

VOA Special English Development Report

GROUP OF 77 MEETING

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Development Report.

A large group of developing nations held its highest level conference earlier this month. The Group of 77 met in Havana, Cuba. Three thousand delegates and more than 50 heads of state attended.

There are 133 member nations in the G77. The recent conference was called the South Summit. Its top goal was to develop cooperative economic plans and policies. The delegates discussed the growing worldwide market and ways for their countries to profit from it. They also discussed the large amounts of money that many G77 countries owe to rich nations.

The organization agreed to create a decision-making group. The chairman of the G77, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, spoke to reporters about this after the conference ended. He said a decision-making group will permit the organization to speak with one voice. This will help the organization enact change within the World Trade Organization.

The powers of the G77 decision-making group will be defined during the next few months. It is expected to include well-known leaders like Mr. Obasanjo, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and South African President Thabo Mbeki.

The final declaration of the South Summit confirmed a

link between development and democracy. The delegates promised to support democracy and strengthen the rule of law. The declaration said that member nations would honor internationally recognized human rights.

The delegates' statement called for working with international financial groups like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But the delegates also expressed their concern about the demands made by these organizations. Developing nations want to get their products on the worldwide market more easily. They do not believe they should have to honor all labor and environmental rules that rich nations have established.

The South Summit Declaration also called on industrial nations to cancel the debts of poor nations. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said this is necessary if poor countries are to pay for programs to fight poverty within their borders.

This VOA Special English Development Report was written by Caty Weaver. This is Bill White.

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