

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE LAHORE,
PAKISTAN ON 24TH FEBRUARY, 1974

Allow me to extend to you, Mr Prime Minister, my warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of this Conference. This is indeed an important Conference at the Summit level where, as Heads of States and Governments of Muslim Countries, we have assembled in the spirit of friendliness and Muslim brotherhood to address our minds together on matters of great concern to all of us. I have no doubt whatsoever that under your able and wise guidance this Conference will bring about not only fruitful discussions among us but also useful and concrete decisions that will reflect the solidarity which exists among all Muslim countries.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to you, Mr Chairman, and to His Majesty King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, for your personal initiative in bringing all of us together to this beautiful and historic city of Lahore. The untiring and painstaking efforts exerted by your Government and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in co-sponsoring this Conference and in attending to all its minute details in co-operation with the Islamic Secretariat will, I know, ensure the success of this Summit. Similarly, the congenial and pleasant atmosphere provided by Lahore, and the generous hospitality showered upon us by you, Mr Chairman, and your Government, will surely ensure smooth deliberations of all the issues that will be brought before us. My delegation and I once again would like to thank you for inviting us here and we are deeply honoured and touched by the welcome, the care and the hospitality extended to us by the Pakistani Government and Pakistani people.

Mr Chairman.

My thanks and gratitude are also due to the Islamic Secretariat under whose auspices we meet today. The retirement of His Excellency Tunku Abdul Rahman as Secretary-General of the Islamic Secretariat recently has been a great loss to all of us. We are indebted to him for the immense contributions he has made in bringing all of us together under the banner of the Islamic Conference. Indeed, our gathering here today owes much to him.

In his place, we are indeed fortunate in having His Excellency Mr Mohammad Hassan El Tohamy who is not only a Muslim of high personal standing but who also has vast experience in Islamic affairs. I am confident we shall gain very much from his wise counsel and persuasive guidance in upholding the noble objectives and ideals of the Islamic Conference and Secretariat. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I wish to extend to him our warmest congratulations on his election to his high office and the renewed assurances of Malaysia's closest co-operation and support for the work of the Secretariat.

Mr Chairman.

It is with greatest pleasure that I offer on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, our sincere congratulations to the delegations of the Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Uganda and Upper Volta on their admission as members of our organization. We are also happy with the participation of Iraq for the first time as observer at this historic Conference. I bid them very warm welcome and we are happy to have them with us. Their presence here is a clear indication of the growing strength of unity of our Muslim brotherhood.

Another unforgettable event which warm all our hearts is the reconciliation between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Pakistan and Bangladesh were one people and one country but were separated by accident of history. However, thanks to the untiring efforts of this Conference both the Governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh have forged a new bond of relationship. We all cannot but admire the magnanimity and a deep sense of understanding and accommodation shown by you, Mr Chairman as leader of Pakistan and by H. E. Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. May this historic event be the beginning of a new era of close and cordial relations between your two countries as brother nations, within the Muslim World.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates.

An assembly such as this was first held five years ago in Rabat, the capital city of the Kingdom of Morocco. Our meeting then, it will be recalled, was occasioned by our anguish and horror at the desecration and destruction of the Al-Aqsa mosque. Islam, the great faith of our fathers was then suffering yet another

blow. Its concepts were misunderstood and its influence in the councils of all but a few nations was waning and for the most part inconsequential. At that meeting, in the midst of our sadness, it was resolved that the decline of Islam had to be arrested. At that meeting, the first steps towards Islamic solidarity and co-operation were taken. This was then followed by the creation of the Islamic Secretariat. Our gathering here today, I believe, is the fruit and vindication of our resolve five years ago.

Mr Chairman.

For several centuries disunity and turmoil has prevailed in the Muslim world and hampered our quest for progress. Internal feuds and rivalries have weakened us and our peoples have succumbed to alien rule. The glory that was Islam faded into all but obscurity. But through it all, Islam never lost its identity. In its golden age, Islam has contributed extensively to the advancement of civilization. The splendour and the glory of its achievements is a historical fact of which we can be justly proud. Our common creed and its contributions to civilization in its era of glory must now inspire us to strive for the restitution of Islam and its relevance in a new progressive era. Through unity, we would be better able to pursue these goals and ideals and at the same time strive to improve our political and socio-economic conditions. In this respect, the Islamic Conference has provided us with the basis for co-operation and our joint efforts towards progress and prosperity can in consequence pave the way for the Revival of Islam.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates.

In the past five years we have made some progress. But let us not be content and become complacent by the success we have so far achieved. Much remains to be done. The tasks ahead are vast and difficult, and require great sacrifice and patience. With our common dedication and faith, we must reach for greater goals. Needless to say, economic advancement remains our primary need. For this reason, I place great hope in the proposal for the establishment of the Islamic Development Bank which, I believe, can provide the avenue for new and promising co-operation amongst us. Indeed, the Bank will enable us to apply and utilize our abundant economic potential to the maximum advantage of all our nations, thereby contributing towards the betterment of all Muslims the world over.

But, Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, standing defiantly in the path of our progress and our quest for the revival of Islam are the forces of Zionism. In 1967, Israel, in complete defiance of the UN Charter and in total disregard of world public opinion, embarked on an act of naked belligerence and force, and occupied vast territories belonging to our Arab brothers. She had, with contempt, rejected all offers for peace, and instead continued with her intransigence. In her negligence, the Al-Aqsa Mosque was desecrated.

Today, Mr Chairman, we meet again in the aftermath of war. But, this time, with a difference. Israel's continued intransigence and bellicosity have forced our Arab brothers again to resort to every means in their power to regain their occupied territories. And, thanks to the valour and vigour of Arab fighting men, a new mood, a new spirit, indeed a new force has emerged in the world.

The problems of West Asia have persisted for nearly three decades and remain today as potentially dangerous and explosives as they have ever been. It cannot be denied that the root cause of the problems in West Asia is the deprivation of the Palestinians of their inalienable birthright. Palestine was their homeland which was forcibly wrested from them by Israel. Time cannot erase this fact nor deny to the Palestinians their rights to their own homeland, their own country. Until their right is restored, the conflict in that region will persist and there will be no lasting peace in West Asia. It remains our urgent responsibility to press for a solution to this basic problem.

Mr Chairman.

Malaysia has consistently emphasised that the acquisition of territory by the use of force, as in the case of Israel occupation of Arab land, is illegal and illegitimate judged by any yardstick of human civilization. Time and again, my Government has emphatically drawn world attention to Israeli intransigence in the West Asian crises and we have unequivocally condemned her for her continued occupation of all Arab lands. Not only is our sympathy with just cause of our Arab brothers, we also stand prepared and willing to extend all possible assistance within our means to help our Arab brothers regain what is rightfully, historically and legally theirs, so that peace with justice once again may prevail in West Asia.

Mr Chairman.

Another issue of no less importance and indeed related to, the question of peace in West Asia, is the issue concerning the Holy City of Baitul-Muqqadis. So many years have passed and countless resolutions have been adopted both by the UN and other international conferences, since Israel annexed the Holy City of three major religions of the world. Israel's persistent attempts to transform the character of the city, in defiance of all resolutions on the issue and in utter disregard of world opinion, is a cause of grave concern to all Muslims and peace-loving countries throughout the world. The Judaization of the city is but a deliberate move by Israel to suffocate the rights of its Arab inhabitants, both Muslims and Christians alike, and deprive them of their ancient freedoms in the Holy City. These are despicable acts. It behoves upon us at this Islamic Conference in co-operation with the International community to see to it that Israel will have to forthwith stop all these activities.

Mr Chairman.

Nearly three decades have passed and the problems of West Asia have persisted. The world community has pronounced itself often enough and clearly enough on the wilful intransigence and arrogance of Israel. But the forces of Zionism have been of such a dimension that the will of the world community has been frustrated—though we are at the same time justified in wondering whether the words of condemnation of Israel were not, in the case of a number of countries, more pious than serious.

To those blind to the plight of our Arab brothers, pleadings failed, as did warnings when repeatedly put before them. Our Arab brothers have resorted to arms, and have emerged with honour and dignity. After much soul searching they have turned to the only other weapon left to them in their quest for justice. Fortunately, the lands where Islam was first propagated are also endowed by nature to be the well spring of one of the world's most important sources of energy. Consequently, the oil embargo is a weapon resorted to by our Arab brothers to counter the influence of Zionism and to peel away layers of falsehood piled on over the years that have hidden the justice of their cause. In consequence of the use of this weapon, the righteousness of the Arab cause stands in bold relief and progressively those who

have been blind to the many injustices perpetrated by Israel are beginning to see the light. This at long last is having an impact upon Israel. For the first time in over a quarter of a century, Israel's intransigence is beginning to wear out. Never in three decades of turmoil and bloodshed has peace been known to the peoples of this sorely troubled area of the world. The initial rounds of preliminary negotiations have been completed and Israel has finally begun to pay some heed to the world's demands for its withdrawal from Arab territories.

Mr Chairman.

A serious blow has been inflicted on Zionism. Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories she has forcibly occupied is the minimum prerequisite for peace in West Asia. This is the wish of world public opinion as pronounced in Security Council Resolution 242 of November, 1967. Our Arab brothers cannot accept anything less, and we of the Muslim world are solidly behind them not only in our sentiments but also in our desire and willingness to render them assistance until pure justice and lasting peace prevail in West Asia.

Mr Chairman.

All of us are alert and alive to the desperate attempts of Zionism to frustrate our quest for justice in West Asia by its incessant dissemination of falsehood regarding the oil embargo that our Arab brothers have been forced to resort to by circumstances beyond their control. It is admitted that the use of this weapon has had its adverse effects not only on the highly industrialised economies but also on those economies that are still developing. But it is without doubt that our Arab brothers, and for that matter, the whole Muslim world, have taken cognizance of this. For, we as Muslims are fully conscious of the immense strength that flows from the precepts and practice of Islam. The greatness of our faith is that it inculcates in the believer the virtues of humility, restraint, and concern for the welfare of our fellowmen in the pursuit of the will and word of Allah.

The use of a powerful weapon is like a great flame. It must inevitably scorch surrounding areas. The use of oil as a weapon against the nefarious influences of Zionism has inevitably had repercussions upon innocent parties. We cannot but be determined

to check the evils of Zionism, but at the same time the tempering influence of Islam upon us has also moved us to sooth the scorched skin of the innocent. We can thus witness here the great concern of our Arab brothers for the innocent who have suffered from the effects of the oil shortage as evidenced by the creation of the two funds namely Arab Special Fund and Special Fund within OPEC to mention but these two measures. We know also that they are continuing to apply their minds to ways and means of alleviating the hardship which face the developing countries. These action should serve as more than sample indication to those who doubt the temperance of our Arab brothers in their use of oil as a weapon, that once the problems of West Asia are resolved with justice and honour they need have no fear that sanctions will continue.

In these trying times faced by all Muslims throughout the world, the unity, the determination and the vigour of our Arab brothers in the pursuit of justice and peace have our complete admiration. Our sympathy and support go to them in their noble and righteous endeavour and we pray for their success. I pledge here once again Malaysia's total support for the Arab cause and for the greater glory of Islam.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates.

We meet today in an atmosphere of renewed faith and hope. Because of the courage and resourcefulness of Arab fighting men, the war of October 1973 transformed more than the situation in West Asia. It has blown a fresh wind of change and renewal in Muslim countries and among all Muslims. I see today at last the glimmerings of Muslim unity. I see today the emergence, by the grace of Allah, of a true Commonwealth of Muslim countries.

Let us all therefore dedicate ourselves to bring about the realisation of this great vision of all Muslims. We should stick to the essentials which hold us together, the great religion of our fathers, the cause of justice and freedom, and the ternal glory of Islam. Let us build, little by little, on the foundation which is beginning to exist so that a truly strong edifice of Muslim unity will emerge. Let us explore areas of co-operation in trade and development, in the diplomatic field, and in such fields as culture and sports and education which will bring our people closer together. Let the Islamic Development Bank which we have

agreed to establish be truly a beacon of hope for the development of Muslim countries. Let us in these practical ways forge greater links of unity and co-operation so that the force of Islam will truly count in the councils of the world.

Let us also affirm once more that the Islamic world will not be a force to intimidate or to destroy, but to create, to succour, and to uphold the cause of justice.

It is in this context, Mr Chairman, that I should like to express the gratitude of the Malaysian delegation for the reference made to the plight of Muslim in the Philippines. We in Malaysia have exerted our effort on the Philippines Government to resolve this problem, and avoid the unnecessary loss of so many lives. The tragic situation prevailing in Southern Philippines today is a cause of great concern to us in Malaysia. Up to now, thousands of Filipino Muslims have fled the country and sought refuge in Malaysia. We therefore appeal to all delegations present here to use their good offices to prevail upon the Philippines Government to work out a just solution to the problem encountered by the Muslims in that country—problems which must be regarded as her own internal affair but nevertheless are of concern to us in Malaysia, as well as to the Muslim World.

Mr Chairman and fellow delegates, we Muslims seek to unite ourselves not for the arrogance of power, but for a noble purpose of building a truly, just and prosperous international order for us and our children. We seek to give our Muslim brothers a rightful place in a peaceful world. Let us, therefore, resolve to achieve this objective and together today make a bold big step forward to that end.