

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF  
MALAYSIA AT THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT  
CONFERENCE, ALGIERS ON SEPTEMBER, 1973

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Heads of State and Government,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I look around this hall, my thoughts are, first of all, directed to the historic significance of the non-aligned movement, which first met formally more than a decade ago in Belgrade. We have witnessed so many changes since then and we have also seen, alas, so many problems still unresolved. This gathering represents an important moment in the history of our movement, for we meet in circumstances when basic changes are taking place on the international scene. We will need, therefore, so soberly and earnestly as we can, to review the international situation and above all to reappraise the role of non-alignment itself in this emerging era of detente so that we can play a more positive role in the search for a more peaceful and just international order.

I am, therefore, happy to be able to take part personally in our deliberations at this important juncture in our movement. I am all the more happy that we are meeting here in Algeria, whose liberation struggle has been one of the most glorious in the entire history of the anti-colonial movement. Our host, the Government and the people of Algeria, have been most meticulous and hospitable in the arrangements they have made and I would like here to express my deep gratitude to them. Meeting here in this historic and beautiful country under your able leadership, Mr Chairman, I am confident that this Conference will fulfil the high expectations which have brought us to Algeria. Let me add that my Delegation for its part will render its utmost co-operation to ensure the success of this Conference.

Mr Chairman, we are indeed meeting, as I mentioned a moment ago, under changed international circumstances. But, first of all, it can be said with some pride, that non-alignment has itself helped to bring about the present atmosphere of detente by its contribution over the years in preventing major power conflict and in breaking down the rigidities of the cold war. However, in spite of the emergence of a politically multi-polar world of detente, it is at

least open to question whether we are any nearer the objective of peace, freedom, justice and development which the non-aligned movement has consistently pursued.

We see today the getting-together of the big powers in bilateral diplomacy to resolve problems that affect world peace and security outside the framework of the United Nations. I certainly do not deny the usefulness of private diplomacy. But the almost studious avoidance of an international dialogue in favour of bilateral diplomacy is a development which must surely cause concern. I had drawn attention to this at the last Summit in Lusaka and I also referred then to the divergence of interest between the major powers, on the one hand, and the small and medium powers, on the other. The neglect of issues and problems of central concern to us is the inevitable result of current developments.

In the political field, we see this in West Asia and in Southern Africa, to name but two glaring instances. Israel continues to occupy Arab lands and to defy more brazenly than ever all efforts at a peaceful and just settlement. In Southern Africa, the colonialist and racist regimes are, if anything, more deeply entrenched than ever, secure in the knowledge that their powerful friends will obstruct any effective action by the international community.

We see this too in the economic field where regional and sectoral claims to protectionism, the revival of economic nationalism, the setback to trade liberalization and the breakdown of the international monetary system are symptoms of an unhealthy international economic order. Such setbacks have exacerbated the plight of the developing countries and have dramatised the neglect in tackling the problems of international poverty.

Mr Chairman, the picture that I have painted may seem somewhat gloomy, and yet it is in that context that the future role of non-alignment must be examined and appraised. In brief, the struggle to attain our objectives is by no means over. Far from it. Our efforts to attain these goals must continue and we must remain steadfast and steady in the face of difficult odds. But to be effective, we must, first of all, recognize these odds. We ignore them only at the peril of listening to the echoes of our own voices. Without losing sight of our principles and our objectives, therefore, we must be conscious of the realities as they exist and we must accept that we shall attain our goals, not by brilliant oratory, not by more resolution however urgently phrased, but by getting down to the

detailed and undramatic business of examining and dealing with each individual issue. We must be serious and we must be seen to be serious.

In this connection, I would like to make one specific point with regard to statements and declarations which are made in the name of the non-aligned movement. My own view is that such declarations should be issued, as far as possible, at the highest level, at a summit Conference such as this, in order to have the necessary impact and to carry the necessary weight. Too many statements at lower levels, particularly when it is well known that many of the participating governments are unenthusiastic or even have reservations about them, tend to be ignored by other governments and this surely does not reflect well on our movement. I believe our primary concern is simply to be effective. We are here not to make propaganda but to make policy. It is easy for statements to be made, particularly when they do not require decisions at the highest level of government. It is, alas, even easier for them to be ignored when it is clear that our own behaviour and policies do not conform to these statements. We must mean what we say and there must be a sustained follow-through of the declarations that we make, if we expect to be taken seriously.

While I am on this subject of self-appraisal, Mr Chairman, allow me to make another point. I believe it is important that we should be on our guard against certain dangers within the non-aligned movement that may cause us to deviate from the basic philosophy or non-alignment and to adopt positions that change the image and character of the non-aligned movement altogether. Our deliberations at all levels are not intended to be exercises in proving our radical or revolutionary credentials. They are intended to be serious efforts in our struggle to attain our objective.

We have arrived where we are—we have achieved our successes in the past—because, within the framework of our commitment and our philosophy, we have never ceased to be objective. Indeed, that is our fundamental contribution to the dialogue of diplomacy: we have tried as far as possible, to judge each issue on its merits and to arrive at our independent judgement on an objective assessment of the facts within the framework of our commitment for peace, for freedom, for justice and for development.

In a movement which has grown to be so large as ours, there will inevitably be differences among us, which spring from differences in value orientations, be they ideological or economic, differences in our regional pre-occupations, differences in priorities and emphases, differences even in our reading of the facts. We must surely expect and, above all, respect these honest differences. But we must not allow ourselves to be divided or polarized because of them. Tendencies in that direction, unless checked, can split our movement into camps and leave us divided and weak. We will need, therefore, to maintain our vigilance against these polarizing influences. We will need to ensure that our actions and motivations must always be consistent with the true spirit, aims and objectives of non-alignment to that in the final analysis, this would strengthen the credibility and fabric of our movement.

One thing, however, is heartening to note. In spite of the tribulations and problems that have beset our movement, there is abundant goodwill among non-aligned countries. This same spirit of goodwill, flexibility and accommodation will, I am certain, continue to be a source of strength in the future. The deliberations at Kabul especially in regard to the reaffirmation to the concept of decision-making by consensus demonstrate that, given the goodwill, understanding and mutual respect for each other's differing viewpoints, the non-aligned movement will continue to be a credible force.

Mr Chairman, the non-aligned movement faces the important task of redressing its own weaknesses. This will be no easy task. However, the greatest challenge for the seventies is whether the non-aligned movement will be capable of going beyond the mere formulation of declarations and the drawing up of elaborate programmes that may not be implemented. It is essential that we get out of the futile exercise of mere rhetorics and exert our strength towards translating our policies into specific and concrete programmes of action. This is particularly relevant in the economic field. I mention the economic field in particular because without the economic muscle at our disposal, our political will cannot be translated into effective action. This surely is a bitter but obvious lesson which we have learnt.

Mr Chairman, the developed nations are using the emerging era of detente to increase the tempo of their economic activity and to enjoy a higher proportion of the growing prosperity in the world.

The developing nations, on the other hand, are struggling against a hose of barriers, to provide their people with a modicum of material satisfaction. The gap between the two groups of nations, as is only too well-known, continues to grow and, in this age of technology and electronics, will grow even more.

As successive sessions of UNCTAD and other international conferences bear testimony, the developed world has hitherto taken only half-hearted measures to assist in rectifying the imbalance: it has been more pre-occupied with pandering to the selfish demands of economic nationalism. As one index of this, it should be pointed out that the protectionist and price-support policies of developed countries are estimated to entail an annual outlay of US\$23 billion. This represents three times the flow of financial resources from developed to developing countries and indicates the intensity of the pursuit of economic nationalism by the developed countries.

It is in this context that the developing countries should attach particular significance to the comprehensive multi-lateral trade negotiations which will begin this year under the aegis of GATT to expand and liberalise world trade and improve the international framework for the conduct of commercial relations. These negotiations will involve detailed and technical work over a wide range of specific issues. Their outcome will crucially affect for good or ill, our economic future for many years to come. We should therefore act in concert to present a common approach and secure an increasing share of the growth in international trade, commensurate with our needs for economic development and on the basis of non-reciprocity, non-discrimination and preferential treatment. The Delegation of Malaysia stands ready to co-operate to the utmost with other non-aligned and developing countries in this direction.

Linked with international trade is the international monetary system which has recently been buffeted by the storms of successive devaluations and flotations. There is a greater urgency than ever before to reform the system and instil greater confidence, stability and discipline, for it is the developing countries who pay the most extreme price. On the question of international monetary reform, developing countries should exert joint efforts to ensure that it is undertaken with adequate regard for their special interests simultaneously with the liberalization of international trade between the developed and the developing nations.

For more than two decades now, the Third World has pleaded for a fair share of the world's growing prosperity and for a more rapid transfer of the developed world's technology. The response from a self-centred and complacent developed world has not been uniformly favourable. Indeed, the developed world has unleashed the forces of economic nationalism so extensively that developing nations face an uphill task.

In the face of this impasse, it is only proper that the Third World should intensify the application of the principle of self-reliance on as wide a spectrum as possible. In resorting to a policy of increasing self-reliance, developing countries may draw inspiration from the examples of those countries that have, largely through self-reliance, built up viable economies. This is not to deny the importance of co-operation and assistance from the developed countries. But, in the final analysis, developing countries will succeed only by dint of their own unremitting efforts.

In Malaysia, from time immemorial, the spirit of *gotong-royong* or community self-help has been a mainstay of village development. We are seeking to extend this spirit throughout the fabric of our society so that the tempo of development may be accelerated and the people's sense of participation increased. I am sure Third World nations have abundant resources of innate ingenuity which can be drawn on in support of an active policy of self-reliance.

Mr Chairman, the primary emphasis in Malaysia's foreign policy are in her strong commitment to non-alignment, to the strengthening of regionalism and to the neutralization of Southeast Asia.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN has, since its foundation in 1967, been the dominant vehicle for the promotion of regionalism in Southeast Asia. As a founder-member of the Association, Malaysia has seen it grow from hesitant beginnings into a stable body which has helped tremendously to bring the nations of Southeast Asia into closer fellowship and dialogue. As a result, solidarity and a better appreciation of common problems have developed.

In November 1971, the member state of ASEAN pledged through the Kuala Lumpur Declaration to exert the necessary effort to transform Southeast Asia into a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. This Declaration is in keeping with the spirit of the Lusaka Declaration. The realization of such a Zone in Southeast Asia would be a concrete expression of non-alignment in the region.

Before the Southeast Asian Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality can become a reality, the existing impediments to peace, harmony and mutual understanding in the region have to be removed. With the signing of the ceasefire agreements on Indochina and the winding down of the most devastating war in the history of that area, there will be ample scope for the lessening of tension and the growth of reconciliation and friendship amongst the peoples of the Indochina countries. I hope that the climate of peace thus created will enable the states of Southeast Asia which are not signatories to the Kuala Lumpur Declaration to associate themselves with the five who have signed the Declaration and thereby hasten the pace towards the achievement of neutrality, peace and freedom on a region-wide scale.

For many decades now, Southeast Asia has been the cockpit of struggle for competing foreign powers seeking to impose their hegemony, imperial or ideological, over the area. The massive foreign intervention to which Southeast Asia has been subjected has been unparalleled in any other region of the globe. The people of Southeast Asia have come to realise that embroiling themselves in the contests and conflicts of foreign powers merely prolonged the agony of their vassalage. They have also come to realise that for the full flowering of their innate spirit, foreign military intervention should be expelled and excluded from their lands. The peoples of Southeast Asia must be allowed the freedom to find their own solutions to their problems and they must be allowed to chart their own destiny untrammelled by the self-seeking influence of foreign powers.

Mr Chairman, I would like to conclude my address by touching on one other matter which is looming large in importance, namely, the question of national sovereignty and jurisdiction over the adjoining seas. To Southeast Asia, which has largely an insular and peninsular configuration, the seas are a close reality providing excellent communication links and a rich harvest of marine products. Of late, oil has been struck in several places in the sea and thereby brought into sharper focus the question of the extent of marine sovereignty.

The Straits of Malacca has become one of the most frequented marine thoroughfares in the world. When in 1969, more than a decade after the last International Conference on the Law of the Sea, Malaysia proclaimed a territorial sea of twelve miles, there

were rumblings of protest from maritime nations outside the region against the imposition of this limit on the Straits of Malacca. There were rumblings also in protest against some of the measures proposed by the littoral States resigned to safeguard the Straits against pollution and to increase safety of navigation. It is being claimed that the right of free transit should be permitted in the Straits and not a regime of innocent passage conceded by the littoral states. To the maritime states outside the area, the threat of pollution to the environment and marine life of the Straits is a matter of remote concern but to the littoral states, it is real, especially the ever-present risk from huge oil tankers which could spring a leak or run aground in the shoals and rocks which abound the Straits. It is in the interest of our peoples, therefore, that steps have been initiated to regulate navigation in the Straits.

I am sure that the extent of patrimony over the adjoining seas is a question that occupies the attention of many non-aligned countries. A concerted stand on this matter and on other matters connected with the law of the sea would be useful to steer the Conference on the Law of the Sea next year in a direction that would assure the non-aligned nations their legitimate share in the growing trend to assert wider national sovereignty and jurisdiction over the resources of the open sea.

Mr Chairman, the non-aligned movement stands for peace, for freedom, for justice, and for development. I am confident that we will attain our objectives if we remain steadfast to our true principles, if we apply ourselves steadily and unremittingly to specific issues with specific programme of action, and if we continue to co-operate with one another in the spirit of brotherhood and goodwill which has long characterized our movement. I pledge Malaysia to the pursuit of policies in these directions.