character. This certainly seems to have been the case with our Group, which conducted itself very ably over the past one year, in difficult and stressful circumstances.

We have come through what must be among the most significant negotiation phases in the United Nations over the past several years. During this one year, the Group successfully negotiated two important outcome documents – the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - which will collectively define the contours of international cooperation on development issues for the coming decade and beyond.

The Group was able to leave a firm imprint over the outcomes of these processes. The Group can take pride in the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which will be adopted by our Leaders tomorrow has a deep and clear reflection of the collective interests of all developing countries.

The challenge now is to consolidate the gains that developing countries have made and work purposefully towards the implementation of the agreements reached. Yet another challenge will be to 'reset' the UN system to make it more effective and in tune with the new development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

The role of developing countries in the world has undergone much change since the founding of this Group. Sustained poverty eradication efforts have borne fruit in many countries, though significant challenges remain. South-South trade and investment flows have re-invigorated our mutual ties and our economies are today playing a key role in backstopping global economic growth. Yet, the shared concerns that brought us together continue to be relevant even today, particularly the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development and even more importantly the reform of the international economic order.

The recent negotiations demonstrated yet again that a united G-77 is essential to ensure that the voice of developing countries is effectively heard. It is to our credit that despite our diverse concerns and sensitivities, the Group has been successful in projecting our common positions, which take into account the concerns of all countries, including Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

In fact contrary to common perceptions, it is the diversity of this Group which is also its greatest strength. G-77 is frequently able to propose effective and rational solutions because its views capture this diversity of opinion representing a large majority of humanity.

We hope we will further build on and strengthen the unity of this Group in the coming year.

As we do so, we must always remain fully cognizant of and sensitive to the particular challenges faced by our LDC, SIDS and LLDC friends. India has been a consistent supporter of their core interests and they can count on our continued and steadfast support to their priorities.

Mr. Chairman,

The tough but ultimately successful negotiations of the past one year have produced numerous achievements for the Group; even as there were numerous missed opportunities. The preservation of the integrity of the SDGs, as negotiated painstakingly through the Open Working Group, was a marked success.

We were also able to preserve the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities which must continue to be the fundamental basis for international cooperation on sustainable development.

On technology, the successful establishment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism marked a significant break from the past and promises to move this issue away from empty pronouncements to meaningful action.

The one area where gains were less than optimal relates to the reform of the global governance architecture which remains skewed against developing countries. The Group made a valiant effort and succeeded in bringing unprecedented spotlight on to the issue of reform of international taxation, even though this remains an unfulfilled task.

Overall, the resounding lack of ambition from developed countries on aid commitments was a cause of disappointment. So is the persistent diversion and double counting of aid towards climate related objectives, which is not only contrary to pledges made but is also increasingly hollowing out support for poverty eradication and pressing social issues in poorer countries.

Over the coming year, the Group will have to remain vigilant and avoid any partial interpretation of the 2030 Agenda, nor any slippage from its lofty ideals and ambition.

Our collective efforts to put in place the right institutional architecture to support the implementation of the new agenda will be a crucial determinant of its success. This should remain our highest priority.

We look forward to lending our strong support to the incoming Chairman in these efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

While acknowledging the stellar work of the Group during the last year, we must be mindful of yet another extremely important negotiation challenge confronting us later this year. I am referring to COP21 of UNFCCC at Paris where the international community is expected to ink a new universal yet differentiated and equitable agreement for the post-2020 period and also chart a workplan for ambitious actions in the pre-2020 period.

The unity and cohesiveness of this Group will be key to reflecting the perspective of developing countries in the new agreement. While some of us may have slightly different perspectives on some of the issues, it will be important to manage those divergences and put forth a common Group position, wherever possible.

Before concluding, **Mr. Chairman**, I would like to reiterate India's strong and unwavering commitment to South-South cooperation and the role of the G-77.

India is already active in sharing our developmental experiences with numerous partner countries, as also its expertise in certain areas of capacity building and technology. India will further expand and intensify such cooperation with our developing country partners in the years ahead.
