

**SPEECH BY
THE HONOURABLE ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
BIODIVERSITY: SCIENCE AND GOVERNANCE AT PARIS
24TH JANUARY 2005**

"BIODIVERSITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS"

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. MAY I BEGIN BY EXPRESSING MY DEEPEST APPRECIATION TO HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT CHIRAC FOR INVITING ME TO ADDRESS THIS MEETING. I AM HONOURED TO BE SPEAKING ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHER EMINENT LEADERS. I AM ALSO INSPIRED BY THE PRESENCE OF SO MANY DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO THE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.

2. I ALSO WISH TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT CHIRAC, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF FRANCE FOR THEIR GENEROSITY AND ASSISTANCE RENDERED TO THE VICTIMS OF THE 26TH DECEMBER 2004 TSUNAMI THAT HIT A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES BORDERING THE INDIAN OCEAN, INCLUDING MALAYSIA. THIS DISASTER IS IN FACT THE WORST NATURAL CALAMITY TO AFFECT ASIA IN RECENT HISTORY. WE IN MALAYSIA, AS I AM SURE ALL OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES, HIGHLY APPRECIATE THE MORAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT PLEDGED FROM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

3. THE RECENT TSUNAMI HAS REMINDED US OF THE AWESOME DESTRUCTION THAT CAN BE WROUGHT BY NATURAL FORCES. THE TSUNAMI EXACTED A HEAVY TOLL INDEED. BIODIVERSITY SUFFERED A HUGE SETBACK IN TERMS OF LIVES LOST AND NATURAL HABITATS SIMPLY SWEEP AWAY, PERHAPS, NEVER TO REGENERATE.

4. WHILE WE CAN NEVER PREVENT THE FORCES OF NATURE, WE CAN CERTAINLY TAKE PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT AND EXTENT OF DESTRUCTION. WE WILL DO THAT BY INSTALLING EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS IN THE REGION TO DETECT TSUNAMIS AND OTHER NATURAL DANGERS. WE SHOULD ALSO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT WHAT WE ARE DOING TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT. THE TSUNAMI AND ITS AFTERMATH UNDERSCORED NOT ONLY THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF NATURE, BUT ALSO THE FRAGILITY OF OUR OWN EXISTENCE.

5. AS HUMAN BEINGS, WE ARE ALL PART OF THIS COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENT BIOLOGICAL SYSTEM ON THE PLANET. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, BEEN GIVEN THE INTELLIGENCE AND WISDOM TO DISCERN AND DISTINGUISH THE COMPLEXITY AND THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE SYSTEM. WE MUST USE THESE CAPABILITIES TO CONSERVE AND HARNESS THE NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PRESENT AS WELL AS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

6. RECENTLY, I HAD CALLED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA ON THE PRESERVATION AND REGENERATION OF THE MANGROVE FORESTS WHICH HAD SHOWN GREAT RESILIENCE IN BREAKING THE FULL FORCE OF THE TSUNAMI WAVES WHICH THREATENED SEVERAL COASTLINES IN THE COUNTRY. IN ADDITION, WE ARE PURSUING OTHER MEASURES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT. MALAYSIA HAS EMBARKED ON FOREST PLANTATIONS WHICH WILL RELIEVE THE INCREASING DEMANDS AND PRESSURES ON THE EXISTING FORESTS AND THEIR DIVERSITY.

7. IN OUR QUEST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE, WE MUST GIVE EQUAL CONSIDERATION TO ALL LIVING THINGS. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT NATIONS ARE BETTER ABLE TO PROTECT THEIR BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES WHEN THEY ARE MORE PROSPEROUS. THE CHALLENGE FOR ALL COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, IS TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT, AS WELL AS GAIN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERTISE, WITHOUT DEPLETING THE NATURAL CAPITAL. THE UTILISATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH MUST BE CARRIED OUT IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER SO THAT THE VALUABLE BIODIVERSITY AND RICH ECOSYSTEMS ON THIS PLANET, CAN CONTINUE TO FLOURISH.

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8. THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "C.B.D.", HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR MORE THAN A DECADE. THE DRAFTERS OF THE CONVENTION, WHICH WAS OPEN FOR SIGNATURE AT THE EARTH SUMMIT IN RIO IN 1992, HAD HIGHLIGHTED THREE MAIN OBJECTIVES, NAMELY, THE CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, ITS SUSTAINABLE USE AND THE FAIR AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF BENEFITS DERIVED FROM GENETIC RESOURCES.

9. MUCH HOPE WAS PINNED ON THE C.B.D. AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION. MANY NOW QUESTION THE EFFICACY OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO CONSERVE OUR BIODIVERSITY. WE THEREFORE NEED TO REVISIT AND ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE C.B.D.'S IMPLEMENTATION.

10. I BELIEVE THAT INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND NATIONAL COMMITMENTS ARE KEY IN THE ATTAINMENT OF THE C.B.D.'S GOALS. AS THE MAIN PROVIDERS AND CUSTODIANS OF BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES DO NOT

ONLY HAVE OBLIGATIONS FOR CONSERVATION BUT ALSO RIGHTS FROM THE BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION.

11. CAPACITY BUILDING IN CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MUST THEREFORE BE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN A NATION'S GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK. INTEGRITY AND ETHICAL MANAGEMENT MUST DRIVE OUR EFFORTS. ADDITIONALLY, CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY MUST BE INTEGRATED INTO ALL NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND STRATEGIES. ALL OF US – THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR, CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – SHOULD BE ENGAGED IN THE BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE DIALOGUE.

12. MALAYSIA TREASURES ITS NATURAL RESOURCES. OUR PRIMARY FORESTS, OUR PRISTINE BEACHES, OUR PRECIOUS RIVERS AND TRIBUTARIES – ALL OF THESE MUST BE CONSERVED AND PROTECTED. I HAVE ASSIGNED THE 'NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY' TO LOOK INTO ALL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION. A NATIONAL COUNCIL ON BIODIVERSITY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY, WHICH I CHAIR, LOOKS AT POLICY INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTATION BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE 13 STATE GOVERNMENTS IN MY COUNTRY. THESE AND OTHER MEASURES ENSURE THAT OUR BIODIVERSITY POSITION IS STRONG AND SECURE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL MUCH MORE TO BE DONE.

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13. WHILE NATIONAL GOVERNANCE REQUIRES UPGRADING, FAIR PLAY MUST CHARACTERISE THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE. IN THIS REGARD, I WISH TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE THIRD OBJECTIVE OF THE C.B.D., REGARDING ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING. MALAYSIA CONSIDERS THIS TO BE PIVOTAL TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE OTHER TWO C.B.D. OBJECTIVES. IT IS THEREFORE ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT GOVERNMENTS WILL SOON BEGIN NEGOTIATING AN INTERNATIONAL REGIME ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING. AS ONE OF THE "MEGADIVERSE" COUNTRIES, MALAYSIA HAS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THIS ISSUE BECAUSE ANY UNREGULATED ACCESS TO BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES THREATENS BIODIVERSITY.

14. IT SHOULD BE ACCEPTED AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE THAT COMMERCIAL BENEFITS SHOULD BE FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY SHARED WITH THE PROVIDERS AND USERS OF THE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. ALTHOUGH FRAUGHT WITH DIFFICULTY, WE MUST SEEK THE RIGHT BALANCE AND CORRECT FORMULA TO CATER FOR NATIONAL RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS IN ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING.

15. ANOTHER RELATED ISSUE CONCERNS THE INCREASING SCOPE OF PATENTS AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CLAIMS OVER BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES AS WELL AS THEIR PARTS AND GENETIC MAKE-UP. THERE ARE MANY UNRESOLVED DIMENSIONS IN THIS AREA, WITH SERIOUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS. THESE ISSUES NEED TO BE EXAMINED AND CAREFULLY

CONSIDERED BY BOTH SCIENTISTS AND POLICY MAKERS, WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING CLEAR AND FAIR RULES AND GUIDELINES.

16. MALAYSIA IS AWARE OF ITS RICH NATURAL HERITAGE AND THE CORRESPONDING RESPONSIBILITIES THAT COME WITH IT. WE ARE PARTICULARLY CONSCIOUS AND COMMITTED ABOUT THE NEED TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT WHILE EMBARKING UPON RAPID DEVELOPMENT.

17. MALAYSIA HAS IDENTIFIED BIOTECHNOLOGY AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF GROWTH, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE EXISTENCE OF ABUNDANT BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN THE COUNTRY. INDEED, BIOTECHNOLOGY IS CAPABLE OF CREATING NEW SOURCES OF WEALTH AND ADDITIONAL INCOME. WE WOULD WELCOME NOT ONLY LOCAL BUT ALSO FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THIS SECTOR. HOWEVER, WHILE MALAYSIA IS AWARE THAT BIOTECHNOLOGY HOLDS MUCH PROMISE, WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT BIOTECHNOLOGICAL PRODUCTS SHOULD NOT POSE ANY THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT, OR TO HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY. AS SUCH, WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO EXCHANGE VIEWS AND IDEAS REGARDING POLICY CHOICES ON THESE ISSUES, INCLUDING ON RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION AS WELL AS ON THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON BIODIVERSITY. IT IS PERTINENT TO REMEMBER THAT GOD HAS CREATED INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EITHER ONE SHOULD NOT BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE OTHER. THEY SHOULD BE MUTUALLY ENRICHING.

18. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS RECOGNISED THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND RISKS OF GENETIC ENGINEERING. THE PRINCIPLE OF PRECAUTION UNDERPINS THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY AS WELL AS ITS PARENT CONVENTION, THE C.B.D.. THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES OF THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL WAS HELD IN KUALA LUMPUR LAST YEAR. MALAYSIA IS ALSO THE CURRENT PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (C.O.P.) TO THE C.B.D.. WE INTEND TO USE THE REMAINING TERM OF OUR PRESIDENCY TO FOCUS ON THE QUESTION OF EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF BOTH THE C.B.D. AND THE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL.

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19. WE VIEW THIS MEETING IN PARIS AS TIMELY FOR TAKING STOCK OF THE STATE OF GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY AS A CRITICAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUE. OF COURSE, SCIENTIFIC INPUT IN THIS MATTER IS ESSENTIAL. SOUND AND HONEST SCIENCE SHOULD BE THE GUIDE FOR OUR ACTIONS AND RESPONSES. HOWEVER, AS WE HAVE SEEN IN THE CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS, SCIENTIFIC FACTS CANNOT PREVAIL WHEN THE POLITICAL WILL IS ABSENT.

20. MALAYSIA HAS CONSISTENTLY CALLED FOR GENUINE DIALOGUE BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, BEFORE AND AFTER THE EARTH SUMMIT, SO THAT ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CAN BE RESOLVED AMICABLY AND EQUITABLY. WE HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT THE NEED TO

FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE – TO ENRICH MAN AND ENABLE PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT, WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE ENVIRONMENT.

21. A LARGE PORTION OF THE WORLD'S BIODIVERSITY RESIDES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. AS SUCH, THE DIALOGUE SHOULD ASCERTAIN THE VIEWS OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD, AS WELL AS IDENTIFY THE AREAS OF THEIR CONCERN. IT SHOULD ALSO SEEK TO ASSUAGE THEIR FEARS OF "BIOPIRACY" WHICH ROBS THEM OF THEIR BIODIVERSITY WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OR BENEFIT-SHARING. WE MUST SEEK WIN-WIN SOLUTIONS FOR THE MUTUAL ADVANTAGE OF THOSE WHO OWN BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES AND THOSE WHO POSSESS THE FINANCIAL MEANS, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERTISE TO DEVELOP THEM. ALL THESE MUST BE PREMISED ON THE CRITICAL NECESSITY OF MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE ECOSYSTEM UPON WHICH OUR SHARED DESTINY IS BASED.

22. SINCE THE EARTH SUMMIT IN RIO IN 1992, THE WORLD HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE HEALTH OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT, THE POTENTIAL VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY AND THE ISSUE OF "BIOPIRACY". THE NEW GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON BIODIVERSITY SHOULD FOSTER A CLIMATE OF SINCERITY, TRUST AND INTEGRITY. THIS IS THE ONLY GUARANTEE WE HAVE FOR A FUTURE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. THE WELL BEING OF OUR EARTH'S ENVIRONMENT IS NOT SERVED BY THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE WHICH CHARACTERISE CURRENT DISCUSSIONS ON THESE AND OTHER GLOBAL ISSUES.

23. THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE AND RESULTANT TSUNAMI DISASTER HAD UNITED THE WORLD INTO A SPONTANEOUS AND CARING INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SURVIVORS IN COUNTRIES FAR AWAY FROM THEIR OWN. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DRAW INSPIRATION FROM THAT AND REFLECT ON WHAT TRUE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COULD DO TO CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY. LET US NOT WAIT FOR A CRISIS OR DISASTER TO STRIKE BEFORE WE TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY, OUR ONLY HOME.

THANK YOU.