

DN 30/11/90 P  
(Statement by Prime Minister Datuk Sri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the UN Security Council Resolution No.678 on the Iraq-Kuwait Situation, 29 November 1990)

Malaysia, as a member of the Security Council, has supported the adoption of Resolution 678 at a meeting of the Security Council today. The Resolution authorises member states of the United Nations to use all necessary means to uphold and implement Security Council Resolution 660, which condemns Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and which demands the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and all subsequent resolutions of the Security Council to restore international peace and security in the area.

2. This has not been an easy decision for the Malaysian Government to make. The government has considered very carefully all the various factors regarding the situation between Iraq and Kuwait before arriving at its decision. In view of the importance of the subject, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Datuk Haji Abu Hassan Omar, met with the US Secretary of State, James Baker, in Los Angeles on 24 November 1990 conveying our views on the Gulf crisis and on the general question of peace in the Middle East. In addition, our Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, Datuk Razali Ismail, had close consultations with other members of the Security Council and the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) Caucus over the past several days.

3. Malaysia is always conscious of the responsibility entrusted upon it as a member of the UN Security Council. As a small nation and member of the OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, it is Malaysia's duty to support and uphold the unity and resolve of the council to confront aggression and restore peace. Malaysia's stand against strong nations invading or annexing small nations is well-known. We cannot compromise on this.

4. The Governments of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and other OIC countries had appealed for Malaysia's support at the Security Council and this appeal weighed heavily in our consideration as Kuwait is one such small country which has been invaded and annexed by a powerful neighbour, Iraq.

5. We have always been a strong proponent of a peaceful solution to the present crisis in the Gulf and co-sponsored and supported various resolutions towards that objective. Unfortunately, and much to our regret, Iraq has not evinced any willingness to comply with the resolutions calling for peaceful and unconditional withdrawal and restoration of Kuwait to its legitimate Government and people. We therefore share the view that Iraq should be reminded of its obligations to the United Nations Charter and under International Law and that a final opportunity be given to Iraq to adhere to the ten previous resolutions adopted by the Council, within a definite time-frame before further action is taken. It is now for Iraq to make possible a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis which started with its invasion of Kuwait.

6 Malaysia has always sought to avoid the use of force to make Iraq withdraw from Kuwait. A unilateral action could have been taken by the multinational force against Iraq under Article 51 of the UN Charter, following Kuwait's request for collective self-defence. We have, however, always insisted on the centrality of the United Nations' role in the maintenance of international peace and security, and that any proposed use of force for that purpose must be brought before the Security Council for its prior approval.

7. We have been less than happy over the United States' ambivalent stand on the questions of peace in the Middle East, particularly on the question of Palestine and Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The United States must now show its serious concern for the rights of the Palestinians and its resolve to move towards a just and even-handed approach to the various issues affecting the Middle East.

8. But we believe the fate of Kuwait and its people cannot be subjected to the solution of the Palestine Question. We do not believe Iraq's invasion of Kuwait can be a means to solve the Palestine Question. We reiterate our unequivocal support for the Palestinians and demand that the Security Council fully address itself urgently to this problem in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

9. We strongly urge Iraq to take heed of and abide by this urgent call of the international community to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from Kuwait before 15 January 1991. It is our fervent hope that the use of force can be avoided. It is essential that Iraq respond positively and comply with this resolution to avoid war. Malaysia has also stated that, in the event force is used, it should be within the scope of the UN Security Council Resolutions especially Resolutions 660, 662 and 664. Countries taking such action are not authorised by the Council to go beyond the objectives of those Resolutions.

10. It is a matter of record that Malaysia has consistently condemned any and every act of aggression committed by one country over another. We do not condone nor accept the use of force in the settlement of disputes between states, let alone an outright military invasion. This is why Malaysia has given its support to Security Council Resolution 678.'

-- Bernama

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