



**GROUP OF FIFTEEN**  
**The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries**

**G-15/06/PR89/2**

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**EIGHTY-NINTH MEETING**  
**OF THE PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE**  
**HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE GROUP OF FIFTEEN**  
Geneva, 17 March 2006

**SUMMARY RECORDS**

1. The 89th Meeting of the Personal Representatives (PRs) of the Heads of State and Government of the Group of Fifteen was held on 17 March 2006 in Geneva, under the Chairmanship of Ambassador Idriss Jazairy, the Personal Representative of the President of Algeria to the Group of Fifteen.

2. Before proceeding with the business of the day, the Chairman recognized the presence of some Ambassadors who were attending the meeting of the Personal Representatives for the first time. The PRs joined him in welcoming them to their midst.

**Item 1 – Adoption of the Agenda**

3. The meeting adopted its Provisional Agenda, without amendment, as contained in Document **G-15/06/PR89/1**.

**Item 2 - Briefing on preparations for the 13<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Group to be held in 2006.**

4. Further to earlier consultations that he initiated, the Chairman invited comments from the floor on a possible date for hosting the 13th Summit in Algiers. In her intervention, the Personal Representative of Malaysia, after listing the dates on which her Prime Minister would otherwise be engaged, proposed that the Summit should be scheduled for 7 - 9 August 2006. In subsequent interventions, some PRs expressed difficulties with the proposed date. In particular, the PRs of Mexico and Brazil referred to the very important national and regional engagements of their Heads of State and Government that would take place in the second half of the year, which would make their participation in the Summit impossible. The PR of Brazil therefore proposed hosting the Summit in November/December 2006. The PR of Indonesia informed the meeting of the availability of his President if the Summit could be held in June 2006, as it would coincide with the visit of his President to the region. The Acting PR of Venezuela similarly informed that her President would be available in the month of June 2006, while noting that the second semester of the year would be difficult due to the Presidential election to be held in December 2006. The PR of Chile also endorsed convening the Summit in the first semester of the year, as the new administration that would be in place in the country would need the second part of the year to settle down, in addition to other engagements and regional events during the period. Some PRs also

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informed the meeting that they were still awaiting instructions from their capitals on a preferred date for hosting the Summit.

5. Noting all the constraints raised on the matter, the Chairman observed that there were obvious difficulties in proposing a tentative date for the Summit. He noted that the determination of the latter would enable the government of Algeria to dispatch Special Envoys to capitals of member countries to formally deliver invitations to the Summit. He remarked in this regard that it was already getting late and that the possibility of hosting the Summit in the second half of the year appeared impossible. He therefore undertook to convey all the observations made to Algiers for consideration. With respect to the preparatory activities for the Summit, the Chairman informed the meeting that a competent consultant had already prepared a good report on Rural Transformation through Community Development and the Management of Water Resources to be considered at the forthcoming G-15 Expert Meeting to be held in Algiers. He remarked that while further information on the event would be made available in due course, the government of Algeria was considering how participation in the event would be funded in light of some budgetary constraints. The foregoing notwithstanding, he observed that the government of Algeria expected a high level of participation due to the importance of the subject to all member countries. To ensure that the proposed Expert Meeting benefited from the outcome of the 4th World Water Forum that took place in Mexico, he expressed his willingness to cooperate with the PR of Mexico. Responding, the latter expressed his positive disposition in this regard.

**Item 3 - Follow-up consultations on the outcome of the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on 21 September 2005 in New York:**

**a) Consultations on the Draft Recommendations submitted by Personal Representatives that turned out to be contentious at the 27th Meeting of the Foreign Ministers;**

6. The Chairman recalled that a set of Draft Recommendations considered as the areas of apparent consensus among PRs on the Report of the Panel of External Consultants on the Examination of the Challenges Facing the Group and Evaluation of its Projects for South-South Cooperation was submitted to the 27th Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which was held on 21 September 2005 in New York. He remarked that as some of these Draft Recommendations turned out to be contentious at the Ministerial Meeting, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed to take due note of them and directed PRs to further consult with a view to forging the needed consensus on the various recommendations of the Panel of External Consultants. To this end, the Chairman drew attention to Document **G-15/06/PR89/INF.1** prepared and circulated by the TSF, which, *inter alia*, clearly identified the three Draft Recommendations that turned out to be contentious, namely, the Expansion of the membership of the Group; the Agenda of the G-15; and Summit Procedures relating to Annual Summits. He therefore invited suggestions from PRs on these draft Recommendations, taking into account the main comments made by the Ministers. The Draft Recommendations were then considered one after the other as follows:

- *Recommendation (a) Expansion of the membership of the Group:*  
*The principle of expansion of membership to include some key developing countries; the Chair is mandated to explore informally any such possibility.*

8. The Chairman recalled in this regard that the two main positions that the Foreign Ministers were unable to bridge were, whether priority should be accorded to expanding the membership of the Group or to consolidating it, as well as the question of whether to admit only new members who expressed such interest or to informally approach potential candidates that could add dynamism and value to the Group. The suggestions made on the subject in the ensuing interventions were as follows:

- Not to expand membership, unless there was a specific request, which would then be examined to determine if the admission of a prospective member would add value to the Group.
- That while consolidation should be the main focus for now, the door should not be closed to the possibility of future admission of deserving developing countries that express strong interest in joining the Group, after a careful examination of such requests;
- That focus should be maintained on the Group's consolidation and revitalization against the background of its current challenges and difficulties. The attainment of this goal would make the Group attract more interest from other countries;
- To focus attention on enhancing the efficiency of the Group by exploring the recommendations of the Panel of External Consultants in this regard;
- That while endorsing the principle of expansion, the Group should, for now, avoid any outright admission drive.

9. In summarizing the comments made, the Chairman identified the apparent consensus reached as follows: "While recognizing that priority attention should be accorded to the consolidation and revitalization of the Group, there was no objection to the principle of future expansion should there be an expression of strong interest by a non-member country. In such a case, the specific request would be considered on its merit." This consensus was agreed upon.

- Recommendation (b) Agenda of the G-15:

*To focus the agenda of the G-15 on development issues while not excluding political issues with development dimensions.*

10. The Chairman identified the main point of contention among the Ministers as to whether the Group should focus exclusively on the development agenda or, in addition, take on political issues that have development dimensions. He observed that PRs had recommended that political issues with development dimensions should be entertained bearing in mind the interrelatedness of both issues and the fact that it would be difficult or futile to attempt to preclude Heads of State and Government from discussing any political issue of interest to them. The suggestions made on the subject in the ensuing interventions were as follows:

- That while the Group's primary focus should be on issues of development and South-South Cooperation, it is the prerogative of Heads of State and Government to consider any political issue of interest to them, particularly in the course of their Retreat;
- The debate was considered a non-issue as all development issues have inherent political dimensions or undertones;
- That the Group should focus exclusively on the development agenda, such as the broadening of intra-G-15 cooperation, to enable it build the desired level of interest and galvanize support for South-South Cooperation and economic issues of common interest to all member countries;
- That the subject should be left to the discretion of the Summit host country and the nature of the draft Joint Communiqué presented by it for consideration, taking into account the prevailing circumstances.

11. In summarizing the comments made, the Chairman identified the apparent consensus reached as follows: "To focus the agenda and documentation of the G-15 on development issues and South-South Cooperation, while not excluding the political dimensions of development issues." This consensus was agreed upon, with the exception of one member country that entered a reservation to enable it seek the view of its capital on this new compromise.

- *Recommendation (c) Summit Procedures - Annual Summits:*

*To consider the possibility of hosting biennial Summits in place of the increasingly troubled practice of annual Summits endorsed by the Panel of External Consultants.*

12. The Chairman recalled in this regard that the main point of contention among the Ministers as well as PRs was whether the Group should retain the practice of annual Summits that had worked satisfactorily until the recent difficulties associated with Summit quorum or on the other hand, to change over to biennial Summits, a position that is gaining increasing support within the Group. The suggestions made on the subject in the ensuing interventions were as follows:

- That biennial Summit was better as it would allow sufficient time for the implementation of decisions and preparations for Summits, as well as ensuring a higher level of participation of Heads of State and Government;
- That increasing Summitry fatigue and the associated problem of participation made biennial Summit more realistic;
- That while biennial Summit should be made the rule, it should be made possible to host a Summit within one year if an offer was made to this effect by a hosting country and a good agenda was presented;
- That since it was the advent of exceptional circumstances that disrupted the regularity of annual Summits, to abandon this established practice would appear to contradict the current impetus towards re-energizing the Group. Besides, it was argued that there was no guarantee that the introduction of biennial Summit would resolve the problem of quorum. As a result, the impending Summit and the one after should be held in 2006 and 2007, respectively, while further discussions on the merits of a change could be deferred to a later date.

13. In summarizing the comments made, the Chairman noted that in recent years, the Group had inadvertently evolved towards a de facto biennial Summit. Recalling the interventions made, he remarked that part of the compromise reached was that while the Group was energizing, it should not be seen to have gone to sleep. The Chairman therefore identified the apparent consensus reached as follows: "Summits should be held biennially, but if a host country offers to host it earlier, this proposal would be reviewed by Personal Representatives with a view to making an appropriate recommendation". This consensus was unanimously endorsed.

**b) Consultations on other Draft Recommendations of the Panel of External Consultants upon which consensus is yet to be reached by the Personal Representatives.**

14. The Chairman recalled that there were a number of other Recommendations of the Panel on which PRs could not attain consensus in the course of their deliberations prior to the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers in New York. He therefore remarked that consultations would resume to this end. These Draft Recommendations of the External Consultants were therefore considered as follows:

(a) SUMMIT PROCEDURES:

Summit Venue

15. The Chairman observed that from the trend of previous discussions, the recommendation to apply alphabetical order in deciding whose turn it would be to host a Summit did not appear to gain favour. He therefore proposed that the first step was to reaffirm the extant principle of regional rotation in the hosting of Summits. Thereafter, the region whose turn it was to host a Summit would hold consultations with its co-regional members, taking into account other factors and not

necessarily the alphabetical order, in choosing the host country for the Summit. The suggestions made on the subject in the ensuing interventions were as follows:

- The principle of regional rotation in hosting Summits should be reaffirmed;
- That the application of the proposed alphabetical order within a region whose turn it was to host a Summit would ensure the assignment of responsibilities and establish predictability, while recognizing the possibility of exceptional circumstances that could constrain a country from offering to host a Summit;
- That the proposed alphabetical order, which would amount to an imposition of an obligation irrespective of a member country's circumstances, should be dispensed with in favour of flexibility in the choice of a possible host country from within a region;

16. The Chairman's proposal to retain the current practice, as reflected in Paragraph 15 above, was endorsed. With respect to the Summit to be held after the 14th Summit in Iran, it was made known that member countries from the Latin American/Caribbean were expected to commence early consultations with a view to identifying which of them would offer to host the 15th Summit.

### Quorum

17. The Chairman recalled in this regard that the Panel's recommendation not to fix a quorum for the Summit found support among some PRs and Foreign Ministers who based their argument on the need for flexibility. On the other hand, others objected to it against the background of the recent difficulties associated with participation and therefore called for the establishment of a minimum quorum for convening a Summit. The suggestions made on the subject in the ensuing interventions were as follows:

- It was important to establish a quorum for convening a Summit in order to guarantee a minimum level of attendance. Accordingly, it was suggested that once a Summit had been scheduled, the participation of at least eight to nine Heads of State and Government should be confirmed three or six months before the due date, failing which the proposed Summit should be postponed;
- That the postponement or cancellation of a Summit due to lack of quorum creates problems for the host country and other member countries as well as sending a negative political message about the Group. It was argued that prior confirmation of participation would not necessarily translate to actual participation and therefore, the need for some flexibility was reiterated;
- That if up to nine Heads of State and Government confirmed their participation, then a Summit should be convened, but if the host country experiences some difficulties in this regard, then the Troika Countries could consider a request for cancellation;
- The convening of a Summit should proceed once all the Troika Heads of State and Government had confirmed their participation, but the Retreat should be cancelled;
- Noting the difficulties of imposing conditionalities and the credibility of hosting a Summit with the participation of only the Troika Heads of State and Government, it was suggested that early notification and appropriate consultations could facilitate a good turn out;
- To maintain the present quorum of eight (at least 5 Heads of State and Government plus 3 Deputy/Vice Heads of State and Government), subject to confirmation a month prior to the Summit date, failing which PRs would meet to review the situation with a view to determining whether to recommend if the proposed Summit should proceed or not; alternatively, the host country should, in such a situation, exercise the discretion of deciding to go ahead or not.

18. The consensus reached on the subject was to retain the current quorum (at least 5 Heads of State and Government plus 3 Deputy/Vice Heads of State and Government), which should be

physical presence and not mere confirmations of participation, with the host country left to decide in good time if the quorum would be met or not. If, however, it turned out that some Heads of State/Government were physically present and there was no quorum, and if this question was raised, then the Heads of State/Government present should decide whether to proceed with the Summit or not.

#### Enhancing the global impact of the Group's pronouncements

19. The Chairman observed that the only area left for consensus building is on the Panel's recommendation that the Group's pronouncements should evolve at the Summit in the form of "Understandings", "Conclusions" or "Communiqués" from informal discussions among Heads of State and Government rather than a draft document reconciling different points of view drafted ahead of time in Geneva. He noted that the resolution of this procedural difference is very important as we embark on substantive preparations for the next Summit. The suggestions made on the subject in the ensuing interventions were as follows:

- In recognition of the need for flexibility on this procedural matter, it was suggested that the host country should be free to decide if it would like to present a draft document for consideration in Geneva, or otherwise, allow such pronouncements to evolve in the course of the Summit;
- That a communiqué addressed to the international community, embodying agreed positions, should emanate from each Summit.

20. The compromise reached on this procedural matter was to leave it to the host country to decide, with a recommendation that the communiqué should emerge from the discussions held during the Summit itself.

#### (b) REVAMPING THE INSTITUTION OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES

21. The Chairman remarked that the trend of discussions so far was that, the Panel's recommendation that Personal Representatives should be high-level and authoritative personalities (Vice Ministers or Permanent Secretaries) from the capitals, with the Geneva-based Ambassadors serving as their Alternates, was less favoured. He added that it was considered difficult to operate because of the high cost of traveling from the capitals and the likely problem of attendance. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the calibers of officials in question were too busy to take on additional assignments. In light of the foregoing considerations, it was agreed to retain the current practice.

#### (c) INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE G-15; AND RESOURCES AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE G-15

22. The Chairman recalled that some member countries were in support of the Panel's recommendations to establish a full-fledged Secretariat with wide-ranging responsibilities as well as the doubling of annual contributions. He noted that others considered the additional financial obligation involved as not justifiable, especially in the face of the inability of a significant number of member countries to pay-up their outstanding contributions. The Chairman therefore proposed, and it was agreed, that the Group should in the meantime retain its current structure and funding, while accepting to revisit the matter when activities gained added momentum in due course.

(d) PROJECTS FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

Projects emanating from the 12th Summit

23. The Chairman recalled that, with the exception of the proposed G-15 Africa Fund that enjoyed general support among PRs and Foreign Ministers, the other proposals emanating from the 12th Summit, namely, the proposed South Bank, University of the South and South Television Network, could not get the support of the majority of member countries. He therefore proposed that a meeting of experts should be organized in Geneva to review the said project proposals and to make concrete recommendations on their feasibility. In her intervention, the Acting PR of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated the proposed South-South Cooperation projects were the most substantive outcomes of the 12th Summit as they dealt with development issues and regretted the fact that recommendations were being contemplated to request Heads of State/Government to reconsider their decision. While observing that it would take a long time to consider embarking on a feasibility study, she expressed doubt on the usefulness of such course of action when those project proposals were already being operationalized successfully in the Latin American region. She expressed the feeling of her country that same goal could be attained in the G-15 should the next Summit so decide. In light of the foregoing, it was considered presumptuous to call for a feasibility study. Accordingly, it was agreed that the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela should submit a report to the next Summit on the operationalization and implementation of these projects in the Latin American region.

Projects under implementation

24. On the recommendation by the PRs to review and rationalize ongoing projects, it was agreed that the TSF should submit a checklist on the projects, identifying their achievements or otherwise, to facilitate the exercise.

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25. In light of the broad interest generated by the discussions on the ongoing effort to reform the Group, it was agreed that as part of the preparations for the 13th Summit in Algiers, a PRs meeting should be convened for proper brainstorming on how to focus the agenda of the G-15, strengthen its value, enhance its credibility and recognition as well as elevate its image in our individual countries and regions. It was further agreed that the exercise should take the form of an open-ended informal discussions to allow for a free flow of ideas.

**Item 4 – Briefing on the recruitment process to fill the vacant positions in the TSF**

26. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Recruitment Panel, composed by the Troika Board of Supervisors and approved by the Personal Representatives, had successfully undertaken the task of selecting the best candidates for the vacant positions of an Economic Affairs Officer and a Secretary in the TSF. He reported that, taking into account the requirements for the posts, as advertised, the academic qualifications and working experiences of the candidates as well as the evaluation of their performance in the written and oral interviews, the Selection Panel chose Mr. Pradip Bhatnagar from India to fill the vacant position of the Economic Affairs Officer in the TSF, while Ms. Wendy Hinds-Anagbogu from Jamaica was chosen to fill the Secretarial post. Both candidates were expected to assume duties as soon as the relevant administrative procedures were concluded. The meeting endorsed the decisions taken.

**Item 5 - Any Other Business**

27. The Chairman drew the attention of the meeting to the outstanding financial contributions, which he considered very high, in spite of the payments made by a few member countries since the

last Meeting of the Foreign Ministers in September 2005. He therefore enjoined member countries, particularly those with the largest arrears of contribution, to take early steps to fulfil their financial obligations to the Group. In this regard, Brazil's announcement that its contributions to the approved Budgets for 2004 and 2005 were in the process of being settled was warmly welcomed.

28. The Head of the Technical Support Facility informed the meeting that, within the context of the G-15 Human Resource Training Programme launched by the Foreign Ministers in Mexico City in 2001, the Government of Egypt, as in the past, has decided to offer additional training courses on Agriculture. He stated that, for the 2006/2007 session, ten courses would be organized by the Egyptian International Center for Agriculture and that five candidates from all G-15 member countries would benefit from this offer. He informed the meeting that the Admission Forms and other relevant documents had already been mailed to the missions of member countries and urged the latter to facilitate the early nomination of their candidates. In the spirit of further elevating intra-G-15 cooperation, he urged other member countries to consider contributing to the strengthening of the G-15 Human Resource Training Programme by making offers in various fields of human development.

29. Before adjourning the meeting, the Chairman thanked the PRs for their attendance and constructive contributions to the success of the meeting.

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