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AN APPEAL FROM THE THIRD WORLD FORUM TO THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT NEW DELHI, MARCH 1983

The Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned States have sought, at their conferences in the past two decades, to bring the influence of this great association of Third World countries to bear on the major events and problems of our time. As a result, the Non-Aligned Movement has secured for itself a position of prestige and influence in the shaping of World affairs. Most people in the Third World are confident that your forthcoming meeting will mark an important step in improving the conditions of their lives.

As you re-assemble in New Delhi, the world is in the throes of a crisis even more serious than that which generated the need to launch the Movement in Belgrade, in 1961. Political and social tensions which afflict many Third World countries and the global arms race we are witnessing are only the apparent manifestations of a much deeper political and economic crisis.

Deep and persistent recession, with growing unemployment, social strains and trading conflicts has affected the economic and political systems of all countries. For developing countries, which have suffered a serious decline in their per capita income for the first time in 35 years, the dangers are even more far reaching. The export prices for most commodities exported by developing countries have fallen in real terms to the disastrous level of the early 1930's. Debt servicing costs have increased very sharply and capital market lending to developing countries has nearly collapsed. As a result, the non-oil developing countries have suffered a deterioration in their external accounts of some 100 billion dollars annually between 1980 and the present, and for many, 1980 was already a difficult year. The oil exports of OPEC countries have fallen by 85 billion dollars or one third between 1980 and 1982. For developing countries as a whole the total deterioration runs at about 180 billion dollars annually, a staggering sum by any reckoning. The resultant financial crisis has further intensified the effect of the global recession in developing countries. The measures currently being taken, while they may help in individual cases, are insufficient and inadequate for the developing countries as a group and for the world economy. Without bold action for major reforms in the international monetary and financial system, there is an enormous risk of continuing deflation and conflict.

In addressing these difficulties, the Non-Aligned Summit would no doubt consider specific proposals to revive the world economy and the possibilities for forging a joint position on financial and monetary issues, but it is equally important to recognize the overwhelming importance of South-South Cooperation. Such Cooperation is necessary, not only to strengthen the bargaining position of the Third World countries in working for a new international economic order, but also as an end in itself, with its own logic, values and potential. The challenge and the responsibility involved in this task have never been greater.

Having considered, with a full sense of responsibility, the political and economic prospects facing the Third World, we, a group of Third World citizens decided, in our personal capacity, to appeal to all the leaders attending the Non-Aligned Summit to elevate the subject of South-South Cooperation to the top of your agenda. *It is our firm conviction that the Non-Aligned Summit can best serve the interests of the disfranchised people of the world by announcing its firm decision in unequivocal terms that henceforth it will attach the highest priority to South-South Cooperation.* The Summit may also appoint a high level Committee or Commission to make firm recommendations to the next Summit for a vigorous cooperation programme that will capture the interest and participation not only of governments but also of business people, labour unionists, scientists, professionals, teachers, communicators, artists and spiritual leaders — a programme that can be carried forward by a broad popular movement.

In assessing the limited progress made so far in tapping the enormous potential that exists for such cooperation, we found that the most important pre-requisite still lacking is solid and sustained political support for the concept and the process of South-South Cooperation. *Just as the Bandung Conference of 1955 provided a charter for the political liberation of the Third World, there is now a historic opportunity to launch a new charter for economic and cultural decolonization of the Third World.*

Concept of South-South Co-operation

South-South Cooperation must be based on the principles of collective self-reliance, free from unequal exchanges and compatible with the socio-cultural realities of different nations or regions. Collective self-reliance may be defined as all forms of collaborative and joint development endeavours undertaken by two or more Third World countries or their nationals in order to accelerate the development of each one and all of them on the basis of mutual benefit and mutual respect. In this context, development has to be viewed in a broader context and should include not only economic activities but social and cultural advancement.

Trade-oriented integration schemes, modelled on the West European experience, are not entirely appropriate for Third World economies. To translate the concept of South-South Cooperation into reality, there is need for a systematic coordination of production plans and policies, the creation of Third World multilateral enterprises for productive activities in industry, trade, transport and communications; associations for buying and selling, and networks for sharing information, science and technology.

Implementation Mechanisms

Many concrete proposals and initiatives for South-South Cooperation are currently being pursued under the Caracas Programme of Action and the Non-Aligned Programme of Action for Economic Cooperation. Many programmes for cooperation are also being implemented successfully in different sub-regions such as ASEAN, ECOWAS, SADCC

and CARICOM. The Summit can strengthen these efforts and initiatives by lending strong political support to the objectives of South-South Co-operation and by identifying specific areas in which operational mechanisms for such cooperation can be strengthened. This will require an innovative approach not only in identifying more promising areas of cooperation but in evolving more effective mechanisms for implementation. There is also an urgent need to coordinate and harmonize the Non-Aligned Action Programme for Economic Cooperation and the Caracas Programme of Action of the Group of 77.

A key element in strengthening the operational instruments for South-South Co-operation would be the creation of a small Secretariat or organizational entity to provide for continuing consultations on various proposals and to mobilize, on a substantial basis, the intellectual and professional resources needed to address specific constraints or to promote specific proposals. The limited core group created in New York to follow up the implementation of the Caracas Programme of Action has already demonstrated the importance of a more effective mechanism.

Launching a Popular Movement

There is also an urgent need to bring about an active and fruitful partnership between official institutions and non-governmental interests — whether commercial or non-profit — at the national, regional and international levels. For this purpose, the Third World Forum is launching a Programme for South-South Co-operation with the collaboration of several other non-governmental groups to complement and strengthen the work of official organizations in building the resources and the resilience of the South.

Under the proposed Programme, the Third World Forum is planning to assemble a pool of about 100 outstanding experts from the South who can be mobilized in small informal groups to undertake research in major areas, explore various issues and proposals, organize unofficial discussion groups in preparation for intergovernmental negotiations, and to identify new initiatives for attaining the objectives of South-South Co-operation.

The Forum is also planning to launch a campaign to mobilize non-governmental networks as a part of the effort to convert South-South Co-operation into a popular movement. The communications revolution that is currently taking place in the world could help facilitate greater inter-cultural and inter-regional communication in the field of science, technology, arts, literature and music.

A Historic Opportunity

We do not underestimate the enormous difficulties and obstacles that lie ahead, but times of hardship can also create opportunities for self-reliance, both national and collective. The reaffirmation, at the Non-

Aligned Summit, of the determination of Third World countries to make collective self-reliance based on the principles of South-South Co-operation a central preoccupation, could become a turning point in their turbulent history.

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