

**SPEECH BY
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AT THE CLOSING OF CONFERENCE ON TERRORISM
AT PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE
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1. I have learned from experience that closing a conference is one of the most difficult and least enviable tasks. I have sat through many sessions, and I think that everything that needs to be said has been said. Thanks also to a thorough agenda of subjects, virtually every aspect of September 11 and the aftermath has been covered. Few stones have been left unturned.

2. Perhaps what I could usefully do now is to share with you what I think countries like Malaysia have learnt, or rather should learn, from the September 11 incidents and the subsequent campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere. In doing this I may perhaps also be summing up what some of you have been saying these past two days.

3. Let me begin though by noting the absolute horror we have all expressed of the attacks of September 11. Some of us may have strong reservations about the way the campaign in Afghanistan is being conducted, but let there be absolutely no doubt: we condemn and condemn most unreservedly the atrocities of September 11.

4. However, mere condemnation of the abhorrent acts of September 11, and voicing concerns about the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan does not address the problem of terrorism itself and does not begin to offer any solutions that the international community can adopt in dealing with this problem.

5. There are several lessons that I think we have collectively learnt in the past two days. Allow me to outline some of them, by way of focusing on areas of consensus and agreement.

6. The first lesson I learn is an old one: that the best way of keeping sickness at bay is to remain healthy. Terrorism will not rear its ugly head if the conditions that breed it do not exist. Terrorism feeds on many things: territory forcefully occupied; land wrongfully seized; homes bombed and bulldozed to rubble; ethnic cleansing; religious persecution; trampling of legitimate political aspirations; oppression; poverty; deprivation; and most of all, the absence of satisfactory avenues to seek redress.

7. The Al-Qaeda fed on these injustices and deprivations, and it grew strong because of them. Its cause and its constituency were built around those who harboured deep resentment and opposition towards foreign invasion and occupation, eviction from their own land, foreign military bases and oppressive regimes.

8. The second lesson we learn is that terrorism cannot be eliminated unless the breeding ground is sanitised. Unless we tend to the root causes terrorist movements will continue to survive and thrive. No amount of punitive action can destroy them permanently. Punitive action in the absence of other credible measures in fact will eventually make them stronger. Even as the terrorist movements are decimated, the breeding grounds will provide them with new recruits, fresh supplies, arms, cover and intelligence.

9. It is therefore absolutely essential that we prescribe curative approaches in dealing with terrorism. The breeding grounds and the root causes of terrorism must be addressed. No two breeding grounds are the same. Each environment nurses its own special grievances. Remedial measures must therefore differ accordingly. Whatever the differences however I believe all remedial measures must of necessity be guided by two indispensable principles: the elimination of injustices and the promotion of human welfare.

10. Justice requires that fundamental injustices like foreign occupation and brutal oppression be removed. The most urgent of these is the illegal occupation of Palestinian land and the denial of a state for the displaced people of Palestine. No other issue inflames passions like this issue. Unless this issue is resolved satisfactorily the Muslim world in particular will seethe with anger and rightly agitate. And let me add that these issues do not merely represent grievances for terrorists like Al-Qaeda, they reverberate all over the Muslim world.

11. Another fundamental injustice is the denial of avenues to register aspirations, voice grievances and seek redress. In such cases, people are forced to resort to other alternatives, including in extreme cases the use of violence and terror. Democratic practices are therefore absolutely essential, and the Muslim world in particular suffers a serious democracy deficit. No other system ensures as well that the wishes and legitimate aspirations of the people are heard and heeded. The political system must also engage and empower all groups, the majorities and the minorities, and marginalise and exclude none.

12. The terrorist leader and some of his followers may come from privileged or comfortable socio-economic backgrounds, but their primary support comes from among the poor and the deprived. Poverty is the ultimate injustice, especially when it resides amidst plenty. Something must be very wrong when rich nations with high per capita incomes have so many poor. The promotion of human welfare beginning with the eradication of poverty must therefore be another guiding principle of measures to address root causes. It is for this reason that Malaysia, as a modern Islamic nation, has placed the eradication of poverty and the uplifting of living standards as an overriding priority. Without such a policy our people could have been alienated and disenfranchised, creating a critical mass of discontent, ready to be tapped by would be terrorists. We will continue to ensure no Malaysian is alienated, and this includes the minorities among us. In many countries minorities are persecuted and marginalised. Some of these are instances of state terrorism. In contrast, Malaysia as a modern Islamic nation will continue to protect the rights and freedoms of all our peoples, regardless of race or religion.

13. The third lesson we have learnt is that while remaining healthy is the best way of not becoming sick, and addressing root causes are absolutely essential, when terrorism strikes it must be eliminated. The terrorist must be isolated, and he must be brought to justice. All necessary and legitimate means must be employed to remove the threat, but in doing so, one cannot destroy everything that happens to lie in the path of our search for terrorists. One must value the lives and welfare of innocent people. If one destroys as indiscriminately as the terrorist does, one becomes a terrorist oneself.

14. Even in the midst of war we must be humane. Every effort needs to be taken to ensure that the civilian population is safe, that their homes continue to stand, that they are not displaced or forced to flee, to become refugees. In Afghanistan the

humanitarian situation was already bad due to the failed economic policies of the Taliban and the drought. The attacks on Afghanistan and the war inside the country that followed made a bad situation much worse. Thankfully, with the apparent return of peace in many parts of Afghanistan now, humanitarian supplies are beginning to flow in again.

15. Fourth, we note that international terrorism is a global scourge, and it is our common enemy. We also note that if we want to launch a global campaign against terrorism, we must all be agreed as to what constitutes terrorism, who a terrorist is, and which terrorist threats require urgent attention. In the absence of such agreement, the powerful few will impose their definition upon the majority according to their own interests, and select the targets for the global community accordingly. We think this should not happen.

16. We therefore think it to be a matter of the utmost importance that the United Nations takes the lead in convening an international conference, or even a series of conferences, to address the issue. We note previous failures. We are aware of the continuing difficulties of achieving complete consensus. But confer we must. If we cannot achieve full consensus we can at least narrow our differences and enlarge areas of agreement. We must defeat the politics of language in defining terrorism that is being imposed by certain parties.

17. The fifth lesson that we learn is that action against terrorism and terrorists, whether at home or abroad, must be governed by the rule of law and accepted norms of behaviour. If it is at home it is domestic law and norms. If it is abroad, it is international law and international norms. No country, Malaysia included, is exempted from this. Every action we take must be legal and must be backed with legal authority. In the international sphere the charter of the United Nations, the resolutions of the United Nations, and the other instruments passed as international law hold supreme.

18. Sixth, we must respect not only laws but institutions as well. In the international sphere the pre-eminent institution is the United Nations. The United Nations is not a perfect instrument. Far from it. But we cannot seek recourse to it only when it is expedient, and ignore it when it is perceived to be not convenient. If all states do this the United Nations loses all credibility. It becomes a travesty. In the campaign against international terrorism the United Nations must be the source of all authority and moral sanction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. Finally allow me to congratulate ISIS for organising this conference at such short notice. I believe this is the first time that a conference such as this is being held in the world post-September 11. This is Malaysia's contribution in building an international consensus on terrorism by starting a rational and reasoned discourse on this difficult subject.

20. I would also like to congratulate all the speakers and members of the audience for taking part. It is difficult to talk about terrorism - it is a complex, emotional, and, sometimes, horrific subject. But we must have the courage to face this problem and to talk about it as a nation. Before we can contribute to building an international consensus to the issue of terrorism, we must come to a consensus at home, and I believe this conference has succeeded in doing that.

21. The scourge of terrorism will by no means be eliminated whatever happens with the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan. Unless the international community - including the United States - takes a cold hard look at its causes, least of which is the global political order, the war against terrorism will not be won.

Thank you.