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## Developing Nation Representatives Meet In Caracas, Venezuela

by John Neagle

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On June 21, ministerial-level representatives of 127 Third World nation governments assembled in Caracas to discuss new development strategies for the 1990s. The event marked the 25th anniversary of the Group of 77's establishment. Although the Group's membership today surpasses the original 77, the loose assembly of developing nations continues to use Group of 77 as its title. Opening statements were delivered by Group of 77 president, Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Haji Abu Hassan, UN Conference on Trade and Development secretary general Kenneth Dadzie, and Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez. The three speakers agreed that despite certain successes registered in the organization's first 25 years, many serious challenges remain. Examples mentioned were the deterioration of Third World economies and the stagnation of North-South dialogue in recent years. Perez called for strengthening of cooperation relationships of all kinds within the "South," or among Third World nations. Resumption of productive dialogue with industrialized nations, he said, will be viable only in the event of meaningful and sustained relations among Third World nations, and developing nation blocs. The Venezuelan president also urged the Group of 77 to broaden its agenda to include not only economic issues, but also social, environmental and cultural issues, among others. Later in the day, Mexican Foreign Minister Fernando Solana called on the Group of 77 to take charge of their own destinies and assume responsibility for economic reforms aimed at increasing productivity and reducing income distribution inequities. Solana asserted that in the past 25 years, very little if any progress has been made in reducing the gap between rich and poor nations, nor in reducing income inequities within Third World nations. The minister continued by declaring that in the context of current socio-economic crises, developing nations need "fewer words and more action." He added, "We cannot accept another prolonged period of good intentions. After all the speeches are over with, no one will do for us that which each one of us can do for ourselves." Solana proposed including discussion of the causes of developing nations' economic problems originating in "an international economic crisis." He said the foreign debt problem is only one manifestation of the global crisis. (At present, the Third World as a whole owes about \$1.3 trillion to industrialized nation governments and banks.) Next, Solana insisted that Third World nations' "agenda of responsibilities" must also include environmental deterioration, and discussion of the role of the state as producer of goods and services. The minister said state enterprises must be competitive in both domestic and international arenas in order to survive and serve as a positive influence on national economies. Conspicuously absent from the proceedings were observers from the most advanced industrialized nations. Only Canada was represented in Caracas by a high-level official, Foreign Minister Joe Clark. The US, Britain and France decided to send no official observers, nor are their respective embassies in Venezuela planning to monitor the meeting. In addition, the World Bank is not represented at the proceedings. In addition to Canada, the only other non-member nations sending official observers are Greece, Spain, Australia and China. These observers are low-level officials. (Basic data from Notimex, Xinhua, 06/21/89)

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