

seventh special session, and I wish to place on record my appreciation of your important contribution to the work of our delegation.

I wish to review for you briefly my personal reaction to these exercises in which we have been involved in the past few months. The first point in my view is that significant progress has been made. The report of the Commonwealth Expert Group was a positive contribution to international dialogue and understanding, and gives us an important guide towards practical action to lessen disparities in living standards between rich and poor around the world.

At the Commonwealth finance ministers' meeting in August, ministers gave their general endorsement to this report. The Commonwealth Expert Group will meet again next year to pursue its task in new areas, such as the problems of developing countries, which must import most of their required raw materials. I believe it is worth while mentioning that the report of the Commonwealth Expert Group was the first, in a sense, "consensus" document that had been produced by representatives of developing countries and by representatives of developed countries. It was the first consensus document; and the endorsement of the document by the ministers of finance was also a new departure.

It was subsequently tabled and put into the flow of material at the United Nations seventh special session. While it did not have the prominence in the debate that the main document, which was produced by the non-aligned, had, it still, in my view, was a significant development. The document of the non-aligned was the focus of debate and it was, of course, supplemented by the statement of the United States, which subsequently put into play its own proposals, and the Commonwealth document was there as well.

I believe those of us who were present at the seventh special session...would have observed a greatly improved atmosphere for debate and negotiations at the United Nations. There were flexibility, foresight and goodwill on all sides of the table and the approach which emerged from that session is one which we welcome and support. There was a much greater meeting of minds at the seventh special session, and this resulted in a consensus approach in dealing with the difficulties and needs of developing countries.

I believe the view would probably be shared by other members of the Committee who were in New York that the statement of the United States played a crucial role in this changed atmosphere. Certainly, in the absence of an American initiative of that importance, probably the session would not have resulted in the adoption of a consensus