



Excerpt from the Speech by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere at the Opening Ceremony of the Second Meeting of the Council of Representatives of the South Centre in New York

21st September 1998

"During the next two days the Council will be exploring in detail the work accomplished and the experience gained during the last three years, and it will chart the future course of the Centre. At this opening session, and in the presence of our distinguished leaders from the South, I would like to stress the political and practical significance of the South Centre.

Today, we in the South live and operate in an external economic and political environment which profoundly affects and limits our situation and our choices and prospects. This international and economic and social environment is not "God given". It is "man-made", and those who design it and run it happen to be the powerful from the North.

We from the South have little say, if any, regarding this external setting, its rules and the application of these rules. We have very little, if any, influence on its operation and its management. Our position has not been helped by the pronounced weakening of the United Nations role and voice in the economic sphere, and the general erosion of democracy in international relations and global governance. As the world is being more and more globalized, its governance at the international level is becoming increasingly authoritarian and/or simply increasingly chaotic.

That is why this otherwise small event of launching the Second Meeting of the Council of Representatives of the South Centre at the UN Headquarters and in the presence of our distinguished guests assumes special significance. It symbolizes the need for the South to pool its resources and to work collectively for a just, equitable and democratic world system. This Meeting highlights the importance of technical preparedness and serious thinking in order to underpin the South's positions and actions.

If we in the developing countries are to shape our own destiny, and participate fully in shaping the future and the nature of the world in which we live, we have to have an effective voice. But we will not have that effective voice if we do not work together, at least in some areas of vital concern to all of us. Together we can reduce our separate weaknesses. Acting together we can become stronger; we can gain at least some more influence in the world.

It was at the NAM Summit in Belgrade in 1989 when the late Rajiv Gandhi of India said, "If the South wants to count, the South must stand up and be counted". The Group of 15 was formed at that Summit.

Institutional support is essential in this undertaking. The countries of the North know this very well. They deploy massive institutional resources in order to arrive at their

common positions. I am told, for example, that the Secretariat of the OECD has a 2,000 member staff and a budget of 330 million dollars per year. Nobody expects that we in the South should or could match that kind of research capacity building.

But we need some kind of professional and technical back-up of our own, albeit modest. For without it we in the South remain at the level of generalities and normative statements. In spite of their intrinsic value, such statements usually have little impact, especially in a political atmosphere markedly cynical towards pleas for equity, justice and democracy. The international atmosphere is responsive primarily to sheer power, economic, or military. It can be influenced by the power of knowledge, organization and management. This we can try to achieve.

Just because of their separate individual weakness in the world arena, the countries of the South must work together and promote their cause together. For this reason, they require institutional and intellectual support, and the South Centre has been established in partial response to that need. The Centre's work so far has been modest, but it has -- I believe -- already demonstrated both the usefulness of, and the demand for, such institutional support at the global level.

On the basis of what it has done so far, I am confident that the Centre will continue to grow stronger and still more useful as an intellectually autonomous entity and the nucleus of a global think-network of institutions and individuals committed to the cause of the South and that of development of its people.

But I need to stress that while the Centre will continue to provide a degree of support to governments of the South in their collective endeavours in the world arena, the Centre is not meant to be, nor is it equipped to be, a substitute for a South Secretariat. The South Centre does not obviate the need for there to be a genuine full-time secretariat to back up the work of the Group of 77 and China, and of another to back up the Non-Aligned Movement.

It is my hope that the usefulness of the South Centre and its potential for greater work will give rise to more determined efforts of the South to organize itself for greater effectiveness at the global level."