

Opening speech by Ambassador Mario Arvelo as G77 Chair for 2009

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude and that of the Government of President Leonel Fernández to the Group of Countries of Latin American and Caribbean for their trust when proposing my name as Chair of the Group of 77 for 2009. I would also wish to thank all the G77 Members for confirming this proposal from GRULAC.

I recognize the support received from the outgoing Chair, Pakistani Ambassador Tasnim Aslam and her deputy Mr. Aamir Khawaja. I am pleased to rely on the cooperation of Mr. Ibrahim Abu Atileh, Deputy Permanent Representative of Jordan, as new G77 Vice-Chair.

Dear colleagues, 44 years ago in Geneva, the delegates of 77 developing countries offered a joint declaration at the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Our countries agreed to sustain and consolidate the unity of tactics and strategy in negotiations within the international system. Our Governments affirmed, correctly, that such unity of principles and actions is essential to promote international cooperation, in order to boost development and eradicate poverty.

Three years later, the first ministerial meeting of the G77 in Algiers confirmed the need for a global strategy based on continuous coordination aimed at reaching firm and joint positions. The Caracas Declaration, on the 25th anniversary of the G77, renewed the call for unity, and emphasized thematic coordination for developing countries to submit our shared positions with one voice. Our governments have reiterated these fundamental principles of unity and cooperation in the subsequent Ministerial meetings of the G77.

Dear colleagues, developing countries indeed have a common vision on the challenges we have mandated FAO, IFAD, and WFP to face.

Consequently, the main goal of my tenure as Chair will be to bring efforts together through an ever more effective coordination. In order to reach these objectives, we must strengthen our communication mechanisms, as well as keep open channels with other countries. Our numbers —130 members around the world and 81 representatives in Rome— is invaluable. Unity is our foremost strength.

Dear colleagues, we know that 2009 is a crucial year. Tomorrow we enter the final stage of the process for reforming and strengthening FAO. Throughout the year all Technical Committees will meet, and the November Conference will approve the Program of Work and Budget for 2010-11. We will continue to optimize WFP's Strategic Plan. In less than a month we will have elected a new IFAD President. In the meantime, the number of hungry people grows to a billion, and almost all of them live within our borders.

The magnitude of the work ahead for the year will force us to focus our efforts and provide mutual support to each other. My tenure, as well as the preceding ones, is at the service of all in general and of everyone in particular to continue working enthusiastically in support of our common interests.

Thank you very much.