

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Trade and Development Board, Twenty-eighth  
Special session**

**Geneva, 17 June 2014**

**Opening Plenary**

**Speaker: Qatar**

**Tuesday, 17 June 2014**

*Not checked against delivery \**

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**Trade and Development Board, Twenty-eighth special session  
Fiftieth Anniversary of UNCTAD  
17 June 2014**

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Hamad bin Abdelaziz Al-Kawari  
Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage  
President of UNCTAD XIII**

Mr. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General  
Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary General of UNCTAD  
Mr. Triyono Wibowo, President of the Trade and Development Board  
Ms. Simonetta Sommaruga, Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me first to thank the honorable Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his wise choice of having appointed Dr. Kituyi to head UNCTAD, an institution we truly believe in, as was demonstrated by Qatar hosting the thirteenth conference in 2012 and I had the honor and privilege to serve as its President.

In that capacity I am more than pleased to be with you today as we open this special event celebrating UNCTAD's 50th anniversary. Events such as this provide us an opportunity to reflect on past accomplishments. More importantly, they should also serve as occasions to stimulate our thinking about the future. In that way, inspired by the past, informed by the present, and motivated by the challenges of the future, we can truly make a difference.

As we undertake our deliberations here today, I would like address one question that Dr. Kituyi raised before the developing country ambassadors in Geneva. That question is perhaps the fundamental one. It is the definitional question itself: "who are we?"

He asked the question in the context of who the Group of 77 has become. I think it is also a fitting question for us to ask as a global community. Who are we as a global community? Have we learned from the past - have we transcended our history of conflict and confrontation? Have we evolved and become more compassionate? Have we become a global community of better people?

I believe that in some ways we have. Emerging from the fires of conflict, the United Nations was established with the fundamental objective of preserving humanity from extinction. Arising from the flames of the most destruct war in history, humanity for the first time possessed the power to render itself extinct. The United Nations was therefore created for a very basic reason: existence.

Yet the United Nations flourished because it transcended this very basic objective. The United Nations also became an instrument for a better world. Its aspirations were, and are, noble. One objective particularly stands out: "...to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

This objective is nothing less than a call for justice; it is a call for a global system that affords the opportunity for all people to realize their full human potential. It is nothing less than a repudiation of the exploitation of the past, and embracing the empowerment of the future.

It was to accomplish these aims that UNCTAD was created. For almost twenty years, the United Nations had existed. Over those two decades, an increasing number of the world's population shed the bonds of colonialism as they attained their independence. With this expansion in the community of nations came a stronger voice for what was to become the community of developing nations. And from this voice sprang the cry to reform the global economic system to ensure that it would truly benefit all of humanity.

This call led to Geneva and to the two landmark events that we developing countries celebrate this year: the creation of UNCTAD, and the establishment of the Group of 77. These two institutions exist for one simple but eminently difficult objective: to make the global economic system work for all of humanity.

This is captured in UNCTAD's slogan today: "Prosperity for all." This is a short statement, but a deep one. Prosperity leads to empowerment. Empowerment leads to opportunity. Opportunity leads to advancement. And this leads to even greater prosperity, which serves to reinforce the virtuous circle.

Central in UNCTAD's work is harnessing trade as an engine and enabler of development. In this regard, UNCTAD has always recognized the multifaceted nature and role of development and consequently, the work of UNCTAD has been holistic and focused on harnessing trade as an engine for development. UNCTAD has therefore always been a development, and not a trade, organization.

As we celebrate this year, we must remember this important reality. We must keep focused on this core value. Some have tried to shift the balance towards making UNCTAD a trade organization. Indeed perhaps part of the identity crisis of UNCTAD of the last few years has been because of this attempted shift. And this is perhaps also why there has been a sometimes unhealthy tension in its relationship with the World Trade Organization.

The key to resolving this unnecessary friction is by going back to the basics and asking who we are. First, as an international community, we must ask if we are now mature as humanity to truly dedicate ourselves to making the world a better place. Second, we must reflect on who are we as UNCTAD.

I believe that the answer to the first question is that yes, we have progressed but more remains to be done to realize the selfless society we aspire for. Many of us, and I am proud of my nation in this regard, have made great strides in becoming more prosperous. And as we have progressed, we have made every effort to share our blessings with others. Yet the global system is far too focused on preserving existing prerogatives.

We see this in the numerous international conferences and summits on development in recent years, where developing countries have to continuously struggle not to advance the global development agenda, but simply to encourage some countries to deliver on commitments that were made long ago. The articulation of the post-2015 development agenda is an excellent opportunity to launch a new wave of change. I have seen too much to expect that 2015 will be a revolutionary event; but I have also seen enough to believe in the power of incremental progress. If we seize this opportunity to change mindsets, and to alter approaches, we can truly achieve great things.

Many of those great things can come from UNCTAD. This requires answering the question of who we are as UNCTAD. The answer is that UNCTAD remains an institution dedicated to fostering a better world through the establishment of an international economic system designed to give people a real chance at fulfilling their full human potential. But for UNCTAD to fully play its role, it must go back to basics and remember that it is a development and not a trade organization. In this way it will return to the path of its destiny.

I will close by recalling a theme I have often spoken about in UNCTAD: the role that UNCTAD can play in shaping the future. I continue to maintain that what the world needs now, more than ever, is a new culture of multilateral relations and a new culture of cooperation.

The State of Qatar hosted UNCTAD 13 and made every effort to overcome all the challenges to ensure a successful outcome, because we believe in the role UNCTAD can play in the executing its mission in service of our humanity .The State of Qatar took on the role of the presidency seriously and we made every effort to be present and available to express our support and views on all occasions.

The Geneva Dialogue, and a spirit of constructive and frank engagement in UNCTAD can also help to foster a new culture of diplomacy and multilateral relations, and this can perhaps be one of the major accomplishments this golden jubilee, and I hope that this is one the transformations that we will talk about in the coming minutes.

My final words is that we in Qatar consequent to our hosting UNCTAD thirteen remain committed to UNCTAD as an indispensable institution of the United Nations system that deserves our full support to play its rightful role in the broader global discourse on development in the future fifty years to come.

Thank you

