

Mr. Chairman, Excellency:

You will perhaps permit us to say  
at the outset that our meeting here has

**"THE POLITICS OF CO-OPERATION"**

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DATUK  
HUSSEIN ONN, PRIME MINISTER OF  
MALAYSIA, AT THE OPENING SESSION  
OF THE ASEAN SUMMIT CONFERENCE  
IN BALI - 23RD - 24TH FEBRUARY,  
1976.**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies:

You will perhaps permit me to say at the outset that our meeting here has a special poignancy for me personally.

My presence today follows the footsteps of my great friend and illustrious predecessor, the late Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Hussein. He was a founding father of ASEAN whose vision of its future never dimmed and who remained a prime moving force behind it throughout his life. I know that he had particularly looked forward to this first meeting of ASEAN Heads of

Government. He saw it as a time to take stock of our environment, of poverty and over population,

of past activities, a time to consolidate  
 and, even more, a time to build for the  
 future. He is no longer with us, but I pledge  
 to this Conference to carry on the work that  
 is his <sup>proud</sup> legacy.

3. For our part, we in Malaysia are

Excellencies: geared to the politics of

2. As we meet today, the world has already  
 centered the last quarter of the 20th Century.  
 Great and rapid changes have occurred and will  
 continue to occur around us. Staggering  
 problems confront us — of international  
 monetary and trade relations, of multi-national  
 corporations, of raw materials and energy,  
 of a new regime for the seas, of the  
 environment, of poverty and over population,

to list but a few. These are problems which require a measure of co-operation among nations, and first of all regional co-operation, unprecedented in human history.

3. For our part, we in Malaysia are fundamentally geared to the politics of co-operation. Internationally, we seek the creation of a new international system based on peace, order and justice. We feel that we can best contribute to this process by a policy of true non-alignment. It is a policy in the last three decades surely reinforces that is as valid and vital today in a world the urgency of co-operation. Because of our natural resources and our strategic location, we have always been objects of interest to hegemonism — politically, economically and militarily — as it was when the world was split

ideologically between East and West. Malaysia will not be a party to international confrontation and rivalries. Our values of freedom and democracy, we shall defend at all costs. But we also stand ready to co-operate with all countries, irrespective of political ideology or social system, on the basis of mutual respect and friendship and non-interference.

Excellencies:

4. The history of Southeast Asia particularly in the last three decades surely reinforces the urgency of co-operation. Because of our natural resources and our strategic location, we have always been objects of interest to

external powers. This pattern will go on until such time as we can co-operate together, and stand together, to exert our rights against those who take advantage of our weakness and our disarray. We face so many challenges in common — of poverty and over-population, of insecurity, of economic exploitation, of social transformation. These are challenges that demand a collective regional response. This awareness long ago caused us in Malaysia to espouse regionalism. My Government today is the heir to the priceless legacy of regionalism which was the corner-stone of Malaysian foreign policy under my esteemed predecessor.

organisation. Over the years, it has

Let me reaffirm that regionalism will continue to be given primacy in Malaysia's foreign policy.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies:

5. Today as we deliberate together, we can look back with quiet pride at just how much ASEAN has transformed first of all, the mood of Southeast Asia. Nine years ago, for many of us, our ties with external powers were stronger than our links with each other. Today we are true neighbours, more conscious of our common destiny, more aware of our shared traditions and histories, and more determined to work together towards higher levels of co-operation. ASEAN today is a viable inter-organisation. Over the years, it has

successfully coped with initial problems of adjustment. It has gained international recognition as a genuine sub-regional organisation of considerable promise. These are not inconsiderable achievements.

7. In looking ahead, economic co-operation  
6. But there is promise, and there is performance. It is this promise that we have to live up to with actual performance. The learning and adjustment phase, long as it may seem to some, was not wasted. It has been a necessary prelude to the new phase that we are about to enter, a phase of consolidation, of greater and more intensive co-operation, of a new thrust towards more meaningful inter-dependence. We should now be poised to broaden

the scope of co-operation in those areas where the burden of experience proves success most likely and consensus most available.

Planning Ministers in their deliberations in Excellencies:

7. In looking ahead, economic co-operation is clearly the most vital area of ASEAN endeavour. It is the possible benefits from regional economic co-operation that brought our countries together in the first instance. We are all engaged in our own countries in the process of accelerating the growth of our respective national economies. But even as we help our own selves, we can simultaneously help each other. National economic growth

and regional economic co-operation are not mutually exclusive — indeed they complement and reinforce each other. Our Economic and Planning Ministers in their deliberations in November of last year have come up with several recommendations that should now serve as the agenda for action in the field of economic co-operation. Much work still needs to be done to arrive at detailed arrangements acceptable to all, but it is heartening to note that the outlines for co-operation have been clearly indicated. Let us now pursue these objectives with vigour.

8. If we can make progress in economic co-operation, we would have made a substantial

contribution towards the maintenance of our respective national security as well as the larger regional security. ASEAN is not, nor should be, a security organisation. In the final analysis, our security depends on our ability to provide the goods of life for our people and to build societies which are just and fair to all. Of course, I do not minimise military preparedness and strength. On-going bilateral security co-operation between ASEAN countries is both necessary and desirable. Indeed we should intensify and expand such co-operation when and where necessary. But it is important that such initiatives should be left to individual states to take, outside

the perview of the organisation. ASEAN should not be side-tracked from its central purpose of promoting economic and socio-cultural co-operation in Southeast Asia.

9. Malaysia sees no benefit in the politics of confrontation which merely saps energy and resources, better devoted to development purposes. In emphasizing the consolidation of economic co-operation in ASEAN, let me <sup>therefore</sup> reaffirm that such consolidation is not to be viewed as ASEAN turning inwards on itself or setting itself up in opposition to any state or group of states. ASEAN remains non-ideological, non-military, non-antagonistic. It should exist to serve the interest of all of

Southeast Asia. Co-operation is its credo.

Conflict is not its business.

10. At the last Ministerial Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur almost a year ago, ASEAN has shown its readiness to extend its hand of friendship, goodwill and co-operation to the Governments of the Indo-China states. There is also scope for co-operation on a bilateral basis and within the functional regional organisations which already exist. I think it can fairly be said that we have done our bit, that we have begun to play our part in trying to overcome the prejudices and passions of the past. We have now good cause to await the response.

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10. Looking to the future, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of November 1971 provides the basis for peaceful, stable, and orderly relations among the states of Southeast Asia ~~on the one hand~~ and between Southeast Asia and the World ~~on the other~~. In this connection, the work of the ASEAN Committee of Senior Officials has reached the stage where it is possible for this Meeting to endorse their detailed recommendations and to direct that consideration be given to the implementation, wherever possible, of initial steps to be taken towards the recognition of, and respect for the Zone. In this endeavour, the way ahead will be determined by the relations between all the

states of Southeast Asia. If we have frequently asserted that working towards Zonal Neutrality was always relevant during the years of Southeast Asian conflict and adjustment, we must affirm that it is all the more relevant now when we are entering into a phase of regional consolidation; and we must all adjust our policies accordingly.

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11. Among us, member-states of ASEAN, the habit of political consultation and co-operation has taken quite firm hold. In various international forums, it has become increasingly possible for us to make our voices heard by taking a common stand especially on matters pertaining to the ASEAN region.

We should strengthen this trend. At the same time, we should consider the possible extension of this trend to the wider Southeast Asian region wherever possible. We all have many problems and interests in common and our working together will undoubtedly add to the credibility of our initiatives in protecting and advancing the interests of the region.

Excellencies:

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~~12~~. The need to strengthen and consolidate our programme of co-operation does not and should not stop at governmental level. ASEAN is more than the sum total of governmental and bureaucratic interaction. It is ultimately all of the peoples in all of our countries.

It is time that we encourage more people-to-people contact to give ASEAN a greater sense of community. We can do this through intensified social and cultural co-operation. Social and cultural matters cut across political divides and in doing so they often help us to better appreciate and understand each other's perspectives and problems. In a region as diverse as ours, that ability can be of the utmost importance.

though it is, could serve as an effective nucleus and catalyst for further Excellencies:

13. The fact that we, the Heads of Government can meet today to deliberate on the common future of ASEAN indicates how

far along the path of co-operation we have travelled together. The loose Association we formed has become cohesive enough for us to bring into being the Permanent ASEAN Secretariat. We were right, I feel, in making the decision to organise a modest Secretariat in the first instance. There will be time for the ~~Secretariat~~<sup>it</sup> to grow as the need arises and as the results begin to show. The Secretariat, small though it is, could serve as an effective nucleus and catalyst for further action. Indeed there are prospects for broadening the scope ~~for~~<sup>of</sup> ASEAN co-operation, particularly in the economic field. It is important that the Secretariat should be able to

play a meaningful and proper role in this regard.

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~~14.~~ There are two other organisational matters which I would like to touch on. The first relates to the working methods and terms of reference of ASEAN's many Committees, which in fact were the subject of a special meeting of ASEAN officials in October 1974. These Committees are the sinews and muscles of ASEAN. Precisely because we value the success of ASEAN, it is essential that they should be effective and efficient, that they should not duplicate or overlap with each other, and that they should be active and vigorous bodies fully capable of undertaking their responsibilities. We must take care to ensure that they are so

organised that they do not lose that sharp cutting edge of freshness and energy, which is so necessary to success.

15. The second organisational matter relates to ASEAN's organisational framework. We are all sceptical — and rightly so — of any grand super-structure. But with the emphasis which we are now giving to economic co-operation and, specifically, with the recent meeting of Economic and Trade Ministers who would be meeting more regularly in the future, it is important that we should rationalise and streamline our organisational framework in order to ensure the optimum results.

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Excellencies:

16. ASEAN exists because it serves a need. It continues to exist because it does not demand from us what we cannot give. ASEAN has been able to absorb national differences because it is a relatively informal organisation without rigid rules of procedure and without elaborate structural machinery. ASEAN co-operation succeeds because such co-operation is freely extended, arising out of the experience that in specific instances of co-operation, our separate individual interests are advanced even as our common interest is served. We have always made haste slowly, not because we are not moved by dreams of what is

desirable, but because we are only too aware of what is sustainable. ASEAN stands for "Association of South East Asian Nations", co-operation, not conflict. It strives not to harm but to harmonise the interests of all. As we deliberate on the future activities of ASEAN, let us not forget these features that have sustained it through its first decade of existence.

17. In pursuing the politics of co-operation we must be guided largely by the need to produce results which alone will make possible further reinvestments in co-operation. Our responsibility therefore is a particularly heavy one, as it is upon our judgement that the momentum of future

co-operation depends. Our Meeting here in Bali has been variously characterised as "historic", "a turning point", "a water-shed" and many other graphic phrases from the lexicon of rich oratory. For my part, I must confess to some scepticism about such ringing phrases. I am impressed not by the shadow of words but by the substance of results. I believe that in <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ <sup>leadings to</sup> preparations for this Meeting in Bali, the five ASEAN Governments have focussed their attention fully and realistically at the highest level on the possibilities for co-operation. I believe that the possibilities for higher levels of co-operation, particularly in the



economic field, are real and are there. Let  
us now pursue them with vigour, with imagination  
and with all deliberate care.



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No Penerimaan ..... 31/84