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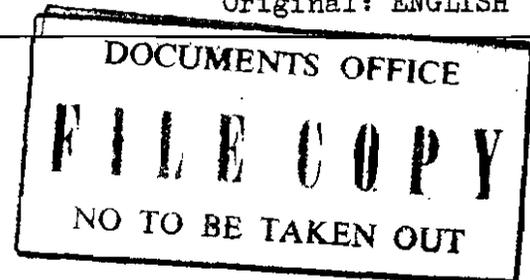
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STATEMENT BY MR. MIGUEL S. BIONCZEK, MEXICO'S REPRESENTATIVE  
AT THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Executive Secretary of the Commission,  
Distinguished Delegates,

May I on behalf of my Government extend to you our best wishes for the full success of the deliberations of the Seventh session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, held in this beautiful and hospitable country of Kenya. May I, furthermore, express my sincere appreciation to his Excellency, Dr. J.G. Kiano, head of the Kenya delegation, for kind words with which he referred in yesterday's debate to our presence as an observer country at this annual meeting of the Commission.

Although we live far away from this continent, our contacts with independent African countries are steadily increasing. During the past two years Mexico was host to a number of African official missions, and just last week we had the honour to have as a visitor the distinguished Minister of Agriculture of Uganda. These visits to Mexico are the outcome of a growing interest in Africa in our economic and social development experiences. As you know, only a quarter of a century ago we were still an underdeveloped country the way they are defined in any textbook on economics. Today, as a consequence of persistent efforts of the State and the private sector, the pragmatic approach to development problems, the continued channeling of public investment into infrastructure, basic industries and education, and the mobilization of human resources for developmental goals, we are - according to countless outside observers - entering the stage of the take-off into self-sustained growth.

But, Mr. Chairman, the economic and social progress registered in Mexico's recent history, together with the consciousness of tasks which still lie ahead before we become a developed economy, make us more and not less aware of a need for broadening a dialogue on international economic problems between the developing and the developed countries, on the one hand, and among the developing countries themselves, on the other. We know that the overall prospects for the expansion of international trade in primary commodities are far from bright and that economic development and industrialization within strictly national framework is becoming more and more difficult. This is why we find it so encouraging to see that our preoccupations - in Mexico and Latin America - are shared by the countries of this continent represented at this ECA session. We believe that only a cool-headed diagnosis of obstacles to economic development can lead us to a fruitful dialogue with the developed countries which are more and more perplexed by growing socio-political tensions in what in the language of Latin American economists is known as the periphery of the world.

The general debate at the present session of the Economic Commission for Africa centers on two issues - that of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and that of regional economic integration. It may be a pure coincidence, but I think there is much more to it, that the first press interview granted to an important foreign magazine by our new President, a few days after the inauguration of his Administration, dealt almost exclusively with the same two issues.

As you know, Mexico not only participated very actively in the Geneva Conference as a member of the Latin American group, but last fall we took part in the work of a special committee, set up by the U.N. Secretary General to elaborate conciliation procedures necessary for effective functioning of the UNTAD as a permanent organ of the United Nations. We consider it as a good sign for the future of this new international mechanism that - thanks to the spirit of compromise, demonstrated by all the major groupings of the U.N. members - such agreement on conciliation procedures was reached, paving the way for

the unanimous adoption by the present U.N. General Assembly of an operative resolution in respect to the UNTAD prospective activities. We do hope that similar spirit of compromise will characterize the UNTAD action in the forthcoming years, as - in our opinion - it is in a long-run interest of both the developing and the developed countries to revise drastically practices of international trade, and adjust them to development needs of Africa, Latin America and Asia. As a matter of fact, the Geneva Conference has already brought certain limited indirect results: the Contracting Parties of the GATT, after very protracted negotiations, have finally agreed on a new chapter of the General Agreement dealing with trade and development; Great Britain set up the Ministry of Overseas Development, and the Soviet Union decided to suspend tariffs on primary products imported from the developing nations.

In respect to regional economic integration, Mexico considers it as a necessity in our part of the world. We are a founding member of the Latin American Free Trade Association which will be five years old next week. Together with other countries of the Western Hemisphere we support with deeds the separate Central American Common Market, of which we are not a member.

These two Latin American integration schemes are making steady progress, which can be measured not only by trade flows but by new cooperation forms in non-commercial fields unknown before in our part of the world. If the progress is not as rapid as some would expect or hope, both schemes are anyway the beginning of an irreversible process which is helping development efforts on national level. Experiences in this respect have convinced us that in the field of regional economic integration the gradualist approach as far as the setting up goals is concerned is the only one guaranteeing positive results. Only by implementing integration programs step by step and by expanding slowly the scope of regional cooperation one dispels mutual fears born from excessively narrow short-term national

considerations and one disarms the opposition of vested interests of all kinds. The road to economic integration of politically sovereign States is neither easy nor short one. This is at least a lesson we are learning in Latin America. Fortunately, in our regional integration endeavours we can count also on outside assistance. The Punta del Este Charter, which founded the Alliance for Progress, expressly states that Latin American integration programs are one of decisive means to accelerate economic development of the area.

We in Mexico are fully aware that economic conditions and socio-cultural heritage differ greatly in our respective continents and that consequently the African road toward regional economic cooperation will not necessarily - and most probably should not - follow our road. But it may well be that some of our experiences in Latin America might be of use to your countries searching for your own appropriate solutions. This statement does not mean that it is our intention to give advice. We ourselves are still in the process of learning how to solve our own problems and our trials and tribulations convinced us that economic development, like charity, must begin at one's own home.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we strongly believe that the acceleration of economic growth in the less developed areas, the most important problem facing today's world, calls for mutual exchange of experiences among the developing countries, so no time is lost in the march towards development and general welfare. Thus, anyone who is interested to see for himself how we are going about accelerating the growth on national and regional level, will be always most heartily welcome in Mexico.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.