

Draft of 5 March 2015

**Statement delivered by
H.E. Amb. Cecilia B. Rebong
Permanent Representative of the Philippines
and Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China
on the Occasion of the forum on
“Multilateral Cooperation in a World of Crisis”
Palais des Nations Room XIII
9 March 2015, 4-6 p.m.**

H.E. Erkki Tuomioja, Foreign Minister of Finland,
H.E. Benjamin Mkapa, Chairman of the Board of South Centre, and former
President of Tanzania,
Fellow panelists,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

1. The development discourse finds itself at a crucial juncture in its history. It is my fervent hope that 15 years from now, the year 2015 will be regarded by our successors as the moment when the South and the North, the developing and the developed countries, came together and overcame the gulf that separated them from their mutual quest to achieve genuine prosperity for all of humanity.
2. The agreements that we are going to negotiate throughout the course of the year and early next year will no doubt determine whether we succeed in embracing the future by overcoming the past. Next week, the World Conference in Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in Sendai, Japan. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development will be held in Addis Ababa in July; in September the Post 2015 Development Agenda will be articulated in New York; in December the UNFCCC COP 21 will be held in Paris and the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference will be held in Nairobi. In March 2016 some of us will find ourselves in Lima, Peru, charting further the course of development at the Fourteenth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the first UNCTAD Conference after the Post 2015 Development Goals are agreed upon, giving this session all the more importance. The opportunities for a reinvigorated multilateralism in favor of development are therefore manifold.
3. Yet the world - and multilateralism - is at a crossroads. Time and again, confrontation has prevented progress despite the very obvious need to move beyond the status quo. One clear manifestation is that despite the obvious need, steps to correct the underlying causes of the global economic and financial crisis have been, at best, disappointing.

4. It has not helped that in various fora, some states have taken approaches that could be interpreted as trying to roll back agreements and commitments made long ago.
5. It is therefore the moral and practical imperative of responsible and pragmatic countries on both sides of the North-South divide to seek new ways of doing things. We need to put the common interest of humanity at the forefront, but in a way that addresses historical wrongs and takes into account the need for justice in global economic relations. Addressing the future of the human race cannot be at the expense of the poorest and the most marginalized. And addressing the survival of humanity cannot be achieved by preserving the comfort and prerogatives of the rich, the comfortable, and the powerful.
6. This is why the Group of 77 and China is a firm believer and supporter of multilateralism. Multilateral cooperation is the best way to overcome the multitude of challenges that lie before us while addressing the individual needs and circumstances of all peoples. Despite our recent record, true multilateralism lies not in finding the least-worst solution, but in the best possible solution for all stakeholders.
7. The Group of 77 and China will therefore continue to play, as it always has, a constructive role in the upcoming processes and will continue to be the voice of justice and equity in global economic relations.
8. Our efforts begin at the systemic level, and the need to address both the obsolescence of the global economic system as well as the resulting crisis in legitimacy that recent events provoked. Indeed, at a time when the shortcomings and failures of the global economic system have been concretely demonstrated at great cost, we can no longer ignore the need to reform global economic governance.
9. These reforms, however, will not deliver results if the need for adequate policy space is not addressed. In addition, the central role of the United Nations in global economic governance cannot be ignored. When many of our partners tend to marginalize the UN and stifle discussion in New York and Geneva on crucial economic and development issues, we should not forget the strong mandates of the UN on development and economic issues inscribed and enshrined in the UN Charter.
10. At the next level, we place a special emphasis on giving due attention to facilitating the development of capacities through economic transformation. Developing countries are not looking for charity. We are looking to a future in which we engage fairly and meaningfully in the global economy. This requires advancing the frontiers of science and technology and transferring this same technology. It necessitates generating the required financing for development to stimulate and sustain productive economic activity. Primarily though there is the

basic need of building, maintaining, and expanding the infrastructure required for development and enabling the evolution towards sustainable growth with equity.

11. Trade and investment are engines for development. However in order for trade to flourish and serve as an engine for growth, there must be a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory, and equitable multilateral trading system. This must be one of the deliverables of the Third International Conference on FfD in July 2015. Furthermore, the issue of agricultural subsidies in trade is an important one to developing countries and must be given serious consideration in Addis Ababa. In terms of investments, these indeed will help put developing countries on the road to prosperity, an issue however is that of Investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms, which need further review given the costs of litigation to the host countries when they arise and more often than not the countries that are involved in these disputes are from the developing world.
12. Development gains once achieved must be sustained. Resilience is therefore an essential aspect of development. There must be resilience to economic shocks, armed conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation. Unfortunately, we have avoided engaging directly on these important inter-linkages, partly as a result of the confidence deficit in multilateralism.
13. I now refer to the most pressing existential threat to humanity; climate change. As the international community prepares for the Paris Conference in December 2015, it is imperative to inject a human right-approach to the discussion. Climate change has adverse effects on the full enjoyment of human rights of people especially those in vulnerable countries.
14. We need a meaningful exchange between climate change and human rights experts in order to increase the understanding of how human rights obligations inform better climate action and build our collective capacity to deliver responses to climate change. We continue to witness how climate change affects fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and the people's right to development due to resource constraints and technological limitations. Climate finance for developing countries – an obligation of developed nations under the Convention – must be new and additional, adequate, accessible, predictable and transparent. Furthermore this financial support must be measurable and verifiable.
15. In terms of the all-encompassing Post 2015 development agenda, we recognize that in order to achieve the ambitious goals that are to be set in September, political will, policy space, and productive capacity are essential elements. Political will is needed to pursue modes of development based on country ownership and empowered with sufficient policy space to enable individual countries to use appropriate policy instruments to address economic fundamentals. In turn, building productive capacities is essential in ensuring that developing countries have the means to participate meaningfully in the global economy. Ultimately the means required to accomplish the post-2015

development agenda need to be predictable, sustainable, and adequate. We appreciate that in order to achieve the ambitious goals that we are going to set the constructive engagement of all partners in development is required. This brings me back to my original point about overcoming the status quo.

16. A refrain often heard is that we cannot afford to continue with business as usual; that we have to find new ways of doing things. But there has been little substantive debate on what this actually means, especially if we aim to explicitly overcome the difficulties in multilateralism. Simply, this means that we have to deal with each other in new and better ways. First, we must recognize that multilateralism has its limitations, but that these are more than outweighed by its advantages. We must therefore engage with more honesty, bearing in mind that any deal at the end of the day will have to be a compromise and that an ideal solution for all is unrealistic. Fundamentally this means having the will to listen to each other in order to identify where agreement really is possible, even on issues that we would rather not discuss or, perhaps, discuss only in forums where we feel we have the advantage. In blunt terms, this means discussing even the most difficult and controversial issues here in the United Nations.
17. Second, to overcome the crisis in multilateralism we must overcome the legitimacy crisis. This again requires us to discuss key issues in the most universal forum in existence and identify possible solutions, even if ultimately the negotiations on specifics are to take place outside of the United Nations.
18. Third, overcoming the challenges facing multilateralism requires a leap of faith - in the goodwill of all partners, and in the commitment of all to reach a good deal through ethical means. I would argue that maintaining sanity in multilateralism requires equal doses of stamina and idealism. I am confident that the stakes are too high, and the cost of failure too dear, for us to do anything less than our best to strive for the future that we want and, hopefully, deserve.