

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF INFORMATION OF
NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES (C.O.M.I.N.A.C.) AT PALACE OF
THE GOLDEN HORSES, KUALA LUMPUR
21 NOVEMBER 2005**

EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU TO MALAYSIA FOR THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF INFORMATION OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES (C.O.M.I.N.A.C.). AS CHAIRMAN OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (N.A.M.), MALAYSIA IS HONOURED TO HOST THIS IMPORTANT EVENT.

2. IT IS HEARTENING TO SEE SO MANY REPRESENTATIVES AND DELEGATES FROM THE VARIOUS N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES GATHERED HERE TODAY. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK EACH OF THE GOVERNMENTS REPRESENTED HERE FOR THEIR POSITIVE RESPONSE TO MALAYSIA'S INVITATION TO ATTEND THIS MEETING. YOUR PRESENCE DEMONSTRATES THE STRONG COMMITMENT OF N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES TO DELIBERATE UPON AND ADVANCE THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE, THAT IS, "ADVANCING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION COLLABORATION TOWARDS A MORE DYNAMIC N.A.M.".

3. THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT HAS SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1955 PLAYED AN ACTIVE, EVEN CENTRAL ROLE, IN ISSUES OF CONCERN AND OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ITS MEMBERS. THESE ISSUES INCLUDE DECOLONISATION, APARTHEID, THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND THE MIDDLE-EAST, DISARMAMENT, POVERTY ERADICATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AMONG OTHERS. NEVERTHELESS, THE END OF THE COLD WAR HAD A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE MOVEMENT, MAINLY THE LOSS OF THE MOVEMENT'S RAISON D'TRE. THE POOR LEVEL OF COHESION AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES ALSO BECAME MORE APPARENT THEREAFTER, DUE TO MEMBER COUNTRIES' DIVERSE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVELS AS WELL AS ASSORTED CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS.

4. THE 13TH N.A.M. SUMMIT HELD IN KUALA LUMPUR IN 2003 WAS PERHAPS A TURNING POINT FOR THE MOVEMENT. IT WAS AGREED THAT A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE ROLE, STRUCTURE AND WORK METHODS OF THE MOVEMENT WOULD BE CONDUCTED, IN KEEPING WITH THE TIMES AND THE NEW REALITIES OF

THE DAY. THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF THE MOVEMENT WILL DEPEND, TO A LARGE EXTENT, ON THE UNITY AND SOLIDARITY OF ITS MEMBERS, AS WELL AS ON N.A.M.'S ABILITY TO ADAPT TO CHANGES IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCENARIOS.

5. AS SUCH, TO ENSURE THAT THE ON-GOING REVITALISATION PROCESS OF N.A.M. CONTINUES UNABATED, MEMBER COUNTRIES MUST MAINTAIN THEIR UNITY AND ENHANCE THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE MOVEMENT. IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN N.A.M.'S COHESION AND TO FOSTER A GREATER SENSE OF COMMUNITY, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE STRENGTHEN OUR COMMON VISION AND ENGENDER A HIGHER DEGREE OF COMMUNICATION, UNDERSTANDING AND TRUST AMONG OURSELVES. THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES AMONG GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES.

6. INDEED, BY COMMUNICATING AND BY SHARING INFORMATION, VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES AMONG OURSELVES, WE WOULD NOT ONLY BE CREATING A STRONGER, MORE COHESIVE COMMUNITY, WE WOULD ALSO BE CREATING A MORE POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL COMITY OF NATIONS. AFTER ALL, WITH BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND DATA SOURCES, OUR GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE BETTER, MORE INFORMED DECISIONS ON A WIDE VARIETY OF ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE. BUSINESSES TOO WOULD BE ABLE TO BENEFIT AS THEY BECOME BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE ECONOMIC SCENARIO BEYOND THEIR OWN SHORES. SOCIETY AT LARGE WOULD ALSO BENEFIT IN THE SENSE THAT THE MORE THEY LEARN ABOUT OTHER CULTURES, THE MORE TOLERANT AND ACCEPTING THEY WOULD BE OF DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY.

7. CLEARLY, THERE IS A LOT OF MERIT IN THE IDEA OF SHARING INFORMATION, NEWS AND VIEWS AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES AS A WAY TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS. IN REALITY HOWEVER, THE PRACTICE MAY PROVE TO BE MORE DIFFICULT, ESPECIALLY AS DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE A MULTITUDE OF CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES. THESE RANGE FROM LIMITED FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES, LACK OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (I.C.T.) INFRASTRUCTURE, TO POOR LEVELS OF TECHNICAL EXPERTISE.

8. BEYOND THESE CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES, ANOTHER ISSUE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, INCLUDING N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES, IS THE ISSUE OF THE "INFORMATION DIVIDE". THIS TERM HAS BEEN COINED TO DEFINE THE IMBALANCE IN INFORMATION FLOWS AND IN I.C.T. ADVANCEMENT BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING WORLD. THIS IS PARTICULARLY EVIDENT IF VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT TREND IN THE GLOBAL INFORMATION AND MEDIA LANDSCAPE, IN THE MOVE TOWARDS CONSOLIDATION AND THE CREATION OF A FEW INFORMATION AND MEDIA GIANTS IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

9. AS SUCH, IT IS INEVITABLE THAT THE NATURE AND FLOW OF INFORMATION IS INCREASINGLY DOMINATED AND INFLUENCED BY A HANDFUL OF MEDIA PLAYERS IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, AT THE EXPENSE OF SMALLER ORGANISATIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. AS A RESULT, THE NEWS AND INFORMATION THAT IS REPORTED MAY NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES', NOR CONSIDER THEIR PERSPECTIVES AND VIEWS. THE OUTPUT OF SMALLER MEDIA PLAYERS, PARTICULARLY FROM THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, ARE SELDOM QUOTED IN THE GLOBAL MAINSTREAM MEDIA. THEREFORE, THERE IS A CRITICAL NEED TO CORRECT THIS IMBALANCE AND TO IMPROVE THE FLOW OF INFORMATION AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

10. AS CHAIRMAN OF N.A.M., MALAYSIA FEELS IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE MOVEMENT TO ADDRESS THIS CRUCIAL ISSUE OF INFORMATION DIVIDE AMONG DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS BETWEEN N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES THEMSELVES. WE BELIEVE THAT IN BRIDGING THE INFORMATION DIVIDE, IT IS NECESSARY TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION, OPTIMISE OUR RESOURCES, AND MANAGE MORE EFFECTIVELY THE CONTENT AND FORM OF OUR INFORMATION FLOWS.

11. AS SUCH, MALAYSIA WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE THAT N.A.M. PURSUE A NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AGENDA. BESIDES SEEKING TO ELIMINATE IMBALANCES IN INFORMATION FLOWS, WHICH CHARACTERISE THE CURRENT SITUATION, THIS AGENDA IS ALSO AIMED AT PROMOTING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES. THIS IS PREDICATED ON THE BELIEF THAT INFORMATION IS A SOCIAL GOOD AND HAS A CULTURAL VALUE ATTACHED TO IT. EACH COUNTRY SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT AND FREEDOM TO TELL ITS OWN STORY FROM ITS OWN PERSPECTIVE, AND TO HAVE THE MEANS TO DO SO. ESSENTIALLY, THIS AGENDA SEEKS TO PROMOTE FREER FLOW OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS, AND TO DISSEMINATE THEM TO A WIDER GROUP OF PEOPLE. ULTIMATELY, THE STRENGTH AND DYNAMISM OF N.A.M. RESTS LARGELY ON THE REALISATION OF THIS AGENDA.

12. TO REALISE THE GOALS OF THIS INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AGENDA AND TO FACILITATE GREATER INFORMATION FLOWS BETWEEN N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES, MALAYSIA HAS PROPOSED THE SETTING UP OF A "N.A.M. NEWS NETWORK" OR "TRIPLE-N.". THE "TRIPLE-N." IS MODELLED AFTER THE MANY SUCCESSFUL NEWS EXCHANGE ARRANGEMENTS THAT ARE CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AROUND THE WORLD. THESE NEWS EXCHANGE ARRANGEMENTS UTILISE THE POWER OF THE INTERNET AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES TO ENABLE THE FREE AND UNENCUMBERED FLOW OF INFORMATION AT LOWER AND LOWER COSTS. IN THIS WAY, THE RESOURCES OF MANY SMALLER NEWS ORGANISATIONS CAN BE SHARED AND POOLED TOGETHER, CREATING A VIABLE NEWS SOURCE ALTERNATIVE TO THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA GIANTS.

13. THE "TRIPLE-N." WOULD BE DEDICATED TO PROMOTING NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM A DEVELOPING COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE, AND THUS PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT WORKING PLATFORM FOR N.A.M.. TO DEMONSTRATE MY GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TOWARDS THIS INITIATIVE, MALAYSIA IS PLEASED TO OFFER THE SERVICES OF BERNAMA, THE MALAYSIAN NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY, TO ACT AS THE PRIMARY COORDINATING BODY OF THE "TRIPLE-N.". AS MANY OF YOU ARE AWARE, BERNAMA HAS CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE IN HANDLING MULTILATERAL NEWS EXCHANGE NETWORKS, ESPECIALLY AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES.

14. I AM PLEASED THAT THIS PROPOSAL HAS THUS FAR BEEN WELL-RECEIVED. MALAYSIA WILL DO OUR BEST TO PROVIDE A WORLD-CLASS NEWS EXCHANGE NETWORK IN MOVING THE "TRIPLE-N." FORWARD. FURTHER DETAILS OF THE PROJECT, INCLUDING THE FINANCING AND MODALITIES OF THE NETWORK, WILL BE WORKED OUT IN DUE COURSE, I AM SURE.

15. ULTIMATELY, I BELIEVE THAT THE "TRIPLE-N." WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT WINDOW FOR N.A.M. TO THE WORLD. IT WOULD BECOME A SIGNIFICANT MEDIUM FOR N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES TO TELL THEIR STORIES TO EACH OTHER, AS WELL AS TO THE WIDER WORLD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

16. TO SET UP A TRULY EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM, IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO MERELY HAVE THE APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT IN PLACE. IT IS ALSO NECESSARY TO INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN ORDER TO MAKE MEANINGFUL USE OF THE EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABLE. THEREFORE, N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES SHOULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING VARIOUS EXCHANGE PROGRAMS FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS ARENA, INCLUDING JOURNALISTS, REPORTERS AND MEDIA ORGANISATION MANAGERS. BESIDES ACQUIRING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, THOSE PARTICIPATING IN THE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WOULD ALSO ACQUIRE WIDER PERSPECTIVES AND A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF OTHER N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE PROCESS.

17. DESPITE OUR LIMITATIONS, I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER TO SHARE MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES. WE ALSO WELCOME THE USE OF OUR FACILITIES BY OTHER N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES. BY DOING SO, WE HOPE TO ENHANCE OUR JOINT CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

18. BY HOSTING THIS MINISTERIAL MEETING, MALAYSIA HOPES TO PROVIDE A FORUM TO PLAN, DELIBERATE UPON AND ADDRESS THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE. WE

ARE CONVINCED THAT INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND POSITIVE RESULTS CAN BE ACHIEVED VIA THIS FORUM. INDEED, THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR N.A.M. TO MOVE TOWARD GREATER COLLABORATION. THE CREATION OF NEW MODALITIES AND FACILITIES FOR THE SHARING AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AMONG MEMBER COUNTRIES WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD ACHIEVING THIS.

19. BEFORE I CONCLUDE, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE MALAYSIAN MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, IN COOPERATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FOR SUCCESSFULLY ORGANISING THIS EVENT. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK N.A.M. MEMBER COUNTRIES ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND PRESENCE AT THIS IMPORTANT MEETING. I WISH YOU SUCCESSFUL DELIBERATIONS IN THE DAYS AHEAD. YOUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND INTERVENTION WILL ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS MEETING AND ULTIMATELY, ENHANCE N.A.M.'S STRENGTH AND CAPACITY TO FACE THE MYRIAD OF CHALLENGES AHEAD.

20. ON THAT NOTE, IT IS MY PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE TO OFFICIALLY DECLARE THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS OF INFORMATION OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES OPEN.

THANK YOU.