



REMARKS BY MINISTER MARCELO SUAREZ SALVIA, PERMANENT MISSION OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIR COUNTRY OF THE GROUP OF 77, AT THE PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE BOOK "THE GROUP OF 77: PERSPECTIVES ON ITS ROLE IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY" (New York, 25 April 2011)

Distinguished panelists and guests,

At the outset, and on behalf of G77 Chairperson, Ambassador Jorge Argüello, let me thank the President of the Center for UN Reform Education, Mr. William R. Pace, for the invitation to participate in the panel discussion on the occasion of the Center's publication of the book "The Group of 77: Perspectives of its role in the UN General Assembly".

For the "public opinion", the Group of 77 is hardly known and for those who know it, most of them often argue that it has outlived its purpose and that it is not very useful.

When the Group of 77 was born in 1964 and the group system of negotiations began to function in UNCTAD and other parts of the United Nations system, the collective action by the South was hardly welcomed by the developed countries. It was asserted that there was no "South" and that it was illusory to try to forge and maintain group positions in view of the differences between developing countries. Group positions were viewed as rigid and confrontational that did not allow different views or opinions to be aired, thus preventing accommodation and negotiations.

Yet the continuing existence and functioning of the Group of 77 owes its strength and inspiration in part from the same underlying reasons which gave rise to its formation and which remain as valid today as they were in 1964 when the Group of 77 was born, namely the wish of the developing countries:

- to articulate common solutions to development problems and promote joint goals collectively and thus boost their role and gain influence on the global scene and within multilateral institutions;
- to mount countervailing power vis-à-vis the well-organized and coordinated countries of the North.

While the world order has changed in a number of ways and the domestic situations and views of many developing countries have evolved significantly since the Group's formation, some underlying factors have not changed:

- Individually, the developing countries, even the big and important ones, wield little or no influence on the global scene and within multilateral organizations;
- A number of systemic issues and unequal relationships that gave rise to the Group of 77 persist in North-South relations, in old and new forms.
- A number of long-standing proposals and demands of developing countries remain on the international agenda, but unfulfilled.
- There are some common, overarching, enduring and systemic interests, concerns and objectives that bind developing countries and their peoples, regardless of the specificity of their individual situations or differences of their particular interests. They have all at stake, no matter what their state of development, in a global economic environment that is supportive of the development process.

- To varying degrees, virtually all the developing countries have a continuing interest in a number of issues of relevance to the development process (e.g., quality and quantity of resource flows, reduced debt burdens, strong and stable commodity markets, access to markets, transfer of technology, etc.).
- These interests pertaining to the global economic framework for development can only be advanced through multilateral processes and negotiations. Their successful pursuit is dependent on the effective mobilization of developing countries in the multilateral arena through the Group of 77 and similar groupings.
- The developed countries of the North, while criticizing and discouraging coordination and cooperation of the developing countries through the Group of 77, have maintained and intensified their own group coordination and action vis-à-vis the South on development-related matters in the UN system and elsewhere.

Since its inception, the Group of 77 has shaped large parts of the development agenda of the South and the substantive context of the international development discussions. Most of these discussions and negotiations and, hence, the activities of the Group of 77, take place in the framework of the United Nations system.

The book on the Group of 77 that the Center for UN Reform Education has published focuses on the activities of the G-77 in the UN General Assembly. It does not aim to present a comprehensive survey of the Group's activities in all the fora where it operates across the UN system which hopefully will be written one day.

The authors of the book, Lydia Swart and Jakob Lund, carefully outline the origins as well as the organization and functioning of the Group of 77 in the General Assembly of the United Nations. They have made an important contribution to a greater knowledge of the role and evolution of the Group of 77 and its continuing relevance in international development diplomacy.

I will not go into the details of the book's content at this stage which I will leave for the panel discussion.

I thank you.