

Tribute by H.E. Benjamin Mkapa
Chair of the Board of the South Centre

Gamani Corea's role at the South Centre

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome your presence here today to this Tribute Seminar in Honour of a great representative, spokesman and leader of the South.

Like everyone else here, we at the South Centre were deeply saddened with the news about the passing away of Dr. Gamani Corea on 3 November.

Dr. Corea, a Sri Lankan, was a statesman and one of the most eminent economists of the developing and developed world. He had been the Governor of the Central Bank and Secretary of the Department of Planning of Sri Lanka as well as a distinguished diplomat for his country. He is best known as the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in 1974-84, in which capacity he led the multilateral efforts to strengthen the position of developing countries in various areas, including in commodities and other areas of trade and development, and in the efforts in establishing a new international economic order.

He was a great contributor to the cause of the South and to South-South cooperation having been instrumental in the establishment of the Group of 77 and UNCTAD.

We are pleased and honoured that Dr. Corea was also a major leader in the establishment and development of the South Centre. He was one of the twenty nine members of the **South Commission** which functioned from 1987 to 1990 under leadership of President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who was the Chair of the Commission and of the current Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who was the Commission's Secretary General.

He provided immense intellectual and personal support to His Excellency Julius Nyerere. The Commission led to the report entitled "Challenges of the South" released in 1990 and which recognized the need for greater cooperation between countries of the South.

Dr. Gamani Corea remained closely associated with the South Centre from its inception in 1991 and for being one of the "founding fathers" of the Centre by providing it with policy and substantive guidance to its work, thus assisting Mwalimu Julius Nyerere to gradually build the Centre into an institution with a global rename and standing and making possible its transformation into an intergovernmental organization of the developing countries for promoting and safeguarding their interests.

Gamani played a direct role in the work of the South Centre, including by the writing of some of its important documents, on such issues as environment and development, commodities, the NAM agenda, the reform of the United Nations system, South-South Trade, and external debt. He chaired the NAM ad Hoc Expert Group on External Debt, organized and served by the Centre for NAM. He also made an important contribution in the establishment of the HIPC (highly indebted poor countries) initiative.

He became later a member of the Board of the South Centre in 1995 when the Centre was transformed into an intergovernmental organization. He was appointed a member of

the first South Centre Board which was chaired by President Nyerere and remained in the Board until 2002, when he was appointed the Chair of the Board, a position he undertook until 2003 when he retired for health reasons. He was also Chairman of the South Centre's Policy and Research Committee from 1998 to 2001. Dr. Corea played a leadership role in directing and supervising the work of the South Centre in the various capacities through the years.

Among his responsibilities, he also chaired the South Centre's Group of Experts on Financing for Development (2001), and prepared a paper which was submitted to the Group of 77 to assist it in its participation in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Financing for Development. He has chaired the NAM Ad Hoc Advisory Group of Experts on Debt (1993-1994) and the NAM Ad Hoc Panel of Economists (1997-1998), submitting its report to the XII Non-Aligned Movement Summit held in 1998 in Durban, South Africa.

We, at the South Centre, were especially grateful to Gamani Corea for his strong and sustained moral and political support to the Centre during the difficult period that it traversed following the passing away of Chairman Nyerere. His commitment, leadership and policy contribution were extremely valuable to our organization and to the people of the South. The remarkable career and trajectory of Gamani Corea place him among those few towering personalities and intellects which have ably led the South and provided it with its own identity in the global arena, which is a historical and substantive achievement.

He spoke always with passion about the cause of the developing world and of the South Centre.

With his passing away, the developing countries have lost a great champion and the world has lost a tireless leader in fostering international cooperation. He is leaving behind a rich



South Unity, South Progress.

and valuable legacy that will continue to be of benefit for the people of the South and the world for many years to come.

We celebrate today, the contributions of a man who advanced the developments goals and all round capacity building of the South.

Thank you.