



GROUP OF FIFTEEN
The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries

**XII SUMMIT OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT OF THE GROUP OF FIFTEEN**

27-28 February 2004, Caracas, Venezuela

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Group of Fifteen, meeting in Caracas, Venezuela from 27 to 28 February 2004, for our Twelfth Summit Meeting under the theme “Energy and Development”, in the spirit of friendship, solidarity and cooperation, and taking cognizance of the importance of Dialogue among Civilizations, undertook an appraisal of the fundamental issues in the international arena and their impact on our countries and other developing countries. We gave special consideration to the crucial subject of energy and development and its role in the global economy in general and developing countries in particular.
2. We observe with concern the global economic situation and its negative impact on the efforts of developing economies towards sustained economic growth, and to address complex problems related to social and economic development. We note the downward trend in real terms in the prices of traditional commodities of interest to developing countries, and low levels of private and official capital flows to developing countries. In this regard, we emphasize the need to integrate the development dimension into international economic processes and to seek international policy options that would sustain and facilitate economic development of developing countries and call for a coordinated and collaborative approach to macroeconomic policy, particularly among the major economic actors.
3. We emphasize the importance of establishing a fair, equitable, predictable, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system to promote sustained economic growth and development of developing countries. The Doha Work Programme placed development at the core of the multilateral trading system. We took note with concern that the negotiations so far have not met the expectations of our member countries and other developing countries. We stress the need to maintain the multilateral nature of the WTO. We invite the developed countries, in particular, to demonstrate the required political will in order to fulfil the commitments they undertook in Doha, particularly that development will be at the forefront of multilateral trade negotiations.
4. We reiterate that meaningful results in the crucial development components are required for the accomplishment of the Doha Work Programme. Agriculture lies at the center of the current negotiations. The objectives established in the Doha mandate must be preserved. Negotiations should aim at substantial improvements in market access, reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies, and substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support. Special and differential treatment for developing countries shall be an integral part of all elements of the negotiation and shall take fully into account developmental needs, including in particular food security and rural development. We underscore the need for substantive improvements in market access for goods and services of export interest to developing countries. We particularly underscore the need for meaningful access for developing countries in services sectors in which they have comparative advantage. We therefore remain deeply concerned by the use of non-trade barriers, and disguised protectionist measures that limit market access opportunities for developing countries,

including the misuse of trade remedies and environmental standards for trade purposes on whatever grounds. We also stress the need to make Special and Differential provisions in favour of developing countries in WTO agreements precise, effective, and operational. We reiterate our commitment to the universal membership of the WTO and the necessity of ensuring a transparent, non-discriminatory, streamlined and accelerated accession process for developing countries. The legitimate concerns of developing countries deriving from the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements are an integral part of the multilateral negotiations and merit special attention.

5. We acknowledge the important role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in providing policy analysis, recommendations, consensus building and technical assistance. We underline the need for the Eleventh Session of the UNCTAD (UNCTAD XI), to be held from 13 to 18 June 2004 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to foster convergences with a view to creating confidence and ensuring that the full potential of the multilateral trading system for development is fulfilled. We emphasize the importance of the successful conclusion of UNCTAD XI and undertake to sustain our active participation in the preparatory processes leading to the Conference. We acknowledge the need for UNCTAD, in cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations, to continue to implement full and effective technical assistance and capacity building programmes that take into account the real needs of developing countries.

6. We recognize that the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) is a very valuable instrument for South-South cooperation and trade whose potential has not been completely realized. In that context, we welcome the decision of the GSTP Committee of Participants to explore alternatives for revitalizing the system. We believe that UNCTAD XI will be a timely opportunity to intensify and make more vigorous our trade cooperation in the GSTP, including possibly, through the launching of a new round of negotiations.

7. We reiterate that the specific needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and of small economies should be fully addressed by the international community and the multilateral trading system.

8. We emphasize the need for the fulfilment of the commitment of all members of the international community to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and outcomes of the major United Nations conferences, in the economic, social and related fields, in particular the International Conference on Financing for Development that was held in Monterrey, as well as the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg. We call for new sources of finance towards the fulfilment of the MDGs and the outcomes of these conferences, enhanced and predictable levels of private and official external resource flows to developing countries; comprehensive, speedy and more effective measures to enable all categories of indebted developing countries to overcome their debt burden, including especially, improved market access to the markets of developed countries; meaningful access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; capacity-building and strengthening of institutional frameworks for sustainable development; as well as ensuring a balanced integration of economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

9. Recognizing that sustainable economic development is the most important factor for indebted countries to be able to comply with their debt service payments, we support the need for developing countries to be afforded policy space by the international financial institutions to accommodate the specificities of their development needs.

10. We are committed to the fight against diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and other public health problems afflicting humanity. We recognize that the high incidence of these deadly diseases has had a devastating impact on developing countries and pose a problem for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore commit ourselves to providing the necessary political leadership and adequate infrastructure to combat these menaces to public health. To this end, we reiterate the urgent need for the international community to provide additional financial, technical and technological resources, including to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, and appropriate international policy space to facilitate affordable access to essential drugs, immunization services, safe vaccines and advanced medical technologies for combating these deadly diseases. In this connection, we urge developing countries to take advantage of the flexibilities inherent in the TRIPS Agreement and confirmed by the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

11. Regarding international financial issues, while standards and codes contribute towards greater transparency, we urge for their voluntary adoption depending on country circumstances and call for increased participation of developing countries in the design of these standards and codes. We call also for (a) the international community to promote all those measures and actions in financial institutions that will contribute towards international financial stability; (b) a fair decision-making process in the International Financial Institutions; and (c) streamlining of Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility process to allow poor countries to benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, including possibly through further actions designed to ensure that their external debt situation does not become unsustainable after the completion of the HIPC initiative. Within the framework of the commitments agreed to at the Monterrey Summit, we confirm the need to establish new financial mechanisms, within the international financial institutions, to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustained economic growth, sustainable development and to eradicate poverty. We welcome the United Nations Convention Against Corruption adopted on 31 October 2003, which provides national governments and the international community with effective instruments in the fight against illegal capital flight and other financial crimes.

12. We declare our commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, as stated in the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted at the Phase I of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (Geneva, 10 to 12 December 2003). We call for concrete initiatives at all levels to bridge the digital divide and to place Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) at the service of development. In this context, equitable and non-discriminatory access to information and ICTs should be ensured. Within this framework, we particularly support the initiative aimed at the creation and mobilization of a digital solidarity fund. Transfer of technology, particularly from developed to developing countries, financing, adequate resources and capacity building are essential to bridge the Digital Divide. The availability of free and open source software along side with proprietary software is an indispensable component in the promotion of universal access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In this context, we express our common desire to actively participate in the Phase II to the WSIS, which will take place in Tunis, from 16 to 18 November 2005. To this end, we request the G-15 Task Force on ICT, taking into account the Jakarta Declaration on ICT for the Development and the Kuala Lumpur Framework Understanding for Cooperation in ICT among G-15 member countries, to follow up closely the preparatory process to the Tunis Phase of WSIS as well as the WSIS Working Group on Internet Governance (WSISWG) which is to be set-up by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to investigate and make proposals for establishing a democratic, multilateral, and transparent mechanism. In this connection, the dominant view was that the future international mechanism for the functioning and management of international internet should have an intergovernmental nature.

13. We note with concern the imbalances in global media coverage that negatively affect developing countries. We stress the importance of addressing this situation. We encourage strengthening cooperation in the dissemination of information among and by G-15 media organizations.

14. We underscore the need to continue to act in concert to broaden and deepen ongoing policy dialogue, coordination and functional collaboration to harness the immense potential and latent synergy and complementarity between our countries. In this regard, we note the number of activities carried out in the current period by member countries of the Group within the framework of South-South Cooperation. We are pleased to note that, as a follow up to our last Summit in Jakarta, the Group has taken actions to institutionalize the G-15 Commission for the improvement of efficiency in the implementation of the Group's decisions. We received with gratitude, the initial results of the work performed by the G-15 Commission. We decide to restructure the Commission in order to intensify its coherence, revitalize the activities and advance coordination and come up with appropriate plans of cooperation among G-15 countries. The structure of the Commission will be as agreed and as appears in the Report of the 25th Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. We reaffirm that the Group should pursue further efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation among our countries, involving the public and private sectors, as well as to take note and implement, as appropriate, the conclusions of the various experts and ministerial meetings. Within this context, we invite member countries to propose new activities in areas of common interest to member countries, including in particular Energy and Development; Information and Communications Technologies; Generic Drugs and Public Health as well as Medical Research Cooperation; and Human Resource Training Programme.

15. In accordance with our principle of promoting and strengthening cooperation and consultations with the wider community of developing countries, we welcome the successful conclusion of the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, held on 16 - 19 December, 2003 in Marrakech, Morocco and undertake to ensure the active participation of our countries in the implementation of its significant outcomes. We urge United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds, as well as the regional economic commissions and other relevant international organizations that have contributed to the strengthening of South-South Cooperation including amongst G-15 member countries to continue and strengthen support in all the areas of our common interest.

16. We welcome the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is anchored on the determination of Africa to overcome the scourge of poverty and marginalization in the globalizing world economy, as the framework within which the international community should concentrate efforts on Africa's development. We therefore pledge to work with our African members to further the objectives of NEPAD and call on Africa's development partners to recommit themselves to the successful implementation of NEPAD.

17. Taking into consideration the importance of North-South Dialogue, our countries undertake to continue efforts to improve interaction and strengthen mutual understanding with developed countries, including the G8, on the basis of a common agreed agenda.

18. We emphasize our full commitment to strengthening multilateralism based on the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and International Law. We reiterate the primacy of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation. In recognizing the need to respond to the challenges of development and the eradication of poverty, we reiterate our support for the provisions contained in the final documents

of the 10th Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the existing relationship between disarmament and development.

19. We reiterate our full commitment to combating drug trafficking, which represents a threat to security and to the economic and social development of all countries, especially in view of, *inter alia*, its links to organized crime, illicit arms trafficking and as a source of funding for different forms of transnational crime. We insist upon the necessity of coordinating efforts to tackle this problem, with strict adherence to the principles of international law as well as the legal framework provided by the United Nations on this matter, and stress the importance of developing and strengthening mechanisms of international cooperation in the investigation of drug trafficking activities.

20. We recognize the urgent need to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all aspects. This illicit trade results in greater casualties in conflict situations, increased crime and instability, and we are fully committed to addressing this scourge.

21. Conscious of the fact that a sizeable portion of the world's population in the developing countries do not have access to efficient and affordable forms of energy, we emphasize that energy security is a basis for peaceful coexistence in the world, particularly as it meets the fundamental interests of both net energy importing and net energy exporting countries in general, and developing countries in particular. In recognition of the need to maximize the benefits derived from access to efficient, reliable and affordable forms of energy for our social and economic development, we seek to carry out further collaborative efforts with interested countries, international organizations and financial institutions in the utilization, production, distribution, trade and diversification of modern energy sources in a sustainable manner for the benefit of developing countries. To this end, we have adopted the Caracas Declaration on Energy and Development.

22. We have also decided to promote the participation of the private sector in the activities of the Group, by associating firms to our work. To this end, we have decided to hold a Business Forum on trade and investment opportunities simultaneously with the Summit in Algiers.

23. Reaffirming our political will to reinforce cooperation among our countries and aware of our strengths, we decide that the Troika will assume greater responsibility to ensure that the Group pursues vigorously plans, projects and programmes jointly identified by it, and that there are effective actions taken for the follow-up of the decisions of the Heads of State and Government. In this regard, we have decided that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Troika will meet, as early as possible, to submit a Plan of Action, drafted by the High Level Officials Commission after consulting the Group's Ministers, on the various proposals, including their feasibility and financial implications, so that the Heads of State and Government of the Troika can make recommendations for their implementation to the XIII Summit to be held in Algiers in 2005.

24. We express our profound gratitude to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its exemplary leadership of our Group during its Chairmanship. We thank the people and Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for their warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements provided for the successful hosting of the Twelfth Summit of the Group of Fifteen.

25. We reiterate our appreciation for the generous offer by the government of Algeria to host the Thirteenth Summit of the G-15 in 2005.
