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Title : **GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 69TH UNGA**

1. Mr President, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election. Your wisdom and experience will stand you in good stead as you guide the General Assembly.

2. I would like to pay tribute to the health workers who are fighting Ebola in West Africa. Malaysia was able to contribute more than 20 million rubber gloves to help the doctors and nurses who are working to stop the outbreak. Our prayers are with them.

3. I also wish to thank all those who came to Malaysia's aid in this difficult year.

4. MH370 and MH17 were tragedies that will stay with us forever. As we mourn the loss of life, we take heart from the compassion shown by our friends. Your support will not be forgotten.

5. We thank our friends and allies who give their time and their resources to help find MH370. Men and women continue to risk their lives searching the deepest oceans. We owe them our gratitude, and our commitment: we will not give up the search.

6. We are also grateful to our international partners who are working together to investigate the loss of MH17. Malaysia will continue to seek justice for those who died. We urge all parties to continue co-operating with the investigation. We hope also that these twin tragedies change the global aviation system for the better, and that nations unite behind new standards on aircraft tracking and overflying conflict zones.

Mr President,

7. Four years ago, I stood before you and called for a global movement of the moderates, to counter extremism. Last year, I spoke of the conflict between Sunni and Shia that is tearing the Muslim world apart.

8. Now these two forces – violent extremism and religious intolerance – have joined hands beneath a black flag. Two countries fractured by war face a new threat: a self-declared Islamic State. Its victims are Sunni and Shia, Yazidi and Kurd; any who will not bow before the sword.

9. This so-called state, torn from existing nations with violence, rules by violence. Its authority is maintained by forced conversions and public executions. Its militants have destroyed lives and communities. They have destabilised fragile nations, and threatened regional security. Yet their dark ambition stretches further still.

10. They challenge the very notion of the state. They call our youth with the siren song of illegitimate jihad. And they demand all Muslims swear allegiance to their so-called caliph.

Mr President,

11. That demand will never be met.

12. We reject this so-called Islamic State. We reject this state defined by extremism. And we condemn the violence being committed in the name of Islam.

13. Around the world, Muslims have watched in despair as our religion – a religion of peace – has been used to justify atrocities. We have turned away in horror at the crucifixions and the beheadings. We have mourned the sons who have been stolen, and the daughters sold.

14. We know that the threat to world peace and security is not Islam, but extremism: intolerant, violent and militant extremism. The actions of these militants are beyond conscience and belief. They violate the teachings of Islam, the example set by the Prophet Mohammed, and the principles of Islamic law.

15. As we speak, some Syrians and Iraqis are being forced to abandon their faith. Yet the Quran states that ‘there shall be no compulsion in religion’ (2:256). They are being forced from their homes, forced to convert to Islam. Yet the Quran says ‘to you your religion, and to me my religion’ (109:6). And if they do not comply, they face death. Yet the protection of life is a fundamental precept of Islamic law; and the killing of civilians, even in war, is prohibited in Islam.

Mr President,

16. The question is: how should we respond? In the past, when the world has mobilised to fight extremists, we have launched wars without planning for peace. We have attacked one evil only to see a greater evil emerge.

17. This time must be different. This time, we must defeat not just the extremists, but also their ideas. We must confront the heresy of a state conceived by ungodly men and enforced through violence. In its place, we must advance the true Islam: the Islam founded on the principles of peace, tolerance and respect, as set out in the Quran, sunnah and hadith.

18. There are key things we must do.
19. First, security and statehood must be returned to the people of Syria and Iraq.
20. Malaysia co-sponsored Resolution 2178 on foreign terrorist fighters to strengthen our commitment to galvanise international action to combat terrorism. We call on the international community to stop the flow of money and recruits to extremist groups. And we continue to offer humanitarian assistance under the ambit of the United Nations or internationally recognised bodies to those who are displaced by fighting. Attacks on militant targets should, at all cost, avoid collateral damage.
21. Secondly, we must pursue a different kind of politics.
22. The emergence of these militants is a symptom of political failure; of poor governance in fragile states, and the conflict that still rages between Sunni and Shia.
23. We must break the cycle where one group gains power only to wield it against the other. Where marginalisation leads to radicalisation, as people lose confidence in the state's ability to provide both security and co-existence.
24. Individuals and ethnic and religious groups need to feel they have a stake in a nation's success, not its failure. So we should commit to more inclusive politics. This is difficult work; it demands pragmatism and compromise. And it must come from within.

25. Malaysia stands ready to share its experience; of marginalising extremism; maintaining a multi-religious country, where different faiths coexist and prosper; and showing that Islam can not only succeed, but drive progress and development in a pluralistic society.
26. Like all nations, we have had our growing pains. Stability is never permanent; it must be actively maintained. But in Malaysia there are streets in which mosques, temples and churches stand side-by-side. Ours is a society in which religions may differ, but do so in peace; in the knowledge that we are all citizens of one nation.
27. We believe this moderate approach can make a valuable contribution to fragile states and international affairs alike. It is a philosophy we have used when acting as an honest broker in peace processes in the Southern Philippines and elsewhere; and a principle we will pursue as we chair ASEAN next year, when it forms a 600-million strong ASEAN Community, with greater political-security, economic and socio-cultural integration.
28. In coming weeks, Malaysia will work with all interested partners to move the moderation agenda forward at the UN. This work informs our bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the coming term.

Mr President,

29. The moderation agenda involves us all. The fight against extremism is not about Christians versus Muslims, or Muslims versus Jews, but moderates versus extremists of all religions. We therefore need to rally a coalition of moderates; those willing to reclaim their religion, and pursue the path to peace.

30. And so I reiterate my call to the leading figures in all the great religious traditions: let us join together to ensure that religion is the source of healing and blessing, rather than conflict and destruction. In this respect, I welcome Pope Francis' visit to Palestine and his efforts to bring moderate Palestinians and Israelis together to pray for peace.

31. By demonstrating moderation in the political process, we can ensure no-one is left outside society. By practicing moderation in religion, we can marginalise the extremists. And by committing to moderation here at the United Nations, we can show that the world is willing to fight extremism not just with short-term military operations, but with long-term plans.

Mr President,

32. The security response by the international community, and a commitment to more inclusive politics by affected countries, will remove two of the conditions that allow extremism to take hold. But to defeat the extremists, we must also undermine their authority – and erode their appeal.

33. We must confront their propaganda. We must defeat the message that seduces the young into acts of violence. And we must address any legitimate grievances that drive people to extremism, be they political or economic. In short, we must win the hearts and minds of those who would serve the so-called caliph.

34. This is the work of a generation. To begin, we should focus on the real world conditions that allow disillusion to grow. That means building sustainable economies that bring opportunity for our young people – and addressing legitimate concerns that drive radicalisation.

35. Malaysia, like so many countries around the world, was appalled by the brutal violence against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. We strongly condemn Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks on Gaza, and its continuing violations of international and human rights laws. The use of heavy weapons in civilian areas – the obliteration of houses, mosques and schools – was an affront to common decency. We condemn it not just for the innocent lives taken but for the message it sends: that religions cannot coexist, and that the international community cannot enforce international law and protect the rights of Palestinians.
36. Their plight is one of the most effective rallying calls for those who claim the international system is broken. So let us unite to find a peaceful, just and lasting outcome that brings dignity and security to the people of Palestine. This should be predicated on a two state solution based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. This will bring dignity and security to the people of Palestine, who have suffered so much, and allow us to redouble our efforts to bring peace to other parts of the world where conflict fuels extremism.
37. We must also understand why these militants succeed in drawing people to their cause.
38. The extremists call upon Muslims to pledge allegiance to their self-proclaimed caliphates in Syria and Iraq; in Nigeria and Somalia; and in Kenya and Libya. They reach out to a people in search of a state. That some answer this call is testament to our failure. We have failed to uphold a vision of moderate and inclusive Islamic development, and to tackle isolation in our own communities.
39. The fight against the extremists must be won not just in Syria and Iraq, but in Britain, Belgium, the US – and Malaysia. We have managed to prevent extremism from gaining a foothold in our country. Yet even a few Malaysians have been lured by foreign terrorist fighters that led them to Iraq and Syria.

40. Countries must educate, include and when necessary confront those at risk of radicalisation. Our religious leaders must continue to show that faith and society are best aligned under a just rule of law. And we must continue making the case that the moderate path is the righteous path – the path Allah set out for us when he said ‘we have made you into a community that is moderate, justly balanced’ (2:143).

41. We must confront the myth that committing atrocities in the name of an Islamic State is an act of faith; that death in the service of that aim brings martyrdom. The extremists use this distorted narrative as a recruitment tool. To counter this deception, Muslims should work together to promote a greater understanding of what a true Islamic state means.

42. An international conference of scholars of Islamic law, convened by my government to define the true meaning of an Islamic state, agreed that for a state to be called ‘Islamic’, it must deliver economic, political and social justice; and it must protect and further the six objectives of Islamic law: the right to life, religion, family, property, dignity, and intellect – the same universal rights enshrined in the UN declaration of human rights.

43. The so-called Islamic state in Syria and Iraq – and the methods used to declare it – has violated every single one of these objectives. It is therefore neither Islamic, nor a state. Individuals, religious leaders and nations have said and must continue to say so, and to advocate for Islamic principles within a framework of tolerance, understanding and peace.

44. This, after all, is the true nature of Islam; a religion of peace, one that values coexistence, and mutual comprehension, and learning – even in times of struggle. When 70 prisoners of war were captured during the battle of Badr, for example, the Prophet Muhammad was urged to slay them. Not only did the Prophet protect the lives of innocent civilians, he also spared enemy combatants.

Mr President,

45. It is this spirit of understanding and compassion that we should continue to embrace, and espouse.

46. Now is the time to advance a vision of peace and moderation. Let us call for a global community of understanding. Let us prove that we can honour the words of the Prophet, and build balanced and just societies, where different faiths live and prosper in peace.

47. Let us show that Muslims, united in faith, can be a powerful force for progress, knowledge, and justice – as we were in the greatest periods of our history. As we can be today. And as we will be tomorrow.

Thank you.