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OPENING STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT OF SPECIAL SESSION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Following is the statement by the President of the eleventh special session of the General Assembly, SALIM A. SALIM (United Republic of Tanzania), this morning:

In light of the decision just taken, I wish at the very outset to take this opportunity to express to you my deep gratitude for the honour which you have again conferred upon me to preside over this special session of the General Assembly. Your continued confidence is profoundly appreciated.

This special session is taking place in a chilling and sombre atmosphere, a time of disjunction and uncertainty in the world economy and polity. We enter the decade of the 1980s in a state of crisis. The international community is experiencing the most serious economic crisis since the great depression of the 1930s. There are varying perceptions as to the causes, directions and resolutions of the crisis, but there is a universal realization that this crisis is both severe and global and that it will not go away by itself or be resolved by one particular group of countries.

The developed market economy countries that were assumed to provide the engine of growth for the developing countries are in a steep recession. Unemployment of men and women and idleness of machines continues unabated and no improvement is in sight. Six per cent of the labour force in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) -- some 18 million people -- are today unemployed. This persistent stagnation has been combined with relatively high rates of inflation. And, associated with stagnation and inflation -- stagflation -- in the major industrial economies there has been a high degree of instability in exchange rates and major structural imbalances in external payments. Those factors have in turn led many developed countries to strengthen their existing protectionist measures, or introduce new ones, against imports of low-cost resources.

Many of the developing countries have experienced a sharp deterioration in their terms of trade and deceleration of growth in the 1970s. Owing to the dependent structures and consequent external vulnerability of their economies, they have had to bear a disproportionate share of the global burden of adjustment to the economic crisis.

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The deficit in external payments of developing countries -- excluding the major oil exporters -- which amounted to \$9 to \$12 billion yearly in the early 1970s, reached \$46 billion in 1979. Current projections indicate that the payment gaps may rise from this already high level to over \$67 billion in 1980, and to some \$73 billion in 1981. Meanwhile, the developing countries' total outstanding external debts disbursed, which had amounted to some \$50 billion in 1970, rose to over \$300 billion in 1979 with an increasing number of countries having to meet their debt service payments which exceeded 25 per cent of their export earnings. There are other constraints to the development process of the developing countries, the foremost of which is the fact that the world economy has entered a period of considerable instability in which uncertainty is a major factor.

In the economic relations among the developed market economies, there is a crisis stemming from the dispersion among them of economic power and a breakdown of the monetary and trading arrangements by which they attempted to harmonize their competing interests. Between the developed and the developing countries, there are serious tensions which originate from the imposed unequal development of the developing countries and the consequential instability in the world political process arising from this asymmetry between the world's regions, given the shift in their relative economic and political power.

The complexity of our world economy today is further compounded by the intensified militarization which not only exacerbates the danger to international peace and security but represents also a serious impediment to the development process. The trend to militarization, which afflicts the very fabric of development, has accelerated massively, particularly during the past decade, to the extent that the aggregate annual military expenditures of the world today exceed \$450 billion. It should be borne in mind that while those expenditures are making a phenomenal increase, the total financial assistance offered to the developing countries is at the level of \$20 billion and is declining.

But compounding all these crises is the conflict over resources and life styles. Many studies, including that initiated by the United Nations Environment Programme, have confirmed that current mechanisms of development are not only impairing the harmony between man and nature, but are also undermining the productive process itself. It has been said that the four major biological systems sustaining human life -- oceanic fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands -- are all under severe stress. Desertification threatens one tenth of South America, one third of Asia and Africa and one quarter of Australia. Devastation and pollution are pervasive. There are, indeed, tendencies which are eroding the balance between man, nature and technology, thus foreclosing the efforts to sustain the process of development.

The gravity of the unfolding crisis cannot therefore be underestimated even though there is a tendency -- regrettably -- to underestimate the human costs. But, however grave the crisis, there is no reason to despair if we are prepared to meet the challenge before it is too late. This is why this special session is so crucial and so timely. The dangers are extreme, but exceptional too are the opportunities. The very fact which has now been documented by various reports of the United Nations bodies, organs and

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agencies, as well as the valuable work of such groups as the Brandt Commission, OECD's Interfutures, IFDA's Third System, the Arusha initiative and numerous reports of non-governmental organizations and academics -- that our present course is likely to end in global disaster -- should imbue us with the resolve to change it and chart a sane course forward.

Yet, as the report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 33/198, informs us, negotiations to attain the objectives of the new international economic order have, in the last six years, yielded results which "fall considerably short of their initial targets or they have shifted focus from bold changes to attempts at partial adaptation".

This has been attributed to several stumbling blocks: the failure to integrate efforts aimed at managing the world economy with those efforts designed to restructure the world economy; the failure to recognize sufficiently the organic link between the current economic difficulties of the industrialized countries and the underlying structural disequilibrium in the existing international division of labour and in the international financial and trading system; the failure by the developing countries to effectively exert their political leverage and the lack of systematic co-operation regarding the supply and use of energy. In short, there has been a failure to take cognizance of our mutual interdependence in a changing world.

I am convinced that members of the Assembly will all agree that it is unacceptable that our generation, which has had the good fortune of living in this advanced stage of human evolution and which possesses such an unprecedented access to information, knowledge and means, should not also have the vision and commitment required in improving the human conditions now and in the future. For I also believe that the future of mankind is by no means predetermined; but it is also not a random occurrence, nor does it essentially obey factors outside our control.

The human future will be a result of human design -- for better or for worse. And the human future will be one -- one for the world as a whole. A closely knit network of environmental, technological, economic, socio-political and security interrelationships binds all mankind organically together, despite our heterogeneity and our pluralism, differences in regimes and uneven levels of development. None of us -- not even those who at present are the strongest and richest -- can disengage ourselves from the others and choose goals or options independent of the key imperatives of mankind.

This special session is a follow-up of the sixth special session. But its agenda has been enriched by the decision of the General Assembly to adopt a new international development strategy and to launch, following the initiative of the Summit of non-aligned countries, a round of global and sustained negotiations on international economic co-operation for development.

Since 1961, when the concept of a "development decade" was initiated, the United Nations has prepared two global and decennial development strategies. The strategy which we will consider for adoption at this session is supposed

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to be "new". It is new in the sense that it draws inspiration from the long-term goal of the international community to establish a new international economic order which entails very far-reaching changes in world economic relations. It is based on the recognition, now broadly shared, that the present international economic system is not efficient; that it does not distribute burdens and benefits evenly, nor does it foster the full use of the world's productive potential.

The new strategy therefore cannot afford to omit, as did previous ones, specifications for concrete measures with respect to structural changes and to the management of the world economy. Nor can it take the trajectory of the developed world for granted, as the perspectives for the future are heavily shrouded in uncertainty and as the development of the developing countries will have a significant influence on the future course of the developed countries. And traditional options for action are foreclosed by failures of the past.

It is imperative to finalize the text of the new international development strategy in the light of all those considerations. Agreement on growth and financial targets or on relevant policies that are crucial in implementing the strategy is essentially a normative and hence a political undertaking. It is no less than a judgement on how far Governments -- developed and developing -- are prepared to make efforts and sacrifices to advance development beyond what is otherwise possible.

It is my confident hope that Member States will express here their sincere willingness, in sovereignty, to undertake obligations and to make commitments in order to adopt a strategy that will be both new and effective. We should all bear in mind that nothing in the way of fundamental change by, and for, the people of all countries, can be expected without sustained efforts and setting bold targets and pursuing them within a stipulated time-frame.

The new international development strategy is concerned with providing mechanisms for the acceleration of the economic development of the developing countries. These mechanisms require the establishment of a restructured and properly functioning world economy that would provide the necessary environment for the sustained growth of both the developed and the developing countries. This is the focus of the global negotiations. The challenge of these negotiations is to end the drift and the uncertainties now enveloping the world economy.

The global round of negotiations can only be meaningful if the various groups of countries confront -- with their commitment and undertaking -- the imperative of an evolving international co-operation which recognizes the interdependence of problems in the fields of raw materials, energy, trade, development, money and finance, as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 34/138 of 1979.

I do not believe that there is any viable alternative to global negotiations. A number of initiatives are currently under active

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consideration by Governments. They are aimed at changing and shaping a climate that can enlarge the prospects of global agreement. But those initiatives can only bear fruit if this special session succeeds in infusing a dynamic of hope by launching the global negotiations.

The momentous questions underlying this special session touch the interests of everyone and the issues we will discuss confront each one of us with historic responsibilities. What kind of world do we want to build? What kind of future are we preparing for the coming generations? These issues are of particular significance to the poor who constitute almost half of mankind. It would be wise of us to listen to the voices of the poor, the excluded and the oppressed who have paid the highest price for the passing, albeit lingering, order and who can no longer be kept in convenient silence.

The tasks before us are immense but with the political will and determination we can make this session proceed on a path of significant movement forward in our common endeavours. Our objective must be to move from the present impasse and advance to genuine international co-operation in the true spirit of interdependence. Towards this goal all must be involved. No one should be excluded. The developed countries -- both the market economies and the centrally planned economies -- as well as the developing countries, have a vital responsibility to ensure the success of this session. Above all, we must approach this session, not as adversaries, but as partners in the cause of common concerns and mutual interests.

I appeal to all of you to confound the pessimists, to give hope to a humanity that is no longer assured of its survival, by adopting a new international development strategy and launching the global round of negotiations.

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consideration of Governments. They are also at the heart of the
climate that can bring the projects of global agreements. But the
difficulties can only be met in the context of a session devoted to
the theme of how to launch the global agenda.

The momentous questions underlying the global session touch the
interests of everyone and the issues we will discuss reflect each one of us
with historic responsibilities. What kind of world do we want to build? What
kind of future are we preparing for the coming generations? These issues are
of particular significance to the poor who constitute a substantial part of mankind.
It would be wise of us to listen to the voices of the poor, the exploited and
the oppressed who have paid the highest price for the prevailing system.
Justice, order and peace are no longer concepts in convenient silence.

The route before us is long and difficult but with the political will and
determination we can make this session a landmark in the history of mankind.
We must forward in our common endeavour. Out of collective will we can move from
the present impasse and advance to genuine international co-operation in the
true spirit of interdependence. Towards this goal all must be involved. No
one should be excluded. The developed countries with their high incomes
and the centrally planned economies -- as well as the developing countries --
have a vital responsibility to ensure the success of this session. Above all,
we must approach this session not as adversaries, but as partners in the
case of common concerns and mutual interests.

I appeal to all of you to endorse the invitation to give hope to a
humanity that seeks the future of its survival by adopting a new
international development strategy and launching the global fund of
resources.