

UPON ASSUMING THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE SUMMIT LEVEL OF THE G-15 HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 5 NOVEMBER 1996

I believe my colleagues and other Representatives would want me to express how greatly we appreciate the warmth that the people of Zimbabwe have shown towards us throughout our stay in this beautiful country, and how indebted we are for the generous hospitality which have been showered upon us by the Government of Zimbabwe since our arrival.

2. Let me also congratulate you, Mr. President, for the job well-done during your tenure as the Chairman of the Group for the period of 1995-1996. Your tireless efforts and commitment to moving the Group forward, especially in the context of South-South Cooperation, deserve our praise and commendation. You have also made tireless efforts to draw the attention of the developed countries, especially the G-7, to the problems of the developing world. We thank you for that.

3. Together, we have discussed the challenges posed by a world that is changing rapidly, be it in terms of politics, economics or technology. The flow of information made available via satellite and through the cyber space has indeed made the world a small place. Some say this is the era of a 'new global partnership for development'. Is this for real, or is it a mere subterfuge for domination by those with the necessary might and resources. The global partnership for development can only be played, and must be played, with due regard being paid to handicaps as much as to level playing fields. Pitting midgets against giants makes nonsense of level fields.

4. We may indeed be living in a world of bigger challenges and uneven opportunities. In fact, in the economic context, countries of the world are showing bigger gaps in term of income disparities as compared to a decade ago. Drastic and persistent efforts would be needed to arrest the slide among the developing countries.

5. We see a lot of double standards and selectivity at the international level, as the dictates of domestic politics overrule justice and humanitarianism in international affairs. At the same time, we also find division and fragmentation among the developing countries.

6. However, we should not despair because the potentials exist for us in the developing world to exert our rights and ensure a better future for ourselves. In the G-15 for example, the Committee on Investment, Trade and Technology (CITT) is the platform for economic cooperation among us in the field of investment and trade exchanges as well as technology sharing. Concrete programmes of action and better flow of information in these fields must be worked out and implemented efficiently.

7. We thank you for leading us through a very successful Summit. Your enthusiasm and boundless energy was infectious and has been an inspiration to us all. But above all, your wisdom and determination has given us great hopes for our Group. You have outlined the vision for the future of the G- 15.

8. Over the past two days, we have successfully addressed a pertinent issue facing us today. The issues that I am talking about is the current international trading system and how the developing countries can promote trade among them. Indeed, we have overcome our first hurdle by agreeing to work closely as a group, in exercising the rights of the developing countries in promoting our trade and development interests and in ensuring that these are incorporated into the future international trade agenda during the Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Singapore next month. The task ahead will be in the hands of our Economic Ministers to work out a mechanism for an effective submission to WTO, in particular, on the complete implementation of the Uruguay Round. We should heed the Midrand Declaration of UNCTAD IX for 'Solidarity in action' as a guide for our cooperation on this issue.

9. Let me join you, Mr. President, in the call to close our ranks and rededicate ourselves to the cause of the developing countries. The G-15 can be relevant if we want it to be. The G-15 can provide the leadership role if we commit ourselves to that purpose. We have a lot to do. The challenges are getting bigger and the time for us to act is getting shorter and shorter. But act we must.

10. Finally, Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you and all the Heads of State and Government of the G-15, and other delegates, to come to Kuala Lumpur in 1997 for the Seventh Summit meeting of the G-15. We hope that all of you could come. It would indeed be a great honour for Malaysia if you do and I am sure it would be good for the G-15.