

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE
SECOND MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY
COMMITTEE OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES,
AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM, DEWAN BAHASA
DAN PUSTAKA, KUALA LUMPUR ON 23RD MAY,
1972

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a privilege for my Government and for my country that the Preparatory Committee of Non-Aligned countries has chosen to hold its second meeting here in Kuala Lumpur.

I should, therefore, like personally to welcome our distinguished guests here and to wish your meeting all possible success.

I would like, in particular, to address a special word of welcome to Mr. Ramphal, the Attorney General and Minister of State for External Affairs of Guyana, who has such an important role to play in ensuring the success of the Ministerial Meeting in August.

Gentlemen,

I have read with interest the report of your deliberations in Georgetown which, I must say, were constructive and fruitful, and I am much encouraged by the progress you made at that meeting. What you do in this Preparatory Committee will set the stage for the Ministerial Meeting in August and will determine whether that meeting will be able to move us further forward in our search for a peaceful, just and prosperous international order.

As I am sure we all realize, our success in that task is by no means assured. Let us, therefore, guard ourselves against euphoria about our past achievements or our present problems and let us set about our business in a serious, sober and responsible spirit. It will be easy to indulge in fanciful flights of oratory or merely to pass more resolutions in perhaps stronger language. But they will take us precisely nowhere. If we are serious—and if we believe our work

to be important—we must be quite clear in our minds what we are about, what our priorities are and what we must do constructively and concretely to bring about the results we desire.

I have no doubts in my own mind that we are serious for we would not be sending our diplomats, and later, our Ministers, half-way across the globe to meet merely for the sake of meeting. I have no doubt also that what we are trying to achieve in the Non-Aligned Group is important, indeed, crucial, if we are to ensure that the coming decade will not be even more dark and dangerous than the decade we have passed.

Gentlemen,

I earnestly hope, therefore, that as a result of your deliberations, it would be possible for the Foreign Ministers at their Meeting in August to address themselves to a specific programme of action, whether in the political or the economic field, whether it is for further action at the United Nations and other international forums or for co-operation among ourselves.

It will also be their task at the Meeting to tackle issues which have long challenged us and face up to new problems which have only recently come into sharper focus. The time has long passed—if indeed there was ever such a time—for a mere statement of general principles and generous intentions. We will succeed—and we will only deserve to succeed—if we are prepared to make a sober reappraisal of ourselves and a renewed and sustained effort to reach our objective.

Gentlemen,

It has become a common place to say that the world today is different from what it was a decade ago when the first Non-Aligned Conference was held in Belgrade. Indeed, ever since the Ministerial Consultative Meeting in New York last October, there have been developments of immense significance in the pattern of international relations.

The seating of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, President Nixon's journey to Peking and his current visit to the Soviet Union; the enlargement and consolidation of the European Economic Community, and the slow but steady emergence of Japan on to the international stage—these are developments which are changing the face of the international landscape.

The trend towards a politically multi-polar world from the rigid bi-polarity of the sixties is now clearly established. I say "politically" because, in the sphere of trade and development, as the proceedings of UNCTAD III at Santiago have demonstrated all too clearly, it is still very much a bi-polar world with the rich developed countries on the one side, and the poor developing countries on the other. These are the contemporary phenomena of international life. We must accept the world as it is, not as we would like it to be, and we must ask ourselves what all these changes mean for us the Non-Aligned Group of States.

Certainly, the developments on the international political stage, where a growing multi-polarity is replacing the bi-polarity of the past, are to be welcomed. But, at the same time, we must be conscious of the dangers that this holds. As the super-powers meet and engage in global diplomacy to resolve outstanding issues between themselves, whether it be in the field of security or trade or technology, we must remain vigilant that our own interests are not adversely affected. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that co-operation between the super-powers will necessarily affect us adversely. Far from it. We welcome, in place of an era of confrontation, the emergence of an era of international detente which holds vast possibilities for fruitful co-operation among nations to harness the almost limitless potential that modern science and technology can offer for human welfare and happiness. But, we would be foolish indeed if we are not also conscious of the fact that our interests and our concerns are often only peripheral to the interests and concerns of the super-powers.

Gentlemen,

Today, as we look around us, we are acutely conscious that the war in Vietnam, probably the most tragic and bloody in the whole history of human conflicts, still goes on—indeed, it goes on with increasing ferocity at this very moment.

In West Asia, despite Security Council Resolution 202, which was unanimously passed nearly five years ago to provide the framework for a peaceful settlement, the situation remains grave where Arab territory continues to be illegally occupied by Israel. In Southern Africa, the forces of racism and colonialism are even more deeply entrenched than ever. The United Nations, as the centre for the harmonisation of international action and as a

catalyst for peaceful change, is often by-passed with the establishment of alternative networks of relationship among the major powers. And in the economic field, despite the UN Development Decade, despite the International Development Strategy and despite UNCTAD, the future remains as bleak as ever. Indeed, the situation is made worse by the rapid progress in the field of technology and electronics which accelerates the widening disparities between the developed and developing countries.

As we face the years ahead, therefore, we must be acutely conscious of these and other problems which so directly affect us. In 1961, at the first Non-Aligned Conference, our role was to separate the protagonists in the Cold War and to build bridges of understanding and co-operation. Today, we will need to reassess our role in the international landscape that is fast emerging. We will need to resist steadfastly any tendencies for hegemony or any ideas about spheres of influence of the super-powers.

In this connection, the concept of zones of peace which was affirmed at Lusaka and reiterated at the Consultative Meeting last year is of increasing significance. We will need also to focus attention even more sharply on the unfinished agenda of international problems whether they be political or economic, whether they be in Asia, Africa, Latin America or elsewhere. We will need to ensure that the machinery of the United Nations on which so much of our hopes is based, succeeds in discharging its responsibilities.

At the same time, new issues emerge on the international agenda. I refer in particular to the Law of the Sea Conference which is scheduled to be held next year. This surely is a fruitful field for co-operation among Non-Aligned States because we share a common interest not only in ensuring that the conflicts of the super-powers are not brought to yet another arena but also that our sovereign rights over our territorial waters and our natural resources are not jeopardised.

Finally, within the Non-Aligned Group itself, it would be useful to examine whether the machinery for consultation and co-operation which we have set in train at the United Nations and elsewhere cannot be improved. Besides these matters, we would also need to identify areas of co-operation among ourselves whether in the political, economic or trade fields.

Gentlemen,

In facing these issues and problems, the coming Ministerial Meeting in Guyana will rely heavily on the groundwork that you will be able to prepare. You have, therefore, a heavy responsibility before you. I am confident that you will discharge these responsibilities successfully. I am also confident that if we will all do our work seriously in preparation for the Ministerial Meeting, if we analyse objectively our own weakness as well as our strength, and, if above all, we remain unswerving and steadfast in our objectives while, at the same time, formulating a specific and concrete programme of action, then the Non-Aligned Group of States will continue to play a vital role in the changing circumstances of the seventies.

The important thing to remember is this: we must be specific and we must have stamina. We must put forward concrete proposals and ideas and we must apply ourselves to our tasks with sustained vigour and determination. We must not lose heart at the difficulties and temporary setbacks which we shall inevitably face. Instead we must be prepared to take the long view—but without at the same time losing our zeal, our persistence and our determination. We must hold fast to our principles and our objectives and we must work hard and work steadily over the years with a definite commitment and a clear sense of direction.

Gentlemen,

May I now, in concluding these remarks wish you well in the important deliberations that are ahead of you. May I also express the hope that in the brief time that you are with us here in Malaysia, you will have the opportunity to see something of our country and to enjoy a pleasant and relaxed stay.

And now, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have great pleasure in declaring open this Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee of Non-Aligned Countries.