

Opening remarks by Mr. Kobsak Chutikul, Special Adviser
to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Madame President, Your Excellencies,

Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, is not able to be here with you as he had intended to be because he has had to attend a meeting of Trade Ministers, many of whom are your colleagues, on possible ways and means of realizing the Development Agenda in the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks.

Before I read out portions of the Message he has conveyed to this auspicious gathering, permit me on behalf of UNCTAD to express our profound appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa for the leadership and direction he has provided to the G77 during this year. We have benefited from our close collaboration with him, and we always look forward to his visits to Geneva where he provides us with a sense of renewed hope and optimism every time that he is in town. His mix of joviality, understanding and serious intent is always intoxicating.

We also express our congratulations to His Excellency Munir Akram for his unanimous election to the Chair of the G77 for the coming year, and look forward to similarly close collaboration with him.

At the same time, it would be remiss of me if mention was not made of the cooperation that UNCTAD has received from Mourad Ahmia, the Executive Secretary of the Group of 77, which has been invaluable to our work in Geneva.

I am also pleased to report that the G77 now has a permanent home in Geneva with the inauguration two weeks ago of the G77 office in the UNCTAD building. This has taken many years to achieve, and was made possible by the strong determination and gentle persuasive powers of Ambassador Kumalo.