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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE OPENING OF WAY ASIA CONFERENCE AT THE AUDITORIUM OF THE UNIVERSITY KEBANGSAAN, KUALA LUMPUR ON 14TH AUGUST, 1972

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, General Ali Moertopo, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a very happy occasion indeed for me to be with you and I wish to thank you most sincerely for the honour you have given me. I would like to welcome the overseas delegates to our country and I am sure your Malaysian counterparts are only too eager to show you around and see how our people go about with their daily life.

It is now almost twenty three years since I attended, as a representative of Malaysia, the WAY Conference held in Brussels which ratified the Charter of WAY. It was at this Conference that give birth to WAY. In this long period, many changes have taken place in WAY, both in its role and activities. Nevertheless, I noted that the objectives are still the same. They still give hope to the aspirations of responsible and progressive youths of the world. WAY is still pointing the way to peace and progress.

In the world of today, where international relations are no longer exclusively relations among governments, WAY in its own way, have made many successful attempts to bring about closer relations among people as individuals and in voluntary associations. These relations comprise the exchanges of youth leaders and other young people, the distribution of literature and books, international contacts in culture, sports and international gathering such as this. These activities, when properly co-ordinated would help to spin the threads that bind people together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our generation, where science and technology have shrunk our physical neighbourhood, no event is wholly unrelated to us, and no crisis is wholly foreign to us. Today, inter-dependence has replaced solitary individualism as the central fact of our lives. In the context of the vast ideological distances which divide us, the path pursued by WAY has special significance.

I would just emphasize one point—the ideological camps have become more responsible today than ever before. The people in all these camps have shown a greater desire for peace than for war, for co-existence than confrontation. They have reflected the need for co-operation than isolation. WAY, I believe, could play its role in helping the governments of the world to realise this objective through a greater co-operation among the youths of the world.

During the last three decades, we in Asia have seen with despondency and despair continuous dark clouds looming across the horizon. We have witnessed so many conflicts and tragedies. We have been victims of super-power conflicts; in some cases of our own miscalculation or misadventure. Nevertheless, after each tragedy, we become more concerned of the need for peace. In fact, Khmer, Laos and Vietnam had never known peace at all since the ending of the Pacific War. Undoubtedly, peace could not emerge if we are not prepared to rationalise our similarities; and if we are not interested to narrow our differences. Yet, history need not repeat itself if we are determined enough to find our own solution. We must have a new approach to this age-old problem.

I have on many occasions repeated that need to neutralize the region of Southeast Asia as a region of freedom, peace and stability. The people, and particularly the young men and women of this region, and for that matter of Asia and the world, long for peace and the taste of its sweet fruits. I am sure the delegates present here share the view of the people of Malaysia that we are always prepared to go with you onto the fields of peace, so that all our Asian brethren will one day share together a new era of happiness and enlightenment in this world. Let us, therefore, proceed on our way, with careful but imaginative planning that is necessary to ensure peace and justice and progress for all the peoples of Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do not wish to waste your time with the exposition of the need to have a decent world order. In our view, the issue is essentially whether an organisation like yours will be able to play a more positive role to help other world organisations to bring about peace and maintain it for all times. An organisation of this nature has opportunities to serve youth of Asia and the world which are limited only by the capacity of its members to work together and to keep on working together. And in this respect, you have a limitless scope.