

Durban Declaration for the New Millennium

We, the Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries who have met in Durban, South Africa, on 2 and 3 September 1998:

At the dawn of the new millennium, aware of the symbolism of being on a shore where we get the first glimpse of the sun rising over the Indian Ocean, now pronounce ourselves as follows:

Our Movement embodies the aspirations, the hopes and the combined yearnings of the peoples of the South to live in peace and security.

We are the ones who have endured centuries of colonialism, oppression, aggression, exploitation and neglect. We have been the invisible people of the world. In recent times, spurred by our Movement and progressive forces, we see our rapid emergence from that condition. This despite vast obstacles deliberately placed in our way and new, totally unexpected, challenges facing humankind.

Indeed, our time has come.

In four and a half decades, the world has changed vastly from the days of the Bandung meeting. Yet the principles laid down by the founders of NAM remain valid, and the ideas, goals and vision articulated then, continue to guide our Movement.

The period has seen the break-up of the old international order based on superpower rivalry, and colonial domination. These were rooted in the North yet impacted globally.

We now stand on the threshold of a new era. An era that offers great opportunity yet poses special danger for the developing world.

The Non-Aligned Movement spread so widely and so representative of the majority – with such abundance in commodities and biophysical diversity – has a central role to play in regulating the advance of humanity. Tested over 43 years of experience, with a proud history of achievement and made wiser by our setbacks, the Movement is emerging as the power of the new millennium – striving to be open, democratic and a forward-looking group of nations.

The Cold War is over. The age that is at hand can, given the will and the focus, be a new age – the age of the emergent nations, the age of the South, the age of renewal and renaissance, the age of justified hope.

However, it is also a time where transnational phenomena and perils to sovereignty, independence, stability and economic development are prevalent dangers representing challenges that the Movement has to face and overcome.

This can be the age of the once downtrodden when the time for the South has come – as the old millennium bows to the new. The opportunities are there to grasp. The threats are there to contain.

We emerge from the XII Non-Aligned Movement meeting acutely aware of the real difficulties ahead, not the least those threats, old and new, facing humankind such as drugs, AIDS, transnational crime, famine, terrorism and environmental degradation. We see dramatic evidence in the world at large, and in the developed world in particular, of exaggerated ethnicity, of chauvinism and xenophobia. These evils are subtly replacing the more formal racism that exists.

We see powerful processes that continue to marginalise many countries of our Movement. We see the twin forces of globalisation and liberalisation having adverse social and economic consequences, which add to the burdens of everyday life in much of the South.

Whilst globalisation holds out the promise of prosperity, it brings with it severe challenges for the developing countries. This promise of prosperity has not touched the vast majority of the world's population, especially in the least developed countries. In this lies the seed of a dangerous new process of uneven development.

We must take up the challenge to fundamentally transform international relations, so as to eradicate aggression, racism, the use of force, unilateral coercive measures and unfair economic practices, foreign occupation and xenophobia in order to achieve a world of peace, justice and dignity for all.

This revolution in waiting can bring delivery to the destitute and diseased, justice to the oppressed, relief to impoverished debtors, equality to women, succour to children, an end to discrimination and foreign occupation – and a burgeoning and dignified partnership, as full equals, with the North.

Unity of purpose and strategy among the nations of the Movement is of critical importance. Globalisation can be a threat to newly acquired freedoms, unless the interests of the South are carefully protected and promoted.

We must guard against forms of globalisation which impose solutions that ignore the historical, cultural and psychological elements peculiar to national or local economies. Globalisation must not sweep all before it. It must not mean uniformity. Its impact must be channelled, not just by the large and powerful nations, but by the representatives of the majority of humankind.

Liberalisation must not provide a cover for the protectionist policies of the rich and powerful, securing their vital interests while the weak are beggared beyond description by being forced to "open up" to the world.

We must act positively to shape our future, advocating a new system of international relations that is both democratic and representative of all - particularly including developing countries - based on respect for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the sovereign equality of nations.

The creation of a multilateral rules-based system is fundamentally an advance, but to be successful it must carry the endorsement of and active participation by developing countries. If there is confidence in the system all parties will feel comfortable. That confidence flows from real involvement, and respect for the interests of all countries, large and small, rich or poor, weak or powerful. Developing economies must negotiate their specific needs within this framework.

South-South co-operation, is a major concern of this Summit. It is a central strategy for creating a new global environment and speeding up the eradication of poverty. The evolving international economic order offers a new, enhanced opportunity for greater co-operation, at different levels, among developing countries. We should resolutely incorporate regional economic affairs in our national agendas. And regional trade co-operation and economic integration should be an essential part of this. Such co-operation and integration should be fostered through our own structures.

South-South co-operation does not imply ignoring dialogue with the North. The world is interdependent, as never before. The security and prosperity of the North will disappear if there is endemic poverty and deprivation in the South and there are societies of the developed world which see, with growing unease, deepening inequality, refugee and alien distress, growing unemployment and social dislocation.

South-South solutions, if they are to be successful, require effective involvement of Governments and their citizens as partners in development.

Our Movement should reaffirm its philosophy of development assistance that moves beyond relations bound by charity and subservient dependency. Client states benefit only the master states. We must address the financing of development, capital flows and their stabilisation, resource mobilisation and trade restrictions faced by developing countries. It is imperative that we secure swift action on debt relief.

To achieve these objectives we have to ensure the democratisation of international institutions, with effective representation for the formerly excluded in the top councils of the world. The wind of democratic change must blow in the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, the World Bank, the IMF and all other international and regional organisations in order to meet the needs of the world's majority.

Our Movement has played a heroic role in the struggle against colonialism, foreign occupation, racism and exploitation, and in support of self-determination. We need to ensure our contribution to a new, just world order free from unilateral coercive measures, free from weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, a world based on tolerance and genuine co-existence, a world based on respect for the United Nations Charter and the full observance of its principles and purposes.

As we mark the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, nothing should be used as a convenient mask to hide genocide, gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity, nor should human rights be used as a political instrument for interference in internal affairs. We must seek a world order of compassion for the weak, of human rights and development for all.

We recognise that human rights and democracy do not, of themselves, automatically bring a better world. They require an environment of peace and development, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Socio-economic rights, including the right to development, are inextricably part of real human rights.

We must act to achieve this state of affairs as part of the public trust that we owe our people. We must do this in a united, clear-headed way.

Finally, it is poverty that, more than any other of the devastating threats facing the world, must be ended. Eradicating poverty is a practical possibility, and an economic imperative for global well being. Looking at the hugely different worlds of Bandung and Durban it is gratifying to note that the numbers of people escaping the net of poverty have improved dramatically. This must spur us on to get rid of poverty in the 21st century. Let this be the challenge and let the spirit of Durban be our determination to succeed.

Durban must mark the turning point where the formerly dispossessed, the majority, enter into their inheritance.