



GROUP OF FIFTEEN
The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries

G-15/08/FM30/3

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THIRTIETH MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE GROUP OF FIFTEEN

26 September 2008, New York

Report of the Chairman of the 95th Meeting of the Personal Representatives of the Group of Fifteen

My report covers the preoccupations of the Personal Representatives of Heads of State and Government of the Group of Fifteen (PRs) in their meetings as well as other activities of the Group beginning from the last Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in New York on 28 September 2007 up to the 95th Meeting of the Personal Representatives held on 15 September 2008 in Geneva. These include follow-up actions on the implementation of decisions and mandates arising from recent Summits of Heads of Government and State and Meetings of Foreign Ministers; ongoing activities as well as matters related to the management of the Group's affairs.

I. Preparation and Endorsement of draft Modalities for the Operationalization of the G-15 Working Groups on Water Resources Management and Rural and Agricultural Development

I wish to report that pursuant to the approval by the 29th Meeting of G-15 Foreign Ministers held in New York on 28 September 2007, of the outcomes of the High Level Meeting on Water Resources Management and Rural and Agricultural Development held in Tehran, 2-4 September 2007, the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted draft modalities for the operationalization of the G-15 Working Groups on Water Resources Management as well as Rural and Agricultural Development, which were considered by the Personal Representatives. The modalities define the scope of work as well as proposals for short-term activities of each Working Group. Personal Representatives considered and endorsed the draft modalities after incorporating necessary amendments, thereby setting the stage for the activation of the Working Groups.

I would also like to present a brief report on the progress made in activating the Working Groups. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in its capacity as Coordinator, has committed to provide necessary facilities and logistical support for both Working Groups. A high-ranking representative of the Ministry of Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran participated in a Meeting of G-15 Experts held in Geneva on 10 September 2008, during which he informed the Group that 70-80 percent of the web content of the Working Group on Water website has already been prepared by them. The Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Jihad-e Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran also briefed the 95th Meeting of Personal Representatives held in Geneva on 15 September 2008 on the proposed activities of the Working Group on Rural and Agricultural Development. He informed the Group that, with a view to immediately activating the Working Group on Rural and Agricultural Development, his Ministry is intent on organizing the first session of the Working Group on Rural and Agricultural Development in December 2008.

In light of these developments, I am confident that both Working Groups, once they become fully operational, will satisfactorily fulfill their mandate of serving as G-15 mechanisms or clearinghouses for the exchange of experiences on water resources management and rural and agricultural development as envisaged by our Heads of State and Government. We therefore have high hopes that the Working Groups will contribute to enhancing the dissemination of good practices and the deepening of South-South cooperation among our member countries.

II. Progress Report on matters related to G-15 Projects

(a) Preparation and Endorsement of Suggested Guidelines for the Selection and Implementation of G-15 Collaborative Projects

I am happy to report that, in line with the mandate arising from the last Meeting of Foreign Ministers, Personal Representatives have successfully concluded an extensive exercise to revamp the implementation and performance of G-15 Collaborative Projects. To this end, Personal Representatives mandated a meeting of G-15 Experts held on 10 September 2008 in Geneva to recommend Suggested Guidelines for the Selection and Implementation of G-15 Collaborative Projects. The draft suggested guidelines recommended by the Experts were then considered and endorsed by the Personal Representatives for approval by the Foreign Ministers. The new guidelines emphasize, among other things, the importance of a feasibility study to justify the project's viability as well as the primary responsibility of the participating countries for ensuring the successful and expeditious implementation and follow-up of approved projects. It is hoped that these and other innovations introduced would open a new chapter in project selection and implementation, thereby adding to the Group's relevance, visibility and credibility.

(b) New project proposal by the Islamic Republic of Iran on a Cooperation Framework among G-15 Countries for the Development of Renewable Energies

Foreign Ministers will recall that at the time of their last meeting, Personal Representatives were actively considering some preliminary project proposals presented by the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly in the areas of water management and renewable energy. I am therefore pleased to report that the Islamic Republic of Iran has since submitted a specific project proposal to the Group in the form of a Background Paper and Concept Paper on a Cooperation Framework among G-15 countries for the Development of Renewable Energies for consideration by member countries. The project, outlined by the head of the Iranian Renewable Energies Organization in the expert meeting on 10 September 2008, aims to take advantage of the relative capabilities and expertise that exists within G-15 countries to develop, through South-South Cooperation, different types of renewable energy, including wind, solar, hydro and biomass energy, among the G-15 countries. This objective is sought to be achieved through the exchange of experiences and Best Practices among technical institutions in the area of renewable energies within member countries. I wish to remark that, among the project activities proposed in the short term leading up to the launching of the project, is the holding of a meeting of technical experts that will also include a Workshop on Wind Energy, an area in which the Islamic Republic of Iran had already submitted a document containing a Summary of abilities of the Renewable Energy Organization of Iran in the field of Wind Energy. I wish to report that Personal Representatives took due note of the new project proposal by the Islamic Republic of Iran on a Cooperation Framework amongst G-15 Countries for the Development of Renewable Energies. I should add that the Islamic Republic of Iran has pledged to prepare and submit a detailed project document for consideration by the Group. I am therefore certain that all pre-project activities will thereafter be completed expeditiously in order to enable the project to be formally launched by the time of the XIVth Summit.

III. Status of the Consultations on the establishment of the G-15 Africa Cooperation Fund

It will be recalled that in the light of the impasse on the establishment of the G-15 Africa Cooperation Fund, Foreign Ministers had, in their previous meeting, asserted that since a political decision to create the Fund had already been taken at the Summit level, Personal Representatives had to redouble their efforts and work towards forging the required consensus on modalities for its operationalization. I wish to report in this regard that Personal Representatives have had further intensive discussions on the issue. Despite these efforts, no satisfactory solution has emerged as there is an absence of group-wide consensus on whether to work on the original intention to establish an autonomous conventional fund or to subsume assistance to Africa under already existing bilateral and inter-regional initiatives of technical cooperation in support of Africa.

In light of the present impasse and the possibility of a breakthrough in the near future, I am delighted to report that Personal Representatives have pledged to renew their efforts and to continue their consultations on the matter. To this end, the Personal Representatives have recommended that Foreign Ministers may wish to provide a new direction on the matter with a view to facilitating a broader understanding that would ensure the needed consensus on the establishment of the G-15 Africa Cooperation Fund.

IV. Progress report on the Implementation of Other Decisions and Activities of the Group

(a) Activities of the G-15 Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Services (FCCIS)

I wish to report also that the G-15 Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Services (FCCIS), the Group's sole private sector forum, has been discharging its responsibilities in a credible manner over the years, by holding annual meetings on a rotation basis among member countries of the Group. I am therefore pleased to inform Ministers that this year, the 15th G-15 FCCIS Annual Body Meeting will be held in New Delhi from 18-24 October 2008 under the auspices of the Confederation of Indian Industry. It is important to note that the theme of the Meeting will be "World Commodity Prices Development and the Need to Enhance cooperation in Trade and Investment within the G-15 countries".

Furthermore, I wish to inform Your Excellencies that Personal Representatives have also considered a request by the FCCIS, that it be allowed to convene its meeting on the flanks of G-15 Summits. This request was based on the experience of FCCIS members that in recent years, their activities have suffered from the increasing inability of some members of the Federation to participate in FCCIS meetings unless they were part of larger FCCIS delegations attending Summit Meetings. In this context, I would like to recall that the FCCIS (and other G-15 bodies that are no longer in operation), were allowed in the past to hold their meetings on the sidelines of G-15 Summits. However, as a result of the demand by member countries to streamline the duration of Summits by reducing the number of days spent by Heads of State and Government, G-15 Foreign Ministers decided in 2001 that such meetings should henceforth be held outside the framework of a Summit. Accordingly, the FCCIS has since been holding its meetings independently of the intergovernmental processes of the Group.

I wish to observe that without prejudice to the foregoing consideration, Personal Representatives discussed the present request of the FCCIS's to revert to the earlier practice of holding their meeting in the course of the G-15 Summits. After carefully examining the pros and cons of the matter, Personal Representatives agreed that the new arrangement sought by the FCCIS

could bring added value to the Group by attracting more attention to the activities of the G-15, while at the same time contribute to the strengthening of the political will of member states to further promote their economic business relations. Accordingly, it is requested that Foreign Ministers may wish to favourably consider and approve the request of the FCCIS.

(b) Activities under the G-15 Human Resource Training Programme

I am pleased to report that, under this Programme first started in the year 2000 as a bold initiative by the Foreign Ministers, the Government of Egypt, as in the past, has decided to offer additional training courses on Agriculture for the year 2009. It is encouraging to note that each country is offered five scholarships for the training courses which aim at bringing together government officials from G-15 countries for a first-hand appreciation of each other's problems and help evolve, by pooling of knowledge, new techniques in agricultural development applicable to local conditions. Ministers are therefore invited to note the commendable gesture of the Government of Egypt in promoting capacity building in G-15 member countries. While commending the Government of Egypt in this regard, Ministers may wish to urge other member countries, in the spirit of further elevating G-15 cooperation, to step forward to contribute to the strengthening of the Programme by making offers for training in various fields of human development.

(c) Activities of the Technical Support Facility of the G-15 (TSF)

I am pleased to inform Ministers that the G-15 website (www.g15.org) that was launched in September 2006, has been revamped with improved user access aimed at promoting better networking and higher visibility of the activities of the Group. It is gratifying to note that important reports highlighting new initiatives of mutual economic cooperation among G-15 countries are being posted regularly on the website. These transactions provide ample testimony to the extent to which member countries have taken new steps to building developmental partnerships with each other, in line with the call made by the 13th Summit for enhanced action-oriented programmes for South-South cooperation among member countries. In addition, I wish to report that two new research papers titled "*The Challenge of Poverty in G-15 countries - and Some Success Stories*" and "*The ICT Revolution and G-15 Countries: Suggestions for Bridging the Digital Divide*" have been published by the Technical Support Facility as part of the Working Paper Series that was launched last year on economic issues of interest to G-15 countries. I am therefore delighted to report that the policy-relevant publications of the TSF on the development challenges facing our member countries would add relevance and credibility to our Group.

V. Financial Matters of the Group:

(a) Draft Proposed Budget for 2009

I wish to draw the attention of the Honourable Ministers to the proposed Budget of the Group of Fifteen for the year 2009 contained in Document **G-15/08/FM30/4**. The estimates, amounting to CHF 1,207,264 (i.e., US\$ 1,207,264), which were prepared under my supervision, were considered and endorsed by the Personal Representatives. They are based on the streamlined figures for the 2008 approved Budget for practically all items with the assumption of a modest rise on a few items to allow for inflation as well as exchange rate variations. It is worthy of note therefore that the proposed estimates for 2009 are virtually the same as those of the approved budget for the current year in Swiss Francs. I therefore invite Ministers to favourably consider and approve the proposed Budget for 2009, along with the recommended financing option, involving maintaining the current level of contribution at US\$25,000 per member country, using income from

investments and part of savings on previous budgets, as recommended by the Personal Representatives.

(a) Financial Report of the Group for the year 2007 prepared by the Auditors

Furthermore, I wish to invite Honourable Ministers to formally take note of the Financial Report of the Group for the year 2007 prepared by the official Auditors. The report, indicating both the approved and actual expenditures of the Group for the previous year, is in order and considered satisfactory.

Furthermore on financial matters, it is important to draw the attention of Ministers to the Current Status of Financial Contributions and to urge Ministers to appeal to member countries in arrears of contributions to the Group to take timely action to settle them. This, I should stress, is important in ensuring the smooth operations of the Group.

VI. Status of Consultations on a possible Host Country for the XVth Summit

It will be recalled that the last Meeting of the Foreign Ministers had urged the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as the member of the *Troika* from Latin America and the Caribbean, to continue its useful consultations to find a possible host country for the XVth Summit from among the Latin American and Caribbean member countries, whose turn it would be to host the Summit of the Group after the next one in Tehran. I wish to inform Ministers in this regard that the Permanent Representative of Venezuela in Geneva has reported that all efforts on this important issue at the level of the Personal Representatives in Geneva are yet to produce the desired result. As a result, Personal Representatives were informed that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela intends to conduct further consultations on the matter at the Vice Ministerial level during the current session of the U.N. General Assembly. In light of this undertaking, it is expected that the Vice Minister of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will brief the impending Meeting of Foreign Ministers on the outcome of his consultations in New York. The subject, which requires urgent action, will be taken up for discussion under Agenda Item 4 of the Meeting of Foreign Ministers.

Finally, I wish to highlight that there are several important aspects of this report on which, under the able stewardship of the Chairman, the Foreign Ministers will be invited to take appropriate action.

I thank your Excellencies for your kind attention.
