

**A NEW ECONOMIC  
ORDER:  
AN ARAB PERCEPTION**

*by Dr. Clovis Maksoud*

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The Eleventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly has provided the opportunity to initiate and perhaps achieve a dialogue of consequence, a dialogue that presumes interdependence and has, as a purpose, the reorganization of a world economic order. The need for this dialogue, which cannot be overstated, is a need dictated by the dynamics of change and by the obvious requirements that exist in the international economic system. Dialogue presumes a will to rectify the present imbalance in the hope of achieving more equity and justice, both in the realm of production and in the realm of consumption.

It should not be necessary to restate the obvious need but we must reaffirm our commitment to meeting that need. Hence, the principles which we so eagerly proclaim must become the yardstick by which we measure our delivery.

During this debate, attempts have been made to place blame for economic dislocation on the oil exporting countries and on the Arab members of OPEC in particular. The impression conveyed by industrial countries is that oil exporting countries have been oblivious to the sufferings and needs of Third World countries. This attempt to separate Arab oil producing countries from their actual and organic sense of belonging to the Third World is not only false but also mischievous. It is in fact a backhanded manner by which the advanced countries try to obscure their own past injustices, exploitation and present indifference to the legitimate objectives of the Third World. If there is to be a constructive dialogue, it cannot be predicated either on half truths or cover-ups. In searching for the elements of a new economic order, dialogue must be the mechanism by which collective responsibilities are based on collective and mutual obligations and accountability.

The Arab world belongs to the Third World. We are a rich nation of poor people. Seventy-five percent of the Arab people have a per capita income of less than US\$1,000 per year. Within our nation, there are several Arab states which are oil producing and oil exporting. But oil, the source of our current wealth, is