

**Najib calls for world unity to promote moderation**  
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NEW YORK – In his maiden speech at the United Nations General Assembly Monday, Najib Tun Razak urged all nations to "choose moderation over extremism" in an effort to promote international peace and harmony.

The prime minister urged world leaders to embark on building a "Global Movement of the Moderates" from all faiths to work together to combat and marginalise extremists, whom he said, had held the world with their bigotry and bias.

"It is time for moderates of all countries, of all religions to take back the centre, to reclaim the agenda for peace and pragmatism, and to marginalise the extremists.

"This Global Movement of the Moderates will save us from sinking into the abyss of despair and depravation," he said.

Expressing concern with the increasing trend in some parts of the world to perpetuate or even fuel Islamophobia, the prime minister said it had intensified the divide between the broad Muslim world and the West.

"The real issue is not between Muslims and non-Muslims but between the moderates and extremists of all religions, be it Islam, Christianity or Judaism."

He said all religions had inadvertently allowed "the ugly voices of the periphery to drown out the many voices of reason and common sense".

The Islamophobia phenomenon escalates following proposals to build a mosque in the vicinity of Ground Zero, the site of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks which destroyed the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan.

Speaking from the dark green marble podium of the UN General Assembly hall, Najib said: "We must choose moderation over extremism. We must choose negotiations over confrontation. We must choose to work together and not against each other. And we must give this effort utmost priority for time is not on our side."

Najib also praised US President Barack Obama and New York Mayor Micheal Bloomberg for rising to the recent challenge by affirming the rights of supporters of the Cordoba House to be located near Ground Zero.

He said Malaysia supported the objectives of the Cordoba Initiative as the organisation focused on promoting, peace, understanding and moderation, both between Muslims and non-Muslims and within Muslim communities.

Najib also commended efforts by the American Evangelical Christians in trying to prevent the threatened burning of the Quran with compelling argument that it was in fact un-Christian to burn the Quran.

He said all countries should encourage and support initiatives that promoted mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, and reject the extremists.

The prime minister also took the opportunity to relate Malaysia's experience in managing issues of diversity, saying that its multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural and democratic society had managed to create an "equilibrium" that led to moderation or "wasatiyyah" in the Islamic tradition of mutual justice.

Najib also explained that the 1Malaysia concept which he had introduced was aimed at bringing all Malaysians together in a just and harmonious relationship.

Touching on the Middle East peace process, Najib said there were three prerequisites that needed to be addressed.

Firstly, he said, Israel must stop the new settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem; secondly, there should be political unity among the Palestinians; and lastly, both the Israelis and Palestinians must eschew violence and respect international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The prime minister also told the 192-nation body that the Malaysian parliament had condemned last May's brutal attack by Israeli soldiers on the humanitarian convoy in international waters.

"We want to see the perpetrators responsible for the attack be brought to justice and adequate compensation for the innocent victims of the attack.

"We want the UN to act justly and decisively, without fear or favour, in a manner that would ensure transgressions of blatant international laws are dealt with and that justice is done," he said.

Najib had arrived last Thursday with wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor to lead the Malaysian delegation to the UN General Assembly. While here, the prime minister had joined leaders of Southeast Asian nations at the second Asean-US Summit, hosted by President Barack Obama.

Earlier on Monday,, Najib held discussions with UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon at the UN building here. - Bernama

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