**The chair**

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Despite an increase in its member countries (from 77 to 134), the Group of 77, the largest intergovernmental grouping of developing countries in the UN, has retained its original title ‘Group 77’ since 1964. Pakistan and India are its founding members.

The objective of the Group is “to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system.” There was a time when G-77 was highly active and vocal about its agenda. Its ‘joint negotiating capacity’ caused some concerns among certain big powers.

The emergence of third-world countries into an active group with demands to share economic resources and promote an equitable economic order was not acceptable to certain powers. With the change of leadership among member nations, G-77 also changed its tone and tenor. Yet it is the largest intergovernmental group of developing countries, with the objective of a ‘new international economic order’.

Pakistan has been elected the chair of the Group for the year 2022. Previously, in 1977, 1992 and 2007, the country was elected as the chair of this group. For the election of its chairperson, the group follows the principle of ‘geographical rotation’. From January 2022, Pakistan will be the leader and spokesperson of this group.

Pakistan’s ambassador to the UN, Munir Akram, has already handled the chairmanship of the G-77 plus China group in the past years. He is aware of the group’s working mechanism, diversity, common goals and impediments. His diplomatic skills are well-recognised and appreciated among UN circles, but harsh ground realities at the UN cannot be ignored.

G-77 and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) were initiated and organised during the cold war between the communist bloc of Warsaw Pact countries and the capitalist bloc of Nato members.

The activism of G-77 and NAM countries subsided with the end of the cold war between the communist and capitalist blocs of the 20th century. India, which initiated the formation of the NAM in 1961 and is still a member of this group, is now an ally of the US and the superpower’s proxy against China.

The objectives of the 57-year-old G-77 plus China, chartered in 1967 were: a new international economic order that would give them real control over their natural resources, more development assistance, fairer prices for raw material, and better access for their manufactured goods in developed countries’ markets.

The lack of any significant progress is obvious. The world had changed from two superpowers to a unipolar world. Now, China, which was supportive of G-77 goals, has emerged as a global economic power with a new cold war with the US. The Biden Administration’s decision of the ‘partial boycott’ of the Winter Olympics in China is another sign of changed realities of the Sino-American cold war.

Despite all these realities, G-77 remains a significant group of countries from three continents – Asia, Africa and Latin America – and the Caribbean with some common issues and goals. It produces joint declarations on issues of interest and concern at the UN General Assembly, its committees and other UN bodies. The common concern and consensus on global issues and its expression in one voice do make a difference at the UN with 193 member countries.

Even though the North-South dialogue between the developed and developing nations of G-77 has not produced results, the South-South dialogue among the members of G-77 has created a better understanding of common issues and cooperation. Engagement and dialogue among nations is the only way for addressing the issues and finding solutions in this global community of nations.

One hundred and thirty-four member countries of G-77 may have their national and divergent interests, but the common issues of the global economy, the hegemony of big players at the UN, and other challenges that trigger cooperative spirit for joint action on common issues keep them in various blocs. A collective approach yields better results than the actions of an individual member country of the UN.

At the UNGA, matters such as sponsoring resolutions, statements and expansion of the Security Council, are decided on the ‘one country one vote’ basis irrespective of its size, population or location. Thus, such groups of countries are quite effective and helpful in shaping up various UN bodies through nomination or elections.

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