**Secretary-General’s remarks at Handover Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China [as delivered]**

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Allow me first of all to join my voice to the expression of total solidarity with the people, the Government and the President of Kenya in total condemnation of the horrible terrorist act that we have just heard about.

But simultaneously it is for me a great pleasure to join you today as we embark on another critical year of work at the United Nations.

I congratulate the State of Palestine as it assumes the Presidency of the Group of 77 and China for 2019. I welcome Your Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas and thank you for joining us today, as a clear demonstration of the strong commitment of the State of Palestine to an effective Presidency of the Group of 77 and China.

And I warmly thank the Egyptian Presidency for your hard work and expert guidance of the G77 and China throughout 2018. Egypt, as a founding member of the G77 and a pillar of the Non-Aligned Movement, has fulfilled high expectations. It is a pleasure to be joined by Your Excellency Minister Shoukry. Allow me to express my personal gratitude to Ambassador Edrees for what was exemplary cooperation during this year.

The Group of 77 and China has demonstrated strong leadership throughout 2018 and proved once again to be a central force in demonstrating that multilateralism is the only way to address our shared challenges.

Thank you for your exemplary engagement and commitment across the agenda of the United Nations.

And thank you for the excellent cooperation between the Group of 77 and the United Nations Secretariat, including with my own office.

Despite many obstacles and challenges, ranging from climate change to rising inequality and fast changing and new technologies, we have made important progress over the past twelve months. Under the Egyptian presidency, the Group of 77 and China have been at the heart of that progress.

On climate change, the Group’s consistent and exemplary stance helped to get a positive result at COP24 in Katowice. Your decisive contribution and again Egypt’s leadership, that I could witness myself - your decisive contribution, enabled us to find common ground so that governments could reach agreement on the Work Programme to implement the Paris agreement.

Egypt’s leadership and advocacy on finance for developing countries to meet their climate action commitments were highly effective.

The Group of 77 and China continued to make sure that resilience and adaptation remain high on the global climate agenda. And some of your largest economies are stepping in as leaders of climate action, filling the space left by others and reaping the rewards of a clean, green energy future.

G77 countries also played a positive role in the negotiations that led to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Your constructive proposals, based on your various experiences as countries of origin and transit and destination, were instrumental in achieving a truly comprehensive agreement that deals with migration in all its dimensions.

With this new holistic framework, we now have an excellent opportunity to strengthen international cooperation to address the challenges and maximize the benefits of migration.

In 2018, the strong support of the Group of 77 and China was instrumental in securing consensus among Member States on an ambitious reform agenda and on the different proposals that it contained.

Your commitment will remain essential as we continue together – Secretariat, United Nations System and Member States – on the most significant change process in the history of the UN. We have our marching orders from Member States and will work hard in 2019 to implement those agreements.

Your support has been critical to the reform of the Development System, even if it was not possible to achieve the financial structure we wanted. In any case, the reform reflects many of your priorities: the eradication of poverty as an overriding objective; national ownership of programmes; and the positioning of development at the centre of UN activities.

The new Resident Coordinator system and the new generation of Country Teams are now in place, and I am confident that they will deliver more effective support on the ground for Member States and for the people we serve.

You have also continued to demonstrate your strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with nearly 30 countries conducting Voluntary National Reviews of implementation in 2018. Members of the G77 initiated important resolutions on development during the General Assembly and in other fora.

You help to keep the United Nations focused on the issues that count for the most vulnerable, and we owe you a debt of gratitude for your extremely constructive role.

The G77 also played a critical role in advancing our reform of the peace and security pillar and the management of the Secretariat.

We have met the first of our milestones: on 1st January, we launched four new departments that will strengthen our peace and security architecture and operational support.

Thanks in large part to your efforts, a new management paradigm is taking hold with an emphasis on transparency, accountability and improved implementation of mandates. We will continue to strive for gender parity and for regional diversity at all levels, and there is a long way to go in both of these areas.

These first steps are laying the foundations to achieve our goal of a more effective and efficient United Nations.

It is an ambitious agenda and we have a long road ahead.

 Your support will continue to be crucial every step of the way.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with the G77 and China in 2019 under the historic leadership of the State of Palestine.

Palestine and its citizens have first-hand experience of some of the most challenging and dramatic global issues we face. You are well-placed to take up the chairmanship of this important group of countries.

2019 will be a critical year for our common efforts to end poverty, reduce inequalities, and transition to more inclusive and sustainable economies.

Climate action must be at the forefront, and G77 countries are on the front lines.

If we do not put policies and commitments in place to launch a decade of climate action by 2020, it will be too late to avoid catastrophic climate change with unforeseeable consequences. Many of the Group of 77 countries would be among the first and worst to suffer.

The Climate Summit in September will be an opportunity for Heads of State, the private sector and other stakeholders to come together to discuss the urgent action needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. I urge you to come with solutions and commitments to greater ambition.

Immediately following this meeting, Heads of State will also come together for the General Assembly’s first High-Level Political Forum since the 2030 Agenda’s agreement in 2015, as the President of the General Assembly just reminded us.

This is a critical moment to take stock of SDG implementation and consider whether we are on track to reach our shared goals. We must analyse successes and look at ways to secure the policies, the resources and the political engagement needed to transition to a new phase of action, partnerships and implementation.

The high-level dialogue on financing for development a few days later will provide some of the answers, since we are not doing enough in this area. This will be a key opportunity to scale up the quality and quantity of investment in sustainable development. There can be no backsliding; the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda must be implemented in full.

Similarly, the high-level meeting on universal health coverage and the high-level meeting to review progress made on the SAMOA pathway for Small Island Developing States will help lay foundations for progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly for people and countries at greatest risk of being left behind.

Before that, the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in March. This will be a moment to reflect on the contribution that many members of this group make to the development and prosperity of other developing countries, by sharing their knowledge and expertise and offering mutual support.

I would like to underline what was said by President Mahmoud Abbas, South-South cooperation is not to replace North-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is not for the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to be forgotten. Commitments made there must be fully implemented. South-South cooperation is a form to complement and to enhance the impact of North-South cooperation.

I anticipate that the G77 and China will have a central role in all these negotiations and processes, and I urge you to consider them in an integrated, coherent and unified way.

Last week, I informed Member States about the serious financial challenges facing our Organisation that - if left unchecked - will put the continued functioning of our operations at risk. We have the paradox of having today, troop contributing countries financing the UN when they are largely some of the countries with more difficult economic situations.

To address these, I will be making proposals to the General Assembly in the coming months, aimed at putting the United Nations on to a sound financial footing. I appeal for your support in addressing these challenges.

At the heart of our agenda for 2019 is a mission to address the most pressing needs of our world and its people, including the most vulnerable, with transparency and accountability.

Multilateralism continues to come under intense pressure from many sides, and we cannot take the advances we have made for granted. We must press on and keep up the momentum won over the past weeks and months.

In this period of transition and change, we count on the continued engagement and support of the Group of 77 and China.

Thank you for your leadership.