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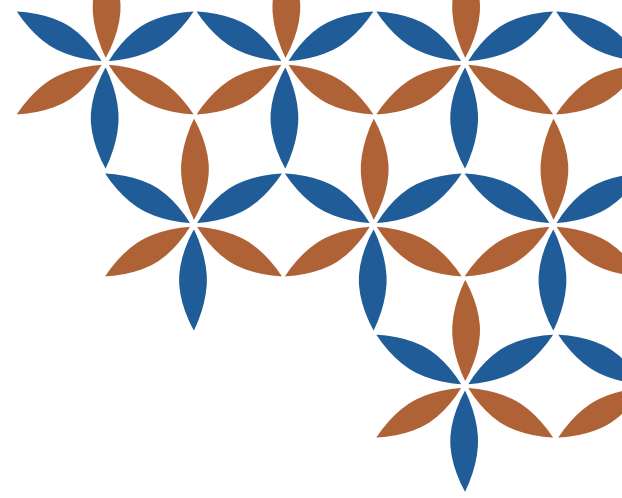


منظمة التعاون الجنوبي  
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# *Why the* **Greater South?**

*A Dialogue with the Secretary-General*  
*Manssour Bin Mussallam*

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## Why the Greater South?

*A Dialogue with the Secretary-General*

**I**n this dialogue, the Secretary-General Manssour Bin Mussallam discusses the idea of the Greater South —its origin, rationale, and relevance— in understanding the need for a new form of multilateralism that is based on equality, equity and solidarity as well as mutual cooperation in addressing development challenges and planetary threats of our era. He explains that the term Greater South enables an emancipation from false or arbitrary geographical limitations, recognising a South in the North and a North in the South.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This dialogue with the Secretary-General was recorded in September 2022. It has been edited in the summer of 2023 for greater clarity and in order to reflect the adoption, since, of General Assembly Resolution GA/RES/23/12.

Interviewer: ***Why the Greater South?***

**Secretary-General:** I think that we must first ask: “Why the South?”, before addressing the meaning and rationale of the Greater South. The discourse of international development that we have known over the years is a discourse directed towards countries that were qualified, in the past, as the “Third World”, then also qualified as “underdeveloped” or “developing”. Today, in general, amplified by multilateral bodies, these countries are now referred to as countries of the South or the Global South.

Interviewer: ***Is the term “Global South” a multilateral body category?***

**Secretary-General:** Yes, and no – it may not have been at its origin, but it is a term that multilateral bodies have certainly started to use in the generalist sense, in addition to more precise categories such as *low income*, *middle income*, and so on. But, overall, one may argue that “Global South” is a term that multilateral bodies have popularised. In any event, the international development discourse has historically been directed to those countries, it’s a discourse *for*, not *of* nor *from*, the Global South. I think it would therefore be interesting to rewind the tape slightly, from the perspective of those countries.

To go back in history to consider the perspective of those countries that make up the majority of the world, countries that emerged – at different times, yet most of them in the 20th century, but also earlier if one takes into account Latin America, which had also been colonised earlier – from colonialism, in a world that at that time, for most of them, was the 20th century, that is within a bipolar world order. Emerging from colonialism within that context, they realised the need for a space of their own, with the Bandung Conference in 1955, and subsequent founding of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. And it seems to me reductive and simplistic to explain the creation of that movement, to limit it to its historical context of a bipolar world order. The name of the movement itself, of course, can give the misleading impression that its only purpose was to affirm neutrality with regard to the United States, the capitalist bloc, and the Soviet Union, the socialist bloc.

Yet, in practice, from the very first days of the movement, it was clear that most of the countries in the movement were either closer to the Soviet Union, or to the United States. For ideological reasons, they were either closer to capitalism or closer to socialism. So, it is a wrong reading of history and of the movement to assume, because of its name, that non-alignment – understood as neutrality – was its only purpose. My position is as follows: when you read some of the joint declarations of the Summits of the Non-Aligned Movement at the time, you realise that the member countries, having emerged from colonialism within the context of the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, realised that the bipolar world order did not respond to their development interests.

And since the world order established by the two superpowers did not respond to their development interests, they were going to join efforts to create a third world order, which would, in fact, respond to their aspirations. At least that was the intention. With regard to the Non-Aligned Movement's achievements, on the other hand, they were not numerous, partly because of its nature as a movement without a permanent secretariat, without institutions working daily to implement the declarations. It inevitably became conference where, every three years, countries could coordinate positions – which is important, but nevertheless falls short of the initial ambition.

The more interesting phenomenon, beyond an assessment of deliverables, is that the bipolar world came to an end, but the Non-Aligned Movement survived. To some degree, this confirms my earlier point – the movement was never limited to non-alignment with regard to either bloc. And although I am not sure that it is still a conscious purpose of the Non-Aligned Movement today, the creation of a different world order clearly remains an unconscious aspiration, which explains its longevity. Why does the South start from there, you may ask? Because the world order today, the international development discourse, and – it must be said – the *industry* that was built around that development purpose, even with the best of intentions – such as in the case of many NGOs –, still do not respond to our authentic development interests as countries.

There is still a need to build genuine alternatives, which is what links us together as countries that are otherwise quite diverse. That is my first point to explain our focus on South-South cooperation, to answer the question of “Why the South?” – we still haven’t started to address the “Greater South”. My second point pertains to relations between the North and the South. Because I have never thought that North-South cooperation is unnecessary or that it is undesirable. It would be, in my opinion, insanity to state such a thing, and even more so to believe it. But on this matter, I have two sub-points: first, we have to define the nature, the purposes, of North-South cooperation.

Interviewer: ***Of course, that is, under what conditions does this cooperation take place?***

**Secretary-General:** Absolutely. And my position there is that it has to be genuine cooperation, which implies two parties with equality in status, but also with equity in the relationship, underpinned by a spirit of solidarity – which is practiced horizontally – instead of charity – which is practiced vertically. As matters stand today, however, any person from the South – whether or not in government – knows that it is not the case, that relations with the North are fundamentally unequal, often inequitable, and – when taking into account well-intentioned civil society organisations – charitable at best. The question, then, is how do we address this issue? And my view is that the only way to achieve authentic, genuine cooperation – what the Universal Declaration of Balanced and Inclusive Education qualifies as “mutually beneficial partnerships of equals” – is through the collective of the South, to rebalance the unbalanced relationship between North and South.

The second sub-point that I have is that for North-South cooperation to be efficient and effective, and for it to respond to our development interests – to not just reproduce an unjust dynamic of eternal dependency – we have to cooperate more broadly, more sustainably, more deeply between countries in the South as a pre-condition. I mention this as a pre-condition because we share realities, aspirations and challenges in the South that do not exist

in the North. And that also means that we have knowledge, experience, *expertise* on those issues that the North does not have, even when some seek to lecture us on those matters. For example, the issue of diversity, the need for the respect of diversity. In this case, the South has historically been, and continues to be, much more diverse, even within nations, than countries in the North. We have millennia-old endogenous knowledge of diversity.

But in more concrete, *technical* terms, lest anyone say that I am engaging in pure sophistry, let us take the case of the education system. We know today – putting aside momentarily the commitment in the UDBIE as well as in other declarations that have preceded it, as we were not the first to recognise this – that the best form of inclusion as a basis – I say as a basis as there are other dimensions, for which we also advocate – is mother tongue education. Beyond the numerous, countless studies that have demonstrated this, it simply makes a lot of sense. Many students arrive to school having the double challenge of learning the content and also learning the language in which they are being taught, resulting on lower grades.

For a lot of them, that understandably results also in alienation and push back. To the extent that some of them may even develop an inferiority complex, thinking that they are not capable enough, or having to repeat years until their parents, perhaps, conclude that they are simply not made for academic studies. Even for those who do manage to finish their education, they may – understandably – have results in their assessments that are lesser than their classmates who are learning in their mother tongue, exacerbating or reproducing the pre-existing injustice when it comes to higher education or employability.

We know this fact already, and we hence collectively recognise the need for mother tongue education to address – beyond the formalism of principles, but also for pragmatic purposes – the social reproduction of inequality through education. This is an issue of particular interest across the South: Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia. Why is that? In the Philippines over 120 languages are spoken, and in Nigeria the number is estimated to

be over 630, and in Bolivia the constitution officially recognises 37. This extraordinarily beautiful diversity is, simultaneously, a considerable challenge for an education system – generally centralised, but even when not centralised –, because of the technical complexity not only of providing equally qualitative education in all those languages, but also of preserving a national language and culture as a source of unity.

After all, whilst we are unwavering in our commitment to the recognition and respect of cultural diversity, one does not want cultural sedition or isolation. There is also the issue of resources, in addition to technical complexity – how to publish pedagogical content, pedagogical material, textbooks in all these languages? How to train teachers in all these languages? And how to do so at the same levels of quality, since automated translations are conspicuously not an option? The development discourse and, in continuation of this example, the international education discourse remain very Eurocentric or North-centric. We are blinded by the educational examples of the North.

This does not mean that we do not have a lot to learn from, for instance, Scandinavian, Nordic education models, but we must have the lucidity to understand that we have our own peculiarities, which go beyond funding. The reality of linguistic diversity does not exist at all, or does not exist at the same level or *scope*, in Northern countries. They have a diversity that is going to include at most two or three, perhaps four languages, and in any case almost everyone already speaks the same language as their mother tongue. Even in the case of a country such as France that has historically had, in fact, considerable linguistic diversity, virtually all French citizens today consider French, and not their regional language, to be their mother tongue. This is not our case.

We may accordingly learn whatever it is that we want from those systems, from those Nordic models of education, but they simply do not have the mechanisms to respond to that challenge, to transform that challenge into a richness for society, because it is not a reality that they face. Yet the Philip-

pines, on the other hand, has experiences and initiatives regarding mother tongue education. Nigeria has experiences and initiatives in this sense, and so does Bolivia. Even if they may not be completely successful initiatives, one can in any case learn from shortcomings as well. Collaboration between Bolivia, Nigeria, and the Philippines, for instance, becomes indispensable and is the pre-condition for any true North-South cooperation in terms of educational inclusion – because without that basis, our endeavours will only benefit a privileged few.

That is the second sub-point that I had about my second point regarding the rationale for the South. The first point was that the current world order does not serve our development interests as countries, and our common recognition of the need for genuine alternatives, brings us together in the South. The second point was regarding relations between North and South, which I had divided into two sub-points: first sub-point was that to achieve authentic cooperation amongst equals, we need to act as a collective (the South) to re-balance relations with the North; the second sub-point was that we share some challenges and aspirations that make cooperation amongst ourselves not only desirable and necessary, but also a pre-condition for any effective North-South cooperation.

I come to the third point to explain “Why the South?”, before arriving to the “Greater South”. The third point is intimately linked to the previous two. In addition to looking at the world order, looking at the development models that have been promoted and implemented by the North, and that we are still trying to implement and that do not serve our development interests, we now know that they are development models that not only do not respond to *our* development interests but also – with this being the major difference compared to when the Non-Aligned Movement was founded – that do not serve the interest of the *North*, looking at the matter from a macro perspective. Because this world order, these development models are leading us to a climate crisis, a climate catastrophe, that is, they are leading the world to the point of unravelling.



Interviewer: ***And I suppose that they have also demonstrated global financial crises, and we are still suffering from those crises.***

**Secretary-General:** Certainly, but some could say, in particular orthodox economists, that it is a necessary natural cycle and that, in spite of those crises, it the best option that we have. Whilst I would not necessarily agree with this assessment, the debate becomes an ideological one, a subjective discussion. Whereas I am seeking to make my third point looking at the objective data. We can disagree about what is moral or immoral, what is right or wrong, and we can prioritise differently with our respective, subjective reasons to do so. But where is no debate is the objective, scientific data around which almost universal consensus has been achieved. And in this regard, we now know, for the first time in history, *objectively*, that these models do not serve *anyone's* interests in the long-term.

But in addition to the climate crisis, the climate catastrophe to which these models are leading us, in objective terms, with the COVID-19 crisis, we also saw the vulnerability of these models, we witnessed a crisis in the North in terms of the masks, in terms of the production necessary to secure personal protective equipment and to confront the crisis generally. At the time, many of these countries talked about re-industrialisation. But well, that is another issue. The point is that the time has come to build authentic alternatives, since these models not only do not serve our interests in the South, but also endanger the future of Humanity as a whole. And such alternatives can only be built from the South. Why? Not because we somehow believe that the North has failed and it is now our turn to venture – that would be childish, and that is not my purpose. But because, in the context of the climate crisis, for example, we know that in the North, before any genuine alternative can be built, the existing models have to undergo considerable deconstruction. And what has historically been our disadvantage and the tragedy for our peoples also becomes, today, an advantage in the sense that we have much less deconstruction to do, and we can focus on construction.

Once again, I make use of the example of the climate crisis because it is the most objective of all and where there is the least debate, but neither do I limit the rationale to it. In sum, these three, broad points taken together constitute my answer to the initial question “Why the South?”. We are now in a position, I believe, to address your actual question: “Why the *Greater South*?”, a term which I gradually started to use, first by proposing it in our Programme, where it was inscribed by the General Assembly, and then in some of my interventions. First of all, because I have a profound dissatisfaction with the term “*Global South*”. I must acknowledge that I have used it prolifically in the past, and that I still use it in many cases today, but it is simply because it is the most popular term, and it makes the conversation easier. I allow myself to use it less if I know I will have the time to explain why I am not using that terminology.

My dissatisfaction with “*Global South*” is – which is my first point about why the *Greater South*? – that one has to realise that the language we use shapes our perspective of the world and influences our reading of the present. And to build alternatives, we must have terms that serve that purpose. I recall a recorded dialogue between Chomsky and Foucault, where Foucault, speaking to the moderator, says – and I am paraphrasing – “I very much admire Mr Chomsky’s aspiration and determination to build more egalitarian, more just societies, but I think that before we engage in this construction, we have to identify the centres of power and criticise them. When we talk about centres of power, we think of the military, the police, the forces that can be used in a repressive way by the state apparatus, but the real power is not there, but in the university, in culture, in art, etc. If we do not criticise these centres of power first, to deconstruct the power dynamics that they contain, in building the new society, we run the constant risk of reproducing these same dynamics, in a different form, in the society of the future.”

Similarly, I should like us to do the same with our conception of the world and, in this case, it seems to me that the term *Global South* disguises certain ideologies. And if we do not unveil these ideologies contained within the term itself, how are we to criticise them? And if we cannot criticise them,

how are we going to deconstruct the power dynamics which they contain? And if the deconstruction of these power dynamics is hence not possible, then how are we to build the genuine alternatives to which we aspire? I state that “Global South” disguises certain ideologies because it gives the impression of a category based upon geography, on something objective. Yet Australia is geographically in the South, nevertheless no one considers Australia as part of the South. Cuba and Mexico are both geographically in the North, yet nobody considers Cuba nor Mexico as belonging to the North.

So, clearly, there is a hidden, or at least unidentified, ideology there. We must start to use other terms, accordingly, in order to not misread our reality and misdirect our endeavours. Needless to say, I have heard alternatives, which I consider to be equally unsatisfactory. For instance, “the developing world” or “developing countries” is deeply problematic as we should first define what development is. When one says *developing*, juxtaposed to countries that are *developed*, the implication is that one has to become like the developed countries, to catch up, so to speak, and reach the current state of those developed countries. Yet, we know – objectively – that we cannot do so, because if I were to use some magic wand to make everyone live like a Swiss or a Texan, the planet would disintegrate. If I could do that, the world would end instantly since these models of development are, once again, unsustainable ecologically.

So “developing” as a term is no good. Another alternative that I have heard is the “Majority World”. And it has the merit to evidence the conspicuous, which is often forgotten, that the majority of the world is what is now called the *Global South* and which has a minoritised voice. But ultimately, what does that term imply? What virtue or vice, what vision of the world does it contain? I find it to be infertile for our purposes, beyond the initial reminder that our countries constitute the majority of the world. Of course, a term that I do like quite a lot, albeit it may surprise you, is “Third World”. Because “Third World”, to me, does not mean that there is a *first* world, a *second* world and that we rank at third place. Nor is it merely a reference to the bipolar order of the twentieth century which is no more. No, to me,

“Third World” as a term implies the construction of an alternative, from the Third World, by the Third World, but for Humanity – it announces a *third* way. I also appreciate the use of the word “world”, because a world implies diversity and implies different dynamics.

Interviewer: ***“World” implies Humanity. Planet doesn’t imply Humanity, but world does. And it brings this idea that there are possible worlds and that there is not just one truth.***

**Secretary-General:** Absolutely. Nevertheless, “Third World” is a term that is very much loaded – unfairly, in my opinion – in the collective imagination with a most derogatory connotation. And one could fight a battle in that sense, to change that perception of the term. But I believe that one has to choose one’s battles, and that one is not worth fighting, at least not today. So, I started to use the term “Greater South” as an idea, which is partly geographic, but is also intimately linked to the ideas I raised earlier about the need for a world order that responds to the development interests of the South, which simultaneously serves the interest of Humanity as whole, including the North. Again, for better or for worse, we are on a common ship.

With this in mind, the term Greater South enables us to emancipate ourselves a little bit from that false, or at least arbitrary, geographical limitation to also include the South of the North – and also to recognise that there is a North in the South, but that is another matter. What do I mean by the “South of the North”? Belonging to the Greater South – with all that I have said – is not merely to belong to a geographical region, but to belong to a framework, to a movement that is diverse, but one that is directed towards a transformation of society and the world. That is to say, to belong to a club of those who are dissatisfied with the world order. This is where the Greater South theoretically today, and effectively in due course, includes movements such as civil rights movements and labour unions and so on in the North. So, the Greater South comes precisely to propose a new form, a new reading of the world based on everything that I have just said. Although lengthy, I hope that my answer was clear.

Interviewer: ***So, is it actually an inclusive term?***

**Secretary-General:** It is indeed an inclusive term, but it does not sacrifice the journey and the dynamics towards our destination, which is transformation and the building of genuine alternatives, in the name of having as many people as possible on our side.

Interviewer: ***Because it challenges power dynamics that are present in relations, not only in relations between the geographic North and the geographic South, but also in relations within them?***

**Secretary-General:** Yes, in a certain sense. Our position is that unjust power dynamics, the dynamics of injustice are always the same. They translate differently in different contexts, but the *underlying* dynamics, between the lines, are always the same whether we are considering women's rights, the rights of minorities, workers' rights, or indeed, whether we consider inter-state or inter-regional disparities that must be bridged. The dynamics of injustice are always the same. So those movements against injustice in what is called the North are also serving, when taking a macro-view, the same cause.

Interviewer: ***I would like to go back a little bit, possibly to something that is related to this last part. In the first part of this conversation, you referred to the development models of the North, in particular to how they are not useful for the South, and it is clear that they are not useful for the North either, if we look at environmental sustainability for example, and when analysing other forms of marginalisation, which could be about gender, racism, and so on. What I wonder is whether at some point there was a shift, a break between the development models of the North and the recipes of the North for the South, which do not replicate the development model of the North. Instead, they seem to be recipes, if you like, favourable to the Northern models. For example, in the 1990s, the recipe for the South by the North was that everything should be privatised, which was not and still is not the case in the North.***

**Secretary-General:** That is a very good point, with which I fully concur. It would, in fact, be impossible for the South to replicate the model used by the North, putting aside the resource issue, or rather not, since resources are at the heart of the matter. Why? Because it is not in democracy, as is often claimed, that Northern prosperity was made. It is not democracy that led to prosperity in the North. It is exploitation. In other words, if the South had to use exactly the same model, we would have to become colonising countries, exploiting nations, exploiting people, pillaging resources, becoming slavers. On this last point, as a parenthesis, it is unfortunately true, and in the most tragic and *despicable* way, that slavery has been a reality throughout history, across every region of the world.

There were African slaves in Africa, there were African slaves in the Arab world and Arab slaves in the Arab world, there were slaves in indigenous empires in Latin America. And in the North, they are keen to remind us of that whenever slavery is mentioned. And it is a terrible stain in the past of every culture, of every nation, and a stain that we must recognise. Yet, what the North did, which had never been done before in history, was to make an actual industry out of slavery – it industrialised slavery. And from that industry – and colonialism is really an extension of that dynamic – it built its wealth and opulence. In fact, Europe, what will later become the North to include the United States, as Fanon puts it, is literally the creation of the Third World. For centuries the resources: textiles, minerals, gold, coffee have gone to Europe, fattening it in prosperity. Even countries in Europe that did not have colonies greatly benefitted from colonisation and the slave trade, building wealth in and from the so-called ‘markets’ administered by the larger colonial powers.

Interviewer: ***Which is not counted as debt.***

**Secretary-General:** By the logic of the system today, one would be called unreasonable to call it so. And with colonialism, not only did the resources of the South travel to Europe, but these same resources would be sold back to us, processed, with an added value. You will notice that the dynamics

have not entirely changed. But to return to the main point, as a conclusion, it would be impossible – and immoral – for us to adopt the actual models that led the North to its present prosperity.

Interviewer: ***It's not capitalism that led to wealth, then?***

**Secretary-General:** Well, in addition to industrialised slavery and colonialism, they did develop other models, such as capitalism and eventually neoliberalism, but that is not entirely how Europe and North America developed – this may have increased their wealth further, accelerated their development, but that is all. And of course, the models that they have almost systematically proposed to us since are models that open the door to *their* own industries, to *their* own companies to come to our countries, to invest in our strategic sectors, and to replicate, in a way, the same extractive dynamic of colonialism.

Interviewer: ***Where they return...***

**Secretary-General:** There is an example that I often give, illustrating my point, from an article in The Guardian published in 2016 or 2017, and although I would have to check the exact figures as it has been so many years since I read it, the article demonstrated that whilst the South received in a given year over 1 trillion dollars in financial inflows, including aid and investments, over 3 trillion dollars left the South to go to the North annually.

Interviewer: ***Taking all that you have said into account, it seems to me that a central issue is multilateralism, and its direction. That is, how to lay the foundations of a new multilateralism that also takes into account – this is a little bit the OSC itself, I suppose – these power dynamics that are present in all relations, and how to re-balance them in order to achieve a more peaceful world where coexistence is possible?***

**Secretary-General:** As you've said, to a large degree this is the OSC proposal, the very structure of the OSC itself. Because the premise of my entire

answer, the foundation of everything that I will say to you on that matter is that there is no multilateralism without multilateral bodies. Hence, for a new form of multilateralism, we need a new kind of multilateral body – and everything that we are striving to do in the establishment, consolidation and development of the OSC goes in that direction. Now, what kind of multilateral bodies are needed? And I will strive to answer without explaining the OSC itself, but draw more general principles.

My first point – even if it may seem simplistic, which I do not think it is, albeit it may be simple – is that an intergovernmental organisation cannot in its own organisational structure replicate the power dynamics it is supposed to address. The obvious case study is the United Nations, where the former UN Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan, himself recognised the structural deficiency of the system and was one of those who tried to reform it. In this extraordinary institution that is the assembly of all nations, not all nations have the same voice, where some initiatives may be stopped by one, single state – by what appears to be a divine right – because it has a permanent seat on the Security Council, with the right of veto.

We are told, however, that the Security Council's existence is crucial to pass important resolutions in service of peace, of collective security, in a timely manner, and the right of veto is equally important to avoid escalations as a result of votes – in other words, to ensure consensus in decision making. This argument would have to be debated, but I can understand that it is necessary, at times, for matters of great importance, of great urgency, and if it is well regulated, to have the possibility of smaller committees to take decisions. Accepting this premise, however, that certain countries have more voice than others, remains unacceptable and replicates the dynamics of inequality and injustice. Why not have a Security Council represented exclusively by regional bodies – with the African Union, the Arab League, CELAC, the European Union and so on, themselves composed of Member States, each having one vote with the right of veto.



This would, in my view, make more sense, if a Security Council must exist, to address the unjust power dynamics of the present order. In any event, my first point is that no State should have a greater voice within a multilateral body than any other. There are, of course, other aspects to raise about the new kind of international organisations that we need, but it would lead me away from the context of your question. We will talk about this matter in the given context. Then, there is a work of consciousness that one must do – and it is not simple nor is it easy. It may not be very attractive for me to state this, because there isn't a technical recipe to be given on consciousness-building, but whether we like it or not, multilateralism is politics in the best sense of the word – a project for the world – and just as national politics requires pedagogy, that is a process of dialogue and mutual learning, so does the new multilateralism.

Interviewer: ***Before continuing, I would like to return to the United Nations for a moment. There has been criticism of the UN for ineffectiveness in many instances. But there's a certain recognition as well that, whilst it may not be perfect, it is a space that must be preserved because it's the one that we were able to build, and it fulfils an important function. Similarly, for example, in Latin America and the Caribbean today, there is great dissatisfaction with the Organization of American States (OAS), which was not quite the case ten years ago. Nevertheless, the OAS remains, overall, a space in which countries of the Americas are proactive. Why do you think that we cling to the institutions that we were able to build, despite being unable to really transform them into something else, nor have we been able to build new, alternative institutions?***

**Secretary-General:** Well, I suppose that one could consider the following image: the institutions that we have are akin to *lifeboats*, saving us from drowning. Now, we realise that we are not given the same seats as the first-class passengers, by whom they were built, and we are even left in the water, only being pulled up when our heads plunge under. Yet, even if we are unhappy with this state of affairs, we simply do not see any another lifeboat.

Interviewer: *Or a log.*

**Secretary-General:** If we were to have another lifeboat, one with more room, we would probably take a seat there – not to abandon the current one, but secure ourselves better and, perhaps, so that the passengers of the current lifeboat change their attitude towards us – the drowning that currently have no other choice but to accept remaining in the water – and start cooperating with us so that all of our lifeboats reach safe harbour. In one of my interventions, in the context of climate change, I had stated that there can be no deconstruction without the plans for reconstruction. I will perhaps go even further now, in this context. The plan for reconstruction is insufficient: we must have parallel construction, not as a substitute but as a complement to the other lifeboats, to enable us all to reach safe harbour – that is, the point is not to unmake the lifeboat where the first-class passengers are seated, but to build additional ones from which we can jointly coordinate our navigation to reach safe harbour. More concretely, regarding the United Nations, it would be folly to seek to unmake it. As you rightfully point out, it plays a crucial role despite its shortcomings. But we must also have other spaces, additional spaces that have been designed not to replicate these shortcomings.

One manner to do so, beyond the issue of the UN Security Council as a structural inequality, we must also recognise that there is also economic power within multilateral institutions. When a State – but also in the case of private sector or civil society donors – contributes half, or even a third of the budget of an international organisation, that contributor naturally has the power to dictate the direction of the Organisation, and if it does not dictate, the Secretariat of that international organisation may pre-emptively, perhaps even unconsciously, act in the manner in which it believes the given State or donor expects it to act. The multilateral body has to become financially independent – I say financially, as it cannot and must not be completely independent: that is, the Member States must actively take decisions and have oversight over its works –, because that is the only way to ensure *true* democracy in the Assembly of sovereign Member States, where decisions are voted.

Now, you also asked for my opinion as to why we do not seem to have been able to build genuine alternatives, in terms of multilateralism and development models. I think there are a couple of reasons, perhaps more technical and which I believe that you are more interested in hearing than my elaboration on the fact that we did not know how to truly build an internationalist consciousness, which I still think we need to do.

First, in the institutions that we were able to build, but which did not evolve into the genuine alternatives that we wanted, I believe that we replicated many aspects of the models of the first multilateral bodies, because we assumed that the issue was that of individuals or specific nations, when the fundamental problem was structural. Or, as an over-correction of the structural issues that we saw within those first multilateral bodies, we fashioned our new organisations in such a manner that they became impotent, without any discretionary power, constantly requiring the Heads of State and Government to meet in order to take a decision. In short, the first problem is that we replicated the models of the first multilateral bodies with all their structural shortcomings, or, because we were displeased by the structural issues of those bodies, we ended up, inadvertently, fashioning our new organisations in a way that prevented them from doing anything tangible at all.

Interviewer: ***Do you mean that, out of fear of being harmed, we created impotent organisations?***

**Secretary-General:** In short, and partly, yes. The second reason, I believe, is that when we did know how to articulate genuine alternatives, neither replicating existing models nor making them impotent, we did so on ideological grounds. Left-wing organisations for left-wing governments, or neo-liberal organisations for neo-liberal governments. The result is that, with a change in government, the entire endeavour collapses. In other words, whereas we must have an ideological framework – which is transformation, sovereignty, respecting rights, etc. –, it nevertheless needs to be a sufficiently broad framework within the context of multilateralism, to recognise the

diversity of countries and divergences amongst governments. It must be a framework that allows Member States to feel that they belong, regardless of ideological differences, where a government of the right and a government of the left can equally contribute and cooperate. Yet every time we articulated a truly alternative structure, a truly different structure, we unfortunately ideologised it to such an extent that we condemned it to fail.

The third point that I should like to make is that we did not give enough voice, within those new intergovernmental organisations, and in a slightly more direct way than representation by the government, to the peoples. For the avoidance of doubt, let me first make it clear that it is *absolutely not* the role of any multilateral body to interfere in the internal affairs of a State. Having stated this and maintained it, we may now raise the known fact that many countries of the South receive considerable pressure, in particular financial, from external sources regarding the policies that they should like to adopt – what amounts to nothing less than threats. In many cases, in particular in the case of financial pressure, the Governments of those States, understandably, to ensure the continuity of basic services in the interest of their people, consider that they may have no other choice but to concede to that external pressure.

But if there is public opinion pressure from the people, both nationally and internationally, with regard to a particular decision taken by the Member States within a multilateral body – which is a genuine alternative –, that public pressure also becomes an instrument and a line of defence for the concerned State in the face of external, mostly financial, pressure. And that is where I tell you that we haven't included the people sufficiently within the framework of our genuinely alternative institutions. That is, whilst I believe that there is work to be done at the level of the government towards its own people – which is an internal matter of each country –, there is also work to be done at the level of multilateral bodies to involve civil society groups, a critical mass, beyond the major NGOs that are, it must be said, a power in themselves and not necessarily representative – even if they may happen to be shapers – of public opinion.

My fourth point, which builds on the previous and is cross-cutting, is that, historically, we have also been too transparent, or too secretive. That is, in the former case, genuine alternatives have too often – and with the best of intentions – publicly stated the end goal, what would be done to achieve it and how, when implementation would begin, what resources would be used, and what contingency plans would be in place. In other words, they have too often gone out stating the whole strategy, in the face of powerful interests that are being disturbed. On the other end of the spectrum, some genuinely alternative initiatives, in an attempt to precisely prevent sabotage, were designed and implemented in a manner that was too opaque and secretive to ever generate the necessary levels of support to achieve their objectives. In summary, the fourth and final reason, I believe, is that we have either been so secretive that we have not been able to build the critical mass needed to realise our aspirations, or so transparent that we doomed ourselves to sabotage. Those are the four points that I think answer your question.





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