

**SPEECH BY
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AT THE MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE XIII NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT
SUMMIT KUALA LUMPUR
AT KUALA LUMPUR
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Welcome to Kuala Lumpur, and to this Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, in preparation for the Summit Meeting of leaders, which will take place a few days from today.

This XIII Summit Meeting of NAM is being held at a critical juncture in the history of the movement; indeed, perhaps in the history of international relations, which today is pervaded by a profound sense of unease and uncertainty about the future. The post-cold war world order is characterised by the pre-eminence and growing influence of just one superpower.

Today, this state of affairs brings us to the brink of conflict - a conflict which the peoples of the world have loudly and clearly opposed. That the collective voice of the global majority that says no to war can be ignored suggests that we live in a world that is no better than one which the founding fathers of this movement found themselves in.

The strategic real politic of bipolarity has been replaced by the vested interests of unilateralism. In the place of political subjugation and colonial oppression, there is today growing economic inequality. And the health and well-being of so many of our peoples continue to deteriorate under the crushing weight of debt and disease.

The present international order also threatens to push aside multilateral diplomacy and allow unilateral pre-emption to determine the security of the world. As we gather here today, the credibility of multilateral institutions like the United Nations is called into question by certain nations because it will not yield to unilateral designs.

The non-aligned movement has a duty to change this world order and to ensure the continued primacy of the multilateral process in the affairs of nations. Unilateralism is inimical to the interests of NAM and must strongly be resisted lest we find ourselves marginalised and our aim of creating a more just and secure world unfulfilled.

Excellencies,

In the wake of the cold war, questions have been raised, both within and outside the movement, about the continued relevance of NAM. Even the name of our movement has been ridiculed, as if in the new international order there is no need to be non-aligned. Indeed, members of NAM have been openly encouraged to abandon the movement on the basis that it is now no longer pertinent to, nor does it serve the interests of, its members.

The relevance of NAM is an urgent challenge for our collective membership to face. It is our hope that here in Kuala Lumpur, NAM will once again be able to provide balance and moderation in global politics. Where once our predecessors stood to ensure that developing countries remained independent in the face of cold war

superpower rivalry, today we must once again unite - as the majority of nations - to protect our sovereignty and integrity of purpose.

In a unipolar world, NAM must continue to maintain our independent position in global affairs. We must continue to pursue peace and stability in the international order, and to speak out against war, violence and terror. NAM must take steps to augment the sovereignty of peoples and nations, and to remedy the imbalances and injustices in the world. We must continue to be the indispensable forum for developing countries, for no superpower, however benign and well-meaning, could ever represent the interests, or articulate the aspirations, of the developing world. Only we ourselves can best represent our individual and collective interests.

For this, we need more than strong insights, creative ideas, innovative approaches, and practical solutions. We need the will to unite and take a stand. It is only with this collective will that NAM will once again occupy its place at the centre of global power, as the legitimate voice of the world's majority.

In ensuring its continued relevance, NAM must also go beyond its traditional concerns. It must address a wide range of issues of vital importance to its members. It must take a sensible and hardnosed approach to resolving global problems, such as the effects of globalisation on developing countries, the structure of the international system, reform of the international financial architecture, the international trade regime, external debt, the role of the media, the increased use of information and communications technology, the threat of terrorism, poverty, south-south cooperation and dangerous diseases, such as hiv /aids.

In gearing ourselves for the tasks ahead, we should be inspired by the fact that with a total membership of 114 members, which will soon be increased to 116, when Timor Leste and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines formally join the movement, we constitute almost two-thirds of the membership of the United Nations. Our numerical strength alone provides us with the political and moral legitimacy to speak on behalf of the developing nations, whose collective voice should be given due weight and consideration in the conduct of international relations. Our collective number places us in a unique position and should give us considerable influence in the global geopolitical and economic environment. I say this because numbers alone will be meaningless if we are unable to speak and act in unison.

Excellencies,

In your interactive sessions today, you will have an important role to play in this revitalisation process. You will have the opportunity to examine in-depth the ways in which the movement can be strengthened and consolidated, and its positions and interests further promoted. You will be well placed to suggest to our leaders practical measures that could be taken by NAM members, individually and collectively, in order to enhance the movement's relevance, as well as its cohesion and unity.

In this regard, we must acknowledge and commend the role played by the Republic of South Africa, our outgoing chairman, in providing the leadership to the movement these past four years particularly for the important steps taken towards the revitalisation of NAM. As the incoming chair of the movement, Malaysia is appreciative of the many constructive ideas that have been generated at the Zimbali and Cape Town brain-storming sessions.

Today, you will have the opportunity to examine these ideas and proposals, as well as any new ones that may have been generated. The outcome of your deliberations will provide positive input for the "Kuala Lumpur Declaration" to be adopted at the end of the summit. The declaration will be an important road-map in facing the challenges that lie ahead. It will also incorporate a number of action programmes that could be undertaken by the movement, aimed at more effective coordination and cooperation among member states, thereby enhancing NAM's profile in international affairs.

Excellencies,

Given the enormity of your responsibility, I ask you to give your serious and undivided attention to your deliberations. I urge you to be frank and forthright in your exchanges. Only if we are candid with each other, befitting a dialogue and interaction among members of a family - of which we are - could we hope to delineate a clear way forward and to re-forge the unity and cohesion that we once enjoyed.

In doing so, however, we must be constructive in our approach vis-...-vis our partners in the north. We need to engage and forge strategic alliances with the industrialised countries, including with their international groupings, such as the E.U., with which we share a strong commitment to multilateralism. Last but not least, we should coordinate, in a more integrated fashion, with our sister organisation of the south, the g-77, so as to maximise our negotiating positions vis-...-vis our other partners. I wish you every success in your important deliberations.

Thank you.