



Statement

By

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**For the United Nations Day
For
South-South Cooperation**

on

**“Celebrating the Global South: Diversity and
Creativity”**

**Trusteeship Council
United Nations Headquarters, NY
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Ambassador Hannesson
Dear Colleague Kermal Dervis
Chairman of Group of 77 and China, Ambassador Stafford Neil
Director of the South-South Unit, Yiping Zhou
Colleagues from the UN System
Distinguished guests

It is a great honor to speak at this second annual celebration of the United Nations Day for South –South cooperation.

South-South cooperation is changing the landscape of international relations. Historically, developing countries tended to look to the North for trade, investment and other development opportunities. In the last decades, however, it has become clear that increased interaction among the countries of the South can bring immense economic and social benefits. Part of the reason for this is the development of excellence in many fields within the South. Many developing countries have become major economic players in the world, emerging as important markets, investors and providers of technical assistance and financial aid to fellow developing countries. Be it in health, education, the arts, agriculture or modern technology, many developing countries have acquired capacities that rival those of the developed world. In many cases, such knowledge, expertise and technology is more appropriate to the needs of other developing countries, as their socio-economic conditions are comparable. It is also more affordable. As a result, many developing countries are increasingly looking southwards to advance their development objectives.

The growing importance of South-South cooperation has been matched by action on the international stage. This year has been particularly successful in advancing the agenda of south-south cooperation. Its significance in development has been highlighted by the last Session of the High Level Committee on South-South Cooperation; the Second South Summit in Qatar; the Secretary General's report on the state of South-South cooperation; the G8 Summit in Gleneagles and the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit. In all these forums, the underlying message is that while south-south cooperation has become an important dimension of the development of many countries, untapped opportunities remain vast and wide-ranging. The challenge is putting in place the necessary policy and institutional frameworks, as well infrastructure, to exploit these opportunities to the full.

Developing countries have a broad range of areas to act on, from investment and infrastructure to the sharing of technological advances and best practices in development. In some cases, the best lessons in tackling a development challenges can only be learnt from other developing countries. This has been the case, for example, with regard to HIV/AIDS. By sharing experiences with the more successful ones among them, many developing countries are beginning to turn the corner in their fight against HIV/AIDS. Hundreds of thousands of lives

have been saved through the provision of generic drugs at affordable prices by fellow developing countries. With greater focus and the necessary facilitation, similar achievements can be made in the areas of food security, environment and health where developing countries share many characteristics.

South-South cooperation is particularly important in the area of trade, which is recognized as the engine of economic growth. Trade between developing countries continues to increase rapidly, with more than 40 per cent of developing-country exports now going to other developing countries. Such contacts and commerce have brought considerable benefits, and continue to prove useful in promoting growth and development in some of the world's poorest countries. In this connection, we highly commend the declarations at the Hong Kong trade talks by developing countries like Brazil, China and India to grant quota-free and duty-free access to the products of the Least Developed Countries. This should expand the trading opportunities of these most vulnerable countries and contribute to poverty reduction. We urge other developing countries that have not yet done so to make similar offers.

South-South cooperation is of particular interest to Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, as it greatly expands the development opportunities of these vulnerable countries, which face more daunting challenges than the other developing countries. Their universally-recognized structural, economic, social, environmental and institutional vulnerability make these countries the most deserving in the renewed effort to expand South-South Cooperation. The importance of south-south cooperation to these countries is recognized in their respective plans of action – the Brussels Programme for LDCs, the Almaty Programme for Landlocked Countries and the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States.

For the 31 Landlocked Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, South-South cooperation is not an option but a must. Disadvantaged by geography, these countries have to rely on their neighbours for access to the sea for their imports and exports. Extending national treatment to the transit traffic of these countries in terms of charges, customs and administrative procedures is an important aspect of south-south cooperation.

It is true that we have made considerable progress in promoting South – South cooperation. Political cohesion within the developing world in the last decades has contributed to placing development at the centre of international relations. However, I believe that the potential of South-South cooperation is still not fully exploited. As the General Assembly Resolution on South-South Cooperation states, developing countries have the primary responsibility for implementing South-South cooperation, but there is a need for the international community to support this process through the provision of financial and technical support.

In keeping with today's theme, *Celebrating the Global South: Diversity and Creativity*, I wish to highlight the rich cultural heritage of the south as an area of great potential for south-south cooperation that remains underexploited largely because we have not fully recognized its commercial aspects. From music to artifacts, traditional cuisines to health remedies, these have largely been treated as forms of cultural identity and fulfillment, rather than commercial products. However, through appropriate research, presentation and marketing, they can play an important role in generating income and reducing poverty especially among rural communities. Moreover, the exchange of such cultural products can be a major force in promoting understanding and solidarity among the developing countries, which is vital for deepening south-south cooperation.

It is important to tie the South-South agenda with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals which are, first and foremost, an internationally agreed package for the poor. We shouldn't pursue south-south cooperation for its own sake, but rather, as a mechanism for ensuring a better quality of life for the world's poor by making progress on the MDGs. As I have stated before, the Millennium Development Goals cannot be met without focusing on these groups of vulnerable countries. Like North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation should keep the weakest segment of the international community at the centre of this important partnership in the fight against poverty.

Given their presence on the ground throughout the developing world, the UN agencies, programmes and funds have a crucial role to play in promoting South-South cooperation. They are an important catalyst and facilitator in sharing of experiences, technical expertise and other forms of exchange among developing countries. In this regard, I commend the efforts of UNDP's Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in advancing the South-South agenda, especially within the UN System.