

SPEECH BY YAB DATO HUSSEIN ONN,  
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA, AT THE  
OFFICIAL OPENING OF UNESCO INTER-  
GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON COMMU-  
NICATION POLICIES IN ASIA AND  
OCEANIA AT DEWAN TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN,  
KUALA LUMPUR, ON MONDAY 5TH FEBRUARY,  
1979 AT 10.00 AM.

I wish to thank Unesco for the great honour in choosing Malaysia to be the host country for this conference, and on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, to extend a very warm welcome to all the distinguished participants. It is a great privilege to me to meet for the first time His Excellency Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'bow, the Director-General of Unesco, and members of his staff. It was some years ago, when I was Minister of Education, that I had direct contact with Unesco and had followed with keen interest its affairs. I would like to apologise to Unesco and the Director-General for our inability to host this conference last June due to our General Election which was held in July.

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Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. As we all know, this conference -----

The Inter-Governmental Conference on Communication

Policies in Asia and Oceania ----- is the first to

be held in Asia. This conference is extremely

important, especially to the developing countries

like Malaysia. The fact that 23 countries and more

that 100 delegates are taking part in it show the serious-

ness of the subject-matters. Some countries are

represented by their ministers or Deputy Ministers.

The conference will last for 10 days, which shows

the varieties and complexities of the subject-matters.

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I would like to congratulate Unesco for responding positively to the proposal of its members to study in depth this important subject and to initiate appropriate actions.

3. Malaysia agrees with the views that have been expressed that owing to the rapid development of communication infrastructures and the growing recognition of the role of communication, especially in the relationships between nations, more serious problems have arisen which require the countries of Asia and Oceania to review their present communication policies. The communication policies of most

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of these countries are still of the colonial past.

They should break away from it and give serious thoughts to "a new Communication Order" consistent with the present day situations and conditions.

4. This is one of the purposes of this conference, which is to help member countries take stock of their communication policies and exchange information with regard to them. All of us are aware that the present situation in communication has many and serious imbalances. We should strive for equal or adequate access to news direct. We should

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not be dependent indefinitely on developed countries' news agencies. Unesco hopes that this conference will make concrete proposals on the development of communications and ideas on the training needs of personnel. This conference provides a good opportunity for a regional dialogue on the state of affairs in communication and exchange of ideas and experience.

5. The General Conference of Unesco at its 20th Session adopted a number of resolutions concerning communication. One resolution has as its objective the promotion of a free and balanced

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flow of information and of international exchanges, and directs and authorises the Director-General to implement activities which will contribute towards the achievement of the objective. The discussions and exchange of ideas at this conference will greatly assist the Director-General in carrying out and fulfilling his task.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

6. Permit me to draw your attention to two Articles in Unescos' "Declaration on fundamental principles concerning the contribution of the mass

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media to strengthening peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and to countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war."

7. Article V of the Declaration says and I quote: "In order to respect freedom of opinion, expression and information and in order that information may reflect all points of view, it is important that the points of view presented by those who consider that the information published or disseminated about them has seriously prejudiced their effort to strengthen peace and international understanding, to promote human rights or to counter racialism, apartheid and incitement to war,

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## **8.**

be disseminated."

8. Article VI of the Declaration says and I quote:"For the establishment of a new equilibrium and greater reciprocity in the flow of information, which will be conducive to the institution of a just and lasting peace and to the economic and political independence of the developing countries, it is necessary to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries, and between those countries. To this end, it is essential that their mass media should have conditions and resources enabling them to gain strength and expand,

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and to co-operate both among themselves and with the mass media in developed countries."

9. I draw your attention to these two Articles of the Declaration because they are very relevant to the newly independent and developing countries. These countries, of which Malaysia is one of them, are often at the mercy of powerful, abundantly financed, and strongly entrenched news agencies of developed countries. Our policies and actions are often being twisted and given bad and prejudicial interpretations; our countries' images are often painted in the blackest possible colour.

**10.**

Ladies and Gentlemen.

10. You have a very busy schedule ahead of you. Nevertheless, I hope that you will find time to see Kuala Lumpur and other parts of the country, and meet the people. I hope too that your stay in our country will be an enjoyable one. I wish your conference every success.

11. Now, I have great pleasure in declaring open the UNESCO Inter-Governmental Conference on Communication Policies in Asia and Oceania.



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