

In 1973 and 1974, it had seemed that the political solidarity of the Group was more important than the taking of positions based on an assessment of national interest regarding individual economic issues. Developing countries judged that national interest was best pursued through political solidarity. This decision grew in part from the hope of emulating the success of OPEC with respect to other raw materials produced by developing countries. Solidarity paved the way to successful leadership by the more radical and outspoken proponents of a New International Economic Order, such as Algeria.

During 1975 there were clear signs of cracks in Group of 77 solidarity. The national interests of developing countries are in certain cases diametrically opposed — between, for example, exporters and importers of the same commodity. Many other commodities are not amenable to the kind of cartel action taken by OPEC, because of the possibility of substitution, the range of countries producing them, and the nature of such commodities. Careful analysis of the provisions of the New Economic Order, as defined by the sixth special session, shows that benefits would accrue largely to the middle-income developing countries, many of which are rich in raw materials and on the verge of industrialization. There are few provisions that would bring practical benefit to the emerging sub-group of developing countries, the Fourth World — those at a very early stage of economic development, poor in natural resources and most seriously affected by rapid increases in food and oil costs.

Those countries were aware that they would continue to need massive quantities of development assistance from developed countries if they were to make economic progress. They were also aware that they had no interest in confrontation with traditional aid donors over issues whose resolution would bring them little in the way of concrete benefits. The middle-income developing countries, already receiving smaller portions of development assistance from developed countries, whose attention was focused increasingly on the poorest countries, were willing to downplay aid and concentrate on economic reforms that would benefit them. The poorest countries were not yet in a position to take that step. Thus, while solidarity among developing countries permitted radical leadership in 1974, the more explicit divergence of views among these countries in 1975 resulted in more moderate leadership, which reflected the balance of interests within the Group of 77.

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The new moderation among developing countries called for an expression of the political determination of developing countries, despite their serious economic difficulties, to take progressive positions on the issues of the New Economic Order. The political prominence of the New Economic Order debate within and among developed countries, coupled with the timing of the seventh special session in a period of Middle East calm for a full 18 months after the sixth session, opened the way to much more positive positions on the part of the representatives of developed countries. Issues had been carefully studied during the 18-month period, and it was generally recognized at a high political level by developed countries that important problems had to be taken to cope with Third World problems if tragedy and confrontation were to be avoided.

The overriding instruction many delegations took with them to New York was to reach an agreement, if necessary at the cost of reassessing some positions of principle that had been firmly held in the past. There was a strong political will to succeed, and to be seen to succeed. Countries that were not directly involved in the substantive negotiations, such as the U.S.S.R., which took the view that the issues were between the developing countries and Western industrialized countries only, did not inject the usualaneous elements into the debate and facilitated the process of reaching an agreement.

Negotiating groups

A final factor that led to the success of the negotiations at the seventh special session was the way in which the negotiations themselves were conducted. The subject matter was broken down and distributed to small negotiating groups. When an impasse was reached on a specific issue, the main spokesmen for conflicting points of view met privately to see if their differences could be reconciled. This process was made more effective by the presence in New York of negotiators with expertise in their respective economic fields and a political commitment to reaching agreement: Mr. Perez-Cuellar of Venezuela, Mr. Lai of Malaysia, Mr. Amouzegar of Iran, Mr. Enders of the United States and Mr. Hijzen of the European Economic Community. The redoubled efforts of these negotiators included almost continuous private meetings during the last hours of the session.

The package that emerged from the seventh special session was in the form