

CHAPTER 2

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE GROUP OF 77

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...neither the Western media nor Western scholars pay much attention to the multilateral policies and practices of the states variously described as the South, the third world, or developing countries. In particular, patterns of cooperation among these states in pursuit of common interests at the UN are often ignored or dismissed as of little consequence. *Sally Morphet, 2004*

Institutional Arrangements: UNCTAD

The institutional arrangements of the G-77 developed slowly. In its first years, the G-77's activities primarily coalesced around UNCTAD as it was regarded by the South as the key locus to improve conditions of trade for development and to form a counterbalance to the Bretton Woods Institutions dominated by the North. The G-77 focus on UNCTAD was so pronounced that until 1976—when it held a Conference on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries—the group only convened high-level meetings in preparation for UNCTAD sessions.

These ministerial meetings to prepare for UNCTAD started in 1967 at the initiative of the Group of 31, consisting of developing countries that were members of UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board (TDB), represented by Ambassadors in Geneva.¹⁰

The first G-77 ministerial meeting in 1967 adopted the *Charter of Algiers*, which details the G-77's programme of action but is rather short on internal institutional issues. It is only at the very end of the Algiers Charter that a few organizational aspects are mentioned. The G-77 decided to meet at the ministerial level as “often as this may be deemed necessary” but “always prior to the convening of sessions” of

¹⁰ Later referred to as preparatory meetings.

UNCTAD. The Charter also made clear that regional decision-making would primarily continue to precede the formulation of its overall positions.

Interestingly, the original group system within UNCTAD separated the Latin American group from other developing countries. African and Asian developing countries were in List A (including Yugoslavia); developed countries in List B (including Cyprus and Malta), Latin American countries in List C, and the Soviet Union and communist East European countries in List D (including G-77 member Romania). The G-77 thus had members in each UNCTAD group. That Latin American countries were in a separate group from other developing countries likely reflects their historically unique role in the South as described in chapter 1.

The *Charter of Algiers* confirmed that, as to UNCTAD, the “competent authority of the Group of 77” was the Group of 31 in the TDB, which consisted of 55 countries until 1972, when it became open to all Member States. The TDB has powerful functions in between UNCTAD’s sessions: acting as the preparatory committee for the sessions, setting the agenda, and it can also create subsidiary organs, working groups and other standing committees.

The *Charter of Algiers* also stated that “the Group of 77 should be established at all headquarters of the various UN specialized agencies.” Therefore, the G-77 established Chapters in Geneva, Nairobi, Paris, Rome, Vienna, and Washington. In Washington DC, where the Bretton Woods institutions are based, the G-77 organized itself into the Group of 24 in 1971. Each Chapter chooses its own G-77 Chair who coordinates group positions locally. Elections of the Chapter Chairs follow the principle of geographical rotation between Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. These Chairs act as local spokespersons, with regular input from the regional groups, and preside over important meetings to reach common decisions. Other G-77 countries may have a coordinating role on specific issues.

G-77 Focus on the General Assembly

Tensions between Ambassadors in Geneva and New York were rather pronounced in the first decade of the G-77. As the group first

came on the international scene in New York, Ambassadors there felt that they should have a key coordinating role. But as UNCTAD was based in Geneva, Ambassadors there thought they were the logical choice for formulating overall G-77 positions.¹¹

At the height of the NIEO discussions, however, much of the political leadership in the G-77 shifted back to New York. When the TDB became a body open to all Member States in 1972, the Group of 31's coordinating role in between ministerial meetings ended up in the hands of the yearly elected Chairs of the G-77 plus the Chairmen of the regional groups. The New York G-77 Chair, however, started functioning as the G-77's overall spokesperson, coordinating the G-77's positions at the UN General Assembly as well as at international negotiations that take place outside New York, such as the climate change negotiations or intergovernmental conferences and UN summits dealing with issues related to the G-77's agenda.

Decision-making in the G-77

The G-77 Chair at the GA is elected for one year in alternating order between the three regions: Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa. After nomination and endorsement by the regional group whose turn it is to preside, the G-77 New York Chair is formally elected at the annual ministerial meetings held around the opening of the General Assembly.¹² The first Chair in New York, India, was appointed to serve from the Fall 1970 to Fall 1971 GA session, but as of 1987, G-77 chairs are appointed for calendar years. A country can chair more than once before other members have had the opportunity to do so. In New York, of the 40 Chairs to date, Pakistan chaired the G-77 three times, while Algeria, Egypt, India, Iran, Mexico, Tunisia, and Venezuela each chaired twice.

As there is only a small G-77 Secretariat in New York, G-77 Chairs from larger missions have a capacity advantage over smaller missions. When the Center asked about this capacity gap, sources

¹¹ Williams, 1991

¹² These ministerial meetings at the opening of the GA were held from 1977 onwards. Previously, it seems, the Chairs were elected by the NY Ambassadors.

typically mentioned that larger missions help the smaller ones out whenever necessary. Clearly, G-77 Chairs from bigger countries bring with them commensurate confidence besides more staff. The perception that bigger presiding countries have a harder time convincing other G-77 members that they are neutral is often brought up by smaller countries when asked about their capacity disadvantage.

In the case of Sudan (2009 Chair), channels of communications between the G-77 and the North were not ideal, according to some of our sources. They contend that Sudan, whose President is under indictment by the International Criminal Court, did not reach out much to countries from the North. Subsequently, it took a while before channels of communications between the G-77 and countries from the North improved during Yemen's 2010 chairmanship. Many of our sources in the North find it hard to understand why the G-77 as a group would pick "controversial" countries as their Chairs. At the most recent election, the Latin American and Caribbean region had two candidates: Argentina and Venezuela. Colombia especially opposed Venezuela, and Argentina was nominated by the region and then elected as the 2011 G-77 Chair by the 34th Annual Ministerial Meeting of the G-77 on 28 September 2010.

All G-77 meetings organized to reach common positions are open to all its members rather than being assigned to smaller groups. Generally speaking though, G-77 meetings at experts' level (Main Committee delegates) are on average attended by only 15-20 delegates and rarely by more than 40.¹³ Apparently, this is primarily because smaller missions do not have the capacity to follow all issues equally. Asked whether in view of this G-77 positions are actually truly representative, delegates pointed out that voting records show that G-77 members are mostly united in their positions. It is noteworthy, however, that in many votes in the Fifth Committee, for instance, an average of some 30-40 countries from the South abstain. Some suggest that this is because they do not want to invoke the ire of powerful countries in the North. The US, for example, tracks voting records at the UN. Other sources contend that many Ambassadors just don't receive instructions in time to vote.

¹³ LDCs always try and have at least one delegate representing them at all G-77 meetings.

Decisions in the G-77 are made by consensus. According to one key player this does not necessarily mean, however, that just one or a handful of countries can block consensus. Rather, this source added, it is customary for countries to disassociate themselves from certain positions in order not to impede G-77 decision-making. It does happen, though, that if one influential country strongly disagrees with a position, the group sometimes avoids taking a common stance, resulting in delays in negotiations.

When observing the G-77, delegates from the North often note the obvious tensions between its more moderate and radical factions. Many are tempted to view the dynamics within the group as a constant struggle between minimalist or maximalist positions, with the latter prevailing more often than not because the silent majority doesn't want to "break up the solidarity." They believe that in the end, just a small group of dominant or radical members shape G-77 decisions. "You will see these countries sit next to the current coordinator," these delegates note.

Delegates from the South, however, say that the perceived domination of just a few G-77 members is not always as accurate as it may seem. It mainly depends on the quality of the coordinator of the negotiations or current Chair of the G-77, they suggest. "Those who make the most noise aren't always the ones with the most influence." Moreover, as one source explained, it also depends on the issue or the venue. For instance, Singapore is close to the North in the Second Committee, but it is closer to the South in the Third Committee. And while it is mostly moderate in the Fifth Committee, it has taken a very strong stance on one of its issues, Administration of Justice, probably because one of its nationals employed by the UN was accused of financial wrongdoing. Singapore is proud of its status as a society with little corruption.¹⁴ And Brazil, which is mostly seen by the North as an influential but moderate G-77 member is regarded by at least one Northern delegate as quite radical in the budget committee of the GA.

Currently, an insider notes, among the most active G-77 players are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania and Venezuela. The influence of particular G-77

¹⁴ See the Center's website on the Fifth Committee for more information.

members often changes over time, depending on their political leadership, international standing, or quality of their Permanent Representatives at the UN. Two countries—Cuba and Egypt—have always played strong roles, according to one source. “They play the UN like it is a game of chess,” he added. Another source noted that a G-77 Chair needs to run every draft by these two delegations first.

Cuba, one G-77 delegate said, never gives up: “it wins on perseverance.” Their delegates are seen by other G-77 members as hard-working and well-informed. One Ambassador noted that Cuba’s “taking the bull [US] by its horn” is amusing or satisfying to most delegates from the South.

Egypt is considered a significant player within the Group as well. For quite a few delegates from the North, Egypt seems a hardliner, holding up strands of the system-wide coherence discussions, for instance. However, Egypt counters that it merely insists that the lessons learned in the pilot countries of the system-wide coherence efforts “should not become law all of a sudden. Policies need involvement of all states.”

The Egyptian diplomat interviewed for this book does not believe that Egypt is seen as “radical, always in contradiction” by the North. “We don’t hijack the agenda, we look for the middle ground.” He stressed that the skills and hard work of Egypt’s delegates are obvious: “we take interest in many more issues than most countries.” Egypt’s participation in many groups: African Union, Organization of the Islamic Conference, G-77 and NAM, this diplomat noted, requires active follow-up. “It allows Egypt to provide support and build bridges.” However, to a delegate from the North, Egypt’s active role in so many different groups means that if Egypt cannot block an initiative which it is against in one group, it can try and do so in the others.

Cohesion within the Group

Northern views about dominant or radical G-77 members may be an oversimplification about decision-making in this large bloc of 131 countries. Differences with the G-77 are often far more complex, based for the most part on members’ economic, geo-political, historical, political, cultural and religious realities. For instance, the

specific interests of landlocked, least developed, and small island countries, have been reflected in the G-77's positions from the very beginning.

The ongoing multiple fault-lines within the group caused by competing national, regional, or factional interests continue to make new common positions hard to achieve. This may explain why the G-77's overall platform cannot easily be amended to reflect new realities or priorities. As one former Chair of the G-77 explained: "Each issue on the G-77's agenda has its own constituency."

Among the many factions within the group are:

- Least developed countries (49 G-77 members) that face the highest level of poverty. The threshold is a per capita income of about \$1,000 per year.
- Small developing island states that face transportation problems and also will likely suffer the most from climate change because of rising sea levels.
- Landlocked countries that face transportation problems and dependency on the infrastructure of neighboring countries.
- Oil-producing countries seeking to ensure a fair price for their commodity.
- Countries with significant forests who seek financial compensation for forest preservation.
- Emerging economic powers in the South whose agendas for commensurate political power incur tensions within the G-77. (See final chapter on *The Future of the G-77*)
- BASIC (Brazil, India, China, South Africa) which at times formulates positions opposing those of the G-77 as a whole (see below).
- BRIC (Brazil, Russian Federation, a non-G-77 member, India and China) often take specific stances on trade issues that may clash with G-77 positions
- ALBA (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*): formed by Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and now also including Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Ecuador, and St. Vincent. ALBA has a more activist, more pronounced anti-Northern agenda.
- Africa - which has the most LDCs - is more invested in ODA than the other regions. Africa also takes diverging positions on peacekeeping issues.
- Those that oppose or promote gender issues.
- Indigenous groups.
- CARICOM/SADAC, which tend to be more moderate and progressive in negotiations.

The December 2009 negotiations in Copenhagen on climate change saw some of these divisions play out in a rather pronounced way. Countries with forests and small island states presented positions that differed from the overall G-77 positions, but these were to be expected. Yet, one Ambassador from the South expressed frustration with these fault lines when he said: "One Tonga should not be able

to frustrate negotiations. Not even 20 Tonga's should be able to do that."

But especially the stance and attitude of BASIC (Brazil, India, China, South Africa) in Copenhagen was very disturbing for many G-77 members. The BASIC group, together with the US, arrived at the political agreement that constituted the rather meager outcome of the Copenhagen meeting.¹⁵ In the decision-making process, the G-77 as a group, like the EU, was basically sidelined towards the end: they were only informed of the outcome, rather than consulted. It seems that besides acknowledging the critical nature of climate change, the BASIC countries were more willing to recognize a need for big developing countries to make more serious commitments towards reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁶

According to some of our sources, Sudan was not able to Chair the G-77 effectively and they believe that under the current Chair, Yemen, climate change views within the G-77 may be harmonized again. In fact, one G-77 insider complained that Yemen has dedicated too much of its efforts on behalf of the G-77 on climate change. As the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012, there is time to harmonize positions, a Chinese delegate added. It should be noted that few developed countries have met their binding commitments towards greenhouse emissions to date.

G-77 Secretariat in New York

While the G-77 has had offices in the UN Secretariat for a long time, the G-77's current "compact executive secretariat" was only established as a formal body of the Group of 77 at its First South Summit in 2000. According to our sources, some larger G-77 countries have long opposed having a permanent secretariat, especially a big one, which would have a larger staff providing backup for the Chair. While some delegates said that political reasons

¹⁵ An interesting account can be found in a Xinhua News Agency report from 25 December 2009: *Verdant Mountains Cannot Stop Water Flowing: Eastward the River Keeps on Going: Premier Wen Jiabao at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.*

¹⁶ According to one source in the G-77, the G-77 may "kick out China because having China in the group means having the world's biggest polluter in the group, making it difficult for the group to claim they are climate victims."

prevented the establishment of a stronger Secretariat—because it could lessen the influence of the bigger missions—others indicated it is mainly for financial reasons.

The G-77 has a few offices and a small meeting room on the 39th floor of the Secretariat building—“higher than the UN Secretary-General,” as one insider quipped to us. The G-77 pays a nominal fee to the UN Secretariat for this space while, according to one insider, the G-77 Chapters “are housed generously by other UN institutions.” The UN Secretariat, according to our sources, tried to increase the rent to reflect commercial rates but apparently the G-77 was able to counter this by pointing out problems in regard to accessibility (the main elevators only reach the 38th floor and the single service elevator to the 39th floor is hard to find) and their offices’ location next to a utility room. One source claimed that there has been a problem with asbestos as well. Some delegations refer to the modest G-77 offices with its visible pipes as the “basement in the sky.”

The G-77 has an Executive Secretary, Mr. Mourad Ahmia, a career diplomat from Algeria, who took this position in 2000. The budget in New York, according to an insider, is mostly derived from membership dues and contributions from G-77 Chairs. The G-77 enjoys services and technical support from the UN such as conference and interpretation services. The UN Trust Fund for South-South cooperation administered by UNDP also provides assistance and on occasion UNDP, DESA, and other organizations provide background papers for G-77 conferences on South-South cooperation (e.g. on water, trade, food, etc).¹⁷

Membership

The largest coalition at the UN, the Group of 77 presently has 131 members. Though one of its members cannot vote, Palestine,¹⁸ the

¹⁷ One source claims that such support explains the generally positive stance of the G-77 towards UNDP.

¹⁸ Palestine, not yet a State, is the only G-77 member that is not a UN Member State. Its status at the UN is that of an Observer State with additional privileges, including the right to speak in the general debate. It cannot, however, vote or put forward candidates for elections.

group's size gives it a commanding position in the GA where it usually easily comprises a simple majority in case of votes. When united, it narrowly holds the two-thirds majority of 128 out of 192 Member States. A two-thirds majority of Member States in the GA is required for key issues such as peace and security recommendations; election of members to organs; admissions, suspension or expulsion of members; as well as budget approvals. The next biggest bloc is the Non-Aligned Movement, which has 119. (See Appendix I.)

Since the beginning of the G-77 in 1964, its membership quickly increased to 96 in 1972, 128 in 1988, and to 131 in 2010. Tajikistan became the newest member of the G-77 when it was admitted in September 2010. At one point, the G-77 had 137 members. The group has kept the number of 77 in its name for historic as well as practical reasons. Clearly, tying its name to its actual number of members would require frequent changes, cause confusion, and undermine its name recognition.

There are no formal criteria for G-77 membership, though being a developing country is a given. Since its inception, any country admitted to one of the UN's three regional groups—Africa, Asia, and Latin America—can automatically become a member of the G-77. A few European countries outside these regions also joined the G-77: Yugoslavia and Cyprus were among the founding members, and Malta and Romania joined later. Unlike NAM, however, the G-77 does not have Europe as a region in its organizational structure. Cyprus, Malta, and Yugoslavia were therefore considered to be part of Asia for G-77 decision-making purposes. Surprisingly, Romania was added to the Latin America group, while Cyprus and Malta belonged in the Asian group.

That the regional groups can exercise a major influence in regard to the acceptance of new members from their area, is illustrated by the case of Cuba. Its full participation was delayed by the Latin American group until 1973, after which it was finally entitled to attend both informal and formal meetings.

Only Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently a G-77 member among the new countries formed after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Remarkably, there are few instances of countries leaving the G-77. Five countries are no longer a member of the G-77 following

their accession to Northern coalitions: Cyprus, Malta, and Romania after they became members of the European Union, and Mexico and South Korea after they joined the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). According to a former G-77 Chair, the reason that these countries are no longer G-77 members is very simple: “double dipping is not allowed.” However, there are different takes on why being an OECD member is incompatible with G-77 membership, and one country even argues that you can actually be a member of both organizations at the same time.

According to one insider, Mexico informed the G-77 in 1994 that it had been formally invited to join the OECD. By taking part in reaching common OECD positions, Mexico apparently explained, it felt it could no longer do the same in the G-77. South Korea joined the OECD in 1996 and its stated reason for leaving the G-77 in late 1997 was that “according to the ground rules of the OECD, Korea cannot maintain its fullfledged membership with the Group of 77 while being an OECD member.”¹⁹

In May 2010, Chile joined the OECD and to our knowledge it argues that it should be able to be a member of both the OECD and the G-77 because it does not regard the OECD as a negotiating bloc. Instead, Chile stresses, the OECD is merely an organization of countries that share common practices in public policy. It is not clear at this point if the G-77 as a group will refute this argument. In the climate change negotiations, one source indicated, both the OECD and G-77 have expressed clashing positions.

Whether membership in the exclusive G20 will come to be regarded as incompatible with that of the G-77 is not being debated, as far as we know, though resentment toward G-77 members in the G20 seems to be building. (See chapter 7.)

According to some sources, Palau left the group at the instigation of the US, after having been a G-77 member for just two years. These sources suggest that Palau agreed to this in exchange for more ODA from the US, which had administered Palau for five decades until its independence in October 1994. A US delegate we talked to denies this, though it is remarkable that in so many votes in

¹⁹ *Journal of the Group of 77*, September/November 1997

the Fifth Committee, for instance, Palau almost always aligns itself with the US. Another source, however, suggests that Palau left because of dissatisfaction with the climate change positions of the G-77.

Sources from the North have indicated that leaving the G-77 and becoming a single player like Norway or Switzerland can actually enhance one's role in negotiations. When you do not belong to a coalition, they argue, you can use your own voice more effectively, especially in a consensus process.

China's Special Status

... the rise of China – the epitome of a South superpower – in many respects poses important challenges for the developing world in the twenty-first century. The sheer size of China's population and economy, coming alongside its military strength and technological skills, as well as its established position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council always set China apart from the other South states. *Chris Alden et al, 2010*

Although China is counted among the 131 countries that make up the G-77, it has a special status that, according to a key official in the group, would never be extended to any other country. Unlike NAM, the G-77 does not have an observer category for participation of non-members in its meetings. According to our information, China never formally applied to become a member.

China has the same rights as other countries in the G-77: it can participate in all meetings and provide coordinators for negotiations. Statements from the group almost always indicate that they represent the positions from the *Group of 77 and China*. Yet, according to a former Chair of the G-77, when China did become active in the group in the early nineties, it wanted to preserve the right not to align itself with all G-77 positions and that this is the reason why they have never applied for membership. According to a key source in the G-77, only in a few instances has China not endorsed G-77 positions. While its special status in the G-77 is often presented as China's choice, some sources have suggested that China could face regional opposition if it formally applied for G-77 membership.

The People's Republic of China did not become a member of the UN until 1971 when it replaced the Republic of China or

Kuomintang, which had been forced to retreat to Taiwan in 1949. Developing countries had lobbied hard for the People's Republic of China to be recognized as the Chinese government to be seated in the GA and thereby on the Security Council. NAM, at its first summit in 1961, even made the seating of the People's Republic at the UN an item on its platform along with the rights of Palestinians.²⁰

According to one Chinese delegate interviewed by the Center, China was not very engaged in multilateral affairs until the 1990s. "We were passive," he explained.²¹ But when the Cold War ended, he added, the world had become unipolar, changing membership dynamics within the UN and causing China to reconsider its role.

In a recent book—*The South in World Politics*—the authors provide an alternative reason, claiming that China's stance towards international negotiations changed because of the Tiananmen Square killings in 1989. Faced with sanctions and criticisms from the West/North, they suggest, China embraced the South as "staunch defenders of sovereignty."²²

Especially during the preparatory process for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), China started to coordinate its positions with the rest of the world's developing countries. The first joint position paper of the G-77 and China came out during an UNCED preparatory meeting in March 1991. But China did not sign on to a G-77 ministerial declaration until 1996. China's engagement with NAM also started in the early nineties, and it officially became a NAM observer in 1992.

Since the early 1990s, China gradually expanded its involvement to include other issues besides development and environment, such as the UN budget and social issues. A Chinese delegate explained that China recognizes the need for global solutions to common critical problems, and he indicated that primarily the financial crisis and climate change had reached the level of urgency to become top priorities for China.

²⁰ This was before the border conflicts with India.

²¹ Of course, there was a period of support for revolutionary movements.

²² Alden et al, 2010, page 156

One former G-77 Chair explained that in his opinion, China is still grappling with the levels of unavoidable international engagement and increasing responsibilities that are accompanying its growing economic power. China, with its large mission at the UN, has always been known as—in the words of one delegate—“extremely effective behind the scenes.” It seems clear, though, that China’s carefully calibrated low profile—wanting to be seen foremost as an observer in multilateral organizations—is no longer as pronounced. According to our sources, China has become more vocal during some, but by no means all, UN negotiations.

By becoming more active in the G-77 and NAM since the early 1990s, China’s primary alignment with the South seemed clear. However, its increasing relationships with economic powerhouses of both the South and the North, especially in BASIC and the G20, are likely to engender suspicion and resentment in the majority of G-77 members.

Interestingly, a Chinese delegate stated that China had no intentions of becoming an OECD member. China does provide aid, but among delegates of the North, there is a strong feeling that China could provide much more ODA. However, in the eyes of the G-77, China’s aid should not be “seen as ODA, but merely as South-South cooperation.”

Dues

Annual dues for G-77 membership increased from \$1,000 to \$5,000 in 2000 but according to one source, only 30-some members actually pay. One insider told us that “dues are voluntary,” though another source denied this. China—as a special case—has been paying \$40,000 a year since 2004 after having previously paid \$20,000 since 1994. South Korea, before it left the G-77 in 1997, gave the G-77 Chair’s office \$30,000 in 1996.

Lack of dues’ payments causes difficulties for the coordination of activities. In fact, we learned of a country that chaired the G-77 in New York that decided to avoid the problem of empty coffers by paying dues for multiple years.

The G-77 has held summits since 2000. Expected to take place every five years, the 2010 summit was postponed till the summer of

2011. According to one source, it was assumed that South Africa would be the venue for the Third South Summit, but because of South Africa's financial commitments to the World Soccer Cup, hosting the G-77 as well was prohibitive. Instead, Libya will host the next summit as it is "one of the few African countries that has the facilities for thousands of delegates to meet."

Joint Coordination Committee

According to a former G-77 Chair, there has traditionally been considerable competition between the G-77 and NAM and there still is political tension. To coordinate positions, enhance collaboration, avoid duplication, and become more efficient in reaching common goals, the two blocs agreed to create a Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) in 1991 but it did not become operational until 1994. Agreement on whether it should be based in New York, for instance, was not reached until a year later and its terms of reference were not worked out until 1993. (See Appendix IV.)

The JCC consists of the immediate past, current—and if known—future Chairs of the G-77 and NAM, as well as the host countries of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries and the Standing Ministerial Committee (SMC) on Economic Cooperation. The Chairmen of the G-77's three regional groups can be invited.

JCC meetings are held at the Ambassadorial level and are open to all G-77 members. According to one source, the role of the JCC will much depend on the country that either chairs the G-77 or NAM. It seems likely that when NAM has a strong country as its Chair while the G-77's Chair represents a much smaller State, the NAM Chair tends to control the JCC positions. A small mission chairing the G-77 may even be tempted to leave the JCC's activities mostly to the NAM Chair and according to one source, this was the case with Antigua and Barbuda in 2008.

At the General Assembly, the JCC is very active in the negotiations on system-wide coherence (see chapter 3), the MDGs, and the working group on the Financial Situation of the UN. Previously, it participated in the deliberations of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the UN System.

Expansion of G-77 Agenda

A summary of key issues on the G-77's agenda are provided in Appendix II. As the G-77 has expanded the scope of issues it deals with over the last two decades, even many of the larger missions of G-77 countries experience the capacity stresses formerly only felt by smaller missions. Apart from its traditional agenda related to development, trade, and ODA, the G-77 has taken on humanitarian affairs, the funding and management of UNDP, and all issues in the Fifth Committee (budget and administrative, see chapter 4, including management reform) and even some human rights issues which are typically dealt with by the regions or NAM (see chapter 5).

A more in-depth re-evaluation of the G-77 platform of issues has been difficult to achieve because, as noted earlier, each issue has its own constituency that is resistant to change. Formulating a prioritization of agenda items is far from easy for the same reason, complicating large-scale reciprocity debates with the North.

South Center

By providing analyses on development, UNCTAD's Secretariat, as well as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and parts of UNDP, have helped formulate the G-77's agenda throughout the years. Some argue that UNCTAD's Secretariat was a *de facto* G-77 Secretariat for many decades.

The South Center in Geneva—"an intergovernmental think tank of developing countries"—in which 51 countries participate, including China, may increasingly become a place for the incubation of new G-77 policies and ideas. The South Center is treaty-based, funded by voluntary contributions, and builds on the work undertaken the South Commission from 1987 to 1990. Its program areas are: new paradigms for South-South and South-North relations; trade for development; innovation and access to knowledge; global governance for development; financing for development; environment for development; social issues and human rights.

The South Center's current director, Martin Kohr, previously worked for the Third World Network, a think tank NGO based in

Malaysia, Ghana and Uruguay. It will be interesting to see if Mr Kohr and his colleagues can bring some fresh thinking and strategies to the somewhat “carved-in-stone” positions of G-77 members.