

**SPEECH BY DATO' SRI ANIFAH AMAN,  
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MALAYSIA  
AT  
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
ASHGABAT, TURKMENISTAN  
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Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and  
Good Afternoon

His Excellency Rashid Meredov  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan,

His Excellency Dr. Baba Zahyrov  
Rector of the Institute of International Relations  
Ashgabat,

Faculty Members and Students of the Institute,

Young Diplomats of MFA Turkmenistan,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the onset, let me take this opportunity first to thank the Institute of International Relations for inviting me to deliver a speech here today. It is an honour and I am very happy to meet all of you, students of International Relations degree program and young Turkmen diplomats, to share some of my thoughts and

experiences on Malaysia's Foreign Policy and the status of bilateral relations and friendships between your country Turkmenistan and my country Malaysia.

## **Malaysia's Foreign Policy**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. In 1957, newly independent Malaya had only 6 embassies and high commissions abroad with corresponding number of officers at headquarters. In fact, back then, only 3 officers were charged with Malaya's relations with the whole world!

3. Fast forward to 2018, the Ministry now has 111 Missions comprising embassies, high commissions and consulates abroad.

4. Malaysia is now physically present in at least 84 countries including Turkmenistan and she plays host to 117 foreign missions.

5. Last year in 2017, was especially significant as it marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with 20 countries that sent envoys and established relations with Malaya way back in 1957. Among them include the United States, France and the United Kingdom; also our close neighbours Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and regional partners, Australia, Canada, Japan, India and Pakistan, as well as Egypt

and Saudi Arabia. Last year also marked the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Turkmenistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Then, as now, a key guiding principle of Malaysia's foreign policy has been to engage with and conduct relations with all friendly nations with a view to protect and advance Malaysia's national interest.

7. At the ground-level, Malaysia works with other countries by sharing its experience and knowledge through various foreign policy tools and programmes. These include the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) and smart partnership forums such as the Langkawi International Dialogue, bilateral humanitarian assistance as well as through public diplomacy programmes.

8. Under the leadership of Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato' Sri Najib, Malaysia had been advancing a more forward-looking and pragmatic foreign policy that seeks to facilitate trade, attract more foreign investment as well as projecting Malaysia as a politically stable, economically prosperous and peaceful country which leverages on its diversity and uniqueness as a source of national strength, rather than division.

9. At the international level, in particular through the UN, Malaysia has been instrumental in its ongoing effort to promote moderation through the Global Movement of the Moderates (GMM) initiative, with a view to contribute

positively towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts around the world.

10. ASEAN too remains the cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy. As a founding member and primary driver of ASEAN, Malaysia had way back in 1967 envisioned an inclusive ASEAN consisting of all Southeast Asian countries. Cambodia's membership of ASEAN in 1999 was the culmination of that early vision.

11. Last year marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN's establishment. In the time since, ASEAN has persevered through many challenges and achieved significant milestones. Among its key successes include adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007, work on which actually commenced during Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2005.

12. Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2015 saw yet another historic achievement, namely the launching of the ASEAN Community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. It was in the context of our strong international reputation and longstanding contribution to the causes of international peace and security, international development and cooperation that Malaysia bid for a seat on the prestigious UN Security Council for the term 2015-2016.

14. Malaysia bid was premised on the belief that we could make a significant and positive contribution

towards improving the state of global peace and security.

15. Malaysia was voted onto the Council with 187 votes out of 193; this meant that Malaysia was elected with a broad and strong mandate by a significant majority of UN member states.

## **Issues on Palestine**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. Malaysia has and will remain fully committed to the Palestinian cause; indeed, Malaysia never wavered from defending this just cause. So when Malaysia took its place at the horseshoe table - as the Security Council is nicknamed - we took every opportunity to highlight the injustices and suffering faced by the Palestinian people.

17. During our UNSC membership, Malaysia convened and chaired three informal meetings on the Palestine issue, focusing respectively on (i) the situation in Gaza, (ii) international protection for the Palestinian people and (iii) on containing the spread of illegal Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory.

18. Malaysia's efforts finally paid off in a big way in December 2016. UNSC Resolution 2334, introduced by Malaysia, was unequivocal in its insistence that the Israeli settlements were illegal and thus should be halted.

19. After much effort and tremendous pressure, resolution 2334 was finally adopted, with the United States historically abstaining during the vote. Without a US veto, resolution 2334 became a reality. This was a significant victory because in 16 years, no resolution on the Israeli settlement had been adopted.

20. In the recent developments in the UNSC on the “Resolution Concerning the US Recognition of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel” at the Emergency Meeting of the UNSC on 18 December 2017, Malaysia expressed our disappointment over the veto by the US, though expected, on the draft resolution.

21. The 14 to 1 vote at the UNSC is a clear indication that the international community strongly opposes the US recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Malaysia reiterates that the issue of Jerusalem is at the core of the Palestinian cause and calls on all Member States of the United Nations not to recognise any attempt to alter the character and status of Jerusalem.

## **Middle East Crisis**

22. Malaysia is deeply concerned over the recent development in the Middle East region and is of the view that the ongoing crisis needs to be resolved expeditiously between Countries concerned.

23. Malaysia continues to uphold our policy of neutrality and moderation in this issue and urges all parties

involved to make the necessary efforts in deescalating tensions.

24. Malaysia hopes for an amicable solution to the ongoing crisis in the region. Malaysia remains committed to combating and confronting terrorism and extremism, and support all efforts in achieving peace and stability in the region

## **Rohingya Issue**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

25. Malaysia's position on the Rohingya issue is well-known and consistent. We believe that the situation in Rakhine is no longer a domestic conflict.

26. Recent experiences elsewhere has shown that if not addressed effectively, the situation currently unfolding in Rakhine will result in a full-blown regional humanitarian crisis; a mass exodus of people from Myanmar fearing persecution or retribution would inevitably lead them to neighboring countries, including Malaysia.

27. Malaysia has always maintained good bilateral relations with Myanmar and has no desire to interfere in its domestic affairs. That being said, Malaysia stands ready to assist Myanmar in finding a just, durable solution to the protracted situation in Rakhine.

28. Currently, our efforts in aiding Rohingya are focused on providing humanitarian aid including the field hospital

which has been set up recently in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh for medical relief of the refugees.

29. Compounding the broad concern on the Rakhine situation is the wholly legitimate concern that the situation there could possibly stoke extremist sentiments, threatening security in wider Southeast Asia.

30. With Da'esh losing its stronghold in the Middle East, Southeast Asia has been identified as a new base by the terrorists; a crisis like this which affects the wider region makes the ground more fertile for the spreading of terrorism and violent extremism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

31. Malaysia believes that tackling the scourge of terrorism requires a broad-based, long term strategy. Military actions alone are inadequate; rather, root causes must be addressed, ideally through a multi-pronged approach. Preventive measures, vigilance, education, public awareness and de-radicalisation campaigns together with effective rehabilitation programmes are all necessary to combat these threats.

32. Apart from countering the threat of physical attacks, Malaysia is waging a constant war against Da'esh and other extremists on the ideological front. Da'esh and its ilk seek to penetrate and infect the minds of youth with malicious ideologies and agendas, particularly through the digital platform.

33. Malaysia is seeking to respond to this threat by developing and disseminating correct counter-narratives. Currently, such efforts are spearheaded by two digital counter-messaging centres under the Malaysian Foreign Ministry and Royal Malaysia Police, both established in 2016.

### **Malaysia-Turkmenistan Bilateral relations**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

34. I just had a very good and productive meetings with your esteemed President Mr Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Foreign Minister Mr Rashid Meredov, where we discussed many important topics and issues essentially on how to further improve relations and cooperation between our two countries for the coming years.

35. Malaysia considers Turkmenistan as a close and brotherly country. The past several years have witnessed the maturing of ties between Malaysia and Turkmenistan, which is underscored by a warm and personal relationship between leaders of both countries. Since the diplomatic relations were established 25 years ago, all three Malaysian Prime Ministers had come to visit Turkmenistan including the current Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Razak in 2014. His Excellency President Mr Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov had also visited Malaysia twice, the latest in November 2016. The visit has succeeded in contributing significantly towards the enhancement of relations between Malaysia and

Turkmenistan. And I myself have come to Ashgabat a few times throughout the years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

36. Malaysia and Turkmenistan have excellent cooperation in the areas of trade and investment; oil and gas; education; culture as well as people-to-people exchange, which have made significant contributions to the progress in both of our respective countries. The Malaysian Technical Cooperation programme (MTCP) since its establishment in 1980 has benefitted many officials from Turkmenistan that participated in various MTCP courses. To date, there were 84 officials that have attended courses in Malaysia and we would continue to share our experiences and expertise on human capacity building programmes with Turkmenistan.

37. All of these and other collaborations represent the steady progression and further strengthening of the relationship between Malaysia and Turkmenistan. The close and brotherly political relations between the two countries have brought about significant joint economic cooperation, particularly Malaysian companies coming to invest in Turkmenistan.

38. Malaysia would like to thank the President and the Government of Turkmenistan for the opportunities given to Petronas to participate in the oil and gas sector in Turkmenistan.

39. Petronas through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has also given substantial amount of financial assistance to the local community in this country. A good number of the company's local employees have been trained in Malaysia and many Turkmen students were given scholarship to study at University Technology Petronas (UTP), the number one private university in Malaysia.

40. I would like to congratulate Turkmenistan for successfully hosting the 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games in Ashgabat in September 2017. Indeed, Turkmenistan's hosting one of the prestigious sporting events in Asia has boosted its profile in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

41. In international arena, Malaysia and Turkmenistan have always worked closely in the United Nations, OIC and other international platforms. Malaysia supports and admires the Permanent Neutrality status of Turkmenistan which we feel contribute to the peace and prosperity in the region. Malaysia was among the countries that co-sponsored the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution recognizing and supporting the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan. The policy is also in line with the principle of the Global Movement of Moderates as I mentioned before as Malaysia's contribution to fight global extremism and radicalism. The significant of the Global Movement of Moderates was translated into an international support when 135 member nations of the UN during the 72nd UNGA last

month in December 2017 adopted the Resolution on Moderation tabled by Malaysia.

42. Looking ahead, I strongly believe relations between Malaysia and Turkmenistan will be further developed and strengthened for the mutual benefits of the two nations. The Malaysian Government has been and will continue to be supportive of the inspiration of His Excellency President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to make Turkmenistan a strong and modern country in Central Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

43. I would like to say to you especially to the students of the Institute, that the 21st Century or the Digital Age will bring many serious challenges for countries to face – political upheavals, extreme views on philosophy and religion, economic difficulties and uncertainties, unstoppable international migration of people looking for better life, global warming, and many other issues and problems that affect the daily lives of everyone of us. As diplomats and practitioners of all the ideas and ideals of International Relations which all of you are learning, we have to try to find the best possible solutions to all these problems.

44. I believe the advent of ICT especially the Internet and Social Media, together with the good-old diplomatic principle of “making and maintaining close relationships and friendships between and amongst nations” will help us all to address and resolve all the issues particularly

those that affect us globally. While we respect individual sovereignty and integrity, nations and governments must be willing and able to work together. Serious global issues such as international terrorism, migration, involuntary displacement of innocent people, pollution – all require concerted global and international efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

45. Last but not least, I wish you all the best in your studies. I am sure after you graduate from this Institute, you will join all of us in the diplomatic circle to bring and maintain peace, stability, prosperity to Turkmenistan and to the world. I hope under the able and wise leadership of the Esteemed President Mr Gurbanguly Berdymuhamadov and His Excellency Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Razak, both Malaysia and Turkmenistan will continue to be the best of friends and we will continue to work closely together to face any challenges and to bring economic progress and prosperity to our two countries.

Thank you.