

**SPEECH BY
THE HONOURABLE ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED BY PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI AT THE
PRESIDENTIAL GUEST HOUSE, S.AFRICA
26 JULY 2005**

H.E. PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI,
HONOURABLE MINISTERS,
HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
EXCELLENCIES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, FOR YOUR KIND AND WARM WORDS OF WELCOME. ON BEHALF OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION AND ON MY OWN BEHALF, I WOULD LIKE TO LET YOU KNOW THAT WE DEEPLY APPRECIATE THE FRIENDLY WELCOME AND KIND HOSPITALITY ACCORDED TO US. PLEASE THEREFORE ACCEPT, MR. PRESIDENT, OUR SINCERE THANKS TO YOU, THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA FOR ALL THE COURTESIES, INCLUDING THIS SUMPTUOUS BANQUET.

2. LET ME ALSO PLACE ON RECORD, MR. PRESIDENT, MY APPRECIATION TO YOU FOR THE OFFICIAL INVITATION TO ENABLE ME TO COME ONCE AGAIN TO THIS VIBRANT AND DYNAMIC COUNTRY. I HAVE BEEN IN SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE BUT THIS IS MY FIRST VISIT AS PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA.

3. PRESIDENT MBEKI, YOU ARE NO STRANGER TO MALAYSIA EITHER. IN FACT YOU VISITED OUR COUNTRY TWICE IN 2003, FIRST TO ATTEND THE NON ALIGNED SUMMIT AND SECOND TO UNDERTAKE A BILATERAL STATE VISIT. WE STILL RETAIN VIVID AND FOND MEMORIES OF THE TIMES YOU SPENT IN MALAYSIA.

4. MY DELEGATION AND I ARE INDEED DELIGHTED TO BE HERE ON THIS OCCASION. I HAVE WITH ME FIVE MEMBERS OF MY CABINET, A PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATURES, AND A NUMBER OF SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THERE IS ALSO A STRONG PRIVATE SECTOR DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE MALAYSIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THE COMPOSITION OF THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION REFLECTS THE WIDE RANGING INTERESTS WE HAVE TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA.

MR. PRESIDENT,

5. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE YOU MOST WARMLY FOR YOUR SUCCESS IN THE RECENT PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH I FOLLOWED WITH KEEN INTEREST. I WAS DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH YOUR SUCCESS AND THE REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE OF THE A.N.C IN SECURING MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF THE POPULAR VOTE,

UNDERSCORING THE FAITH AND CONFIDENCE WHICH SOUTH AFRICANS HAVE IN YOU AND YOUR PARTY. THIS STRONG MANDATE REPOSED IN YOU AND THE A.N.C WILL, I AM CERTAIN, PROVIDE A FIRM FOUNDATION FOR THE EFFORTS OF YOUR GOVERNMENT TO BUILD A STRONG, FREE AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH AFRICA.

6. LIKE THE A.N.C, THE NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENT WHICH I LEAD IN MALAYSIA IS ALSO THE BENEFICIARY OF A MASSIVE MAJORITY IN OUR LAST NATIONAL ELECTIONS. LIKE YOU AND YOUR GOVERNMENT, OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE IN MALAYSIA IS TO MEET THE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE, THAT IS THOSE WHO VOTED FOR US AS WELL AS THOSE WHO DID NOT DO SO. LIKE YOU IN SOUTH AFRICA, WE IN MALAYSIA ARE DETERMINED TO MEET THESE CHALLENGES AND WE ARE CONFIDENT OF MEETING THEM SUCCESSFULLY.

7. INDEED, MALAYSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA HAVE A DEEP AND ABIDING RELATIONSHIP BASED ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS WHICH CAN BE BUILT UPON, NOT ONLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH OUR COUNTRIES BUT ALSO FOR THE LARGER DEVELOPING WORLD. BOTH OUR COUNTRIES HAVE PLAYED IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE PAST AND WE CAN CONTINUE TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE. THIS IS THEREFORE THE MESSAGE THAT I BRING TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT WE IN MALAYSIA VIEW OUR RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA AS PIVOTAL AND STRATEGIC.

MR. PRESIDENT,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

8. THE HISTORICAL TIES BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES PRE-DATE THE FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES IN 1993. THE LINKS CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE 17TH CENTURY, WHEN LARGE NUMBERS OF MALAYS WERE BANISHED BY THE DUTCH TO THE SHORES OF SOUTH AFRICA. TODAY, WE ARE GLAD THAT THEIR DESCENDANTS, KNOWN AS CAPE MALAYS, HAVE BECOME GOOD CITIZENS OF SOUTH AFRICA AND PLAY IMPORTANT AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLES IN THE LIFE OF THIS NATION.

9. MALAYSIA ACHIEVED ITS INDEPENDENCE IN 1957. ONE OF THE FIRST FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS WE TOOK AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY WAS TO IDENTIFY OURSELVES WITH THE CAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICANS. WE WERE UNEQUIVOCAL IN REJECTING APARTHEID AND CONSISTENTLY CALLED FOR MAJORITY RULE. MALAYSIA'S RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN THE POST-APARTHEID PERIOD HAVE CONTINUED TO FLOURISH BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS.

10. TODAY, AS TWO SOVEREIGN STATES CHERISHING PEACE, STABILITY, DEMOCRACY, WE ARE KEENLY AWARE THAT THERE IS MUCH TO GAIN BY CONTINUING TO WORK TOGETHER FOR OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT. IN OUR MEETING EARLIER TODAY, WE HAVE REAFFIRMED OUR DETERMINATION TO FURTHER ELEVATE MALAYSIA-SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS. WE AGREED TO COOPERATE TO UNDERTAKE SPECIFIC VENTURES AND ESTABLISH VARIOUS PROGRAMMES TO ENRICH THE TAPESTRY OF MALAYSIA-SOUTH AFRICA TIES.

MR. PRESIDENT,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

11. IN TERMS OF TRADE RELATIONS, OUR TWO COUNTRIES ARE ALREADY IMPORTANT PARTNERS. SOUTH AFRICA IS MALAYSIA'S LARGEST TRADING PARTNER IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, ACCOUNTING FOR MORE THAN ONE THIRD OF MALAYSIA'S TRADE WITH THE REGION AS A WHOLE. SIMILARLY, MALAYSIA IS ONE OF THE MAIN TRADING PARTNERS OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE ASEAN REGION. WHILE THERE IS STILL MUCH ROOM FOR EXPANSION IN THE AREA OF TRADE, I BELIEVE THE TIME HAS COME TO FOCUS A LITTLE MORE ON INVESTMENT. WE MUST ENCOURAGE OUR ENTREPRENEURS TO FORM JOINT VENTURES OR UNDERTAKE OTHER FORMS OF ECONOMIC COLLABORATION. RELATIVELY SPEAKING, MALAYSIAN INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA IS LARGER THAN SOUTH AFRICAN INVESTMENT IN MALAYSIA. JUST AS WE WISH TO EXPLORE POTENTIALS HERE, WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO ENCOURAGE SOUTH AFRICANS TO INVEST IN MALAYSIA.

12. FOR THE BENEFIT OF POTENTIAL INVESTORS, LET ME JUST BRIEFLY MENTION SOME SECTORS WHICH WE ARE GIVING PRIORITY ATTENTION FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA. THESE INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICES SECTOR SUCH AS I.C.T, FINANCE, CONSTRUCTION AND TOURISM. REGARDING FINANCIAL SERVICES, WE ARE ALSO STRONGLY PROMOTING OUR LABUAN INTERNATIONAL OFFSHORE FINANCIAL CENTER. MALAYSIA IS DETERMINED TO LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. ONE SUCH TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN SECTOR WITH VAST POTENTIALS FOR COLLABORATION IS IN THE FIELD OF BIOTECHNOLOGY.

13. THE MALAYSIAN PRIVATE SECTOR DELEGATION ACCOMPANYING ME DURING THIS VISIT IS KEEN TO ESTABLISH BUSINESS LINKS AND COOPERATION WITH THEIR SOUTH AFRICAN COUNTERPARTS. I CANNOT BUT REITERATE THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN BOOSTING BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN NATIONS.

MR. PRESIDENT,

14. TOWARDS THE STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES AND INDEED WITH A VIEW TO TAKING IT UP TO A NEW LEVEL, MALAYSIA WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT OUR TWO COUNTRIES ACCEPT EACH OTHER AS STRATEGIC PARTNERS. THE OBJECTIVE OF SUCH A PARTNERSHIP IS TO EXPLOIT THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. WE CAN ALSO SHARE INFORMATION AND DEVISE COMMON STRATEGIES IN FACING OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OR DEVELOPMENTS. I AM OF COURSE THINKING ABOUT ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS. BUT, SUCH A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP COULD ALSO ENCOMPASS THE WHOLE RANGE OF OTHER ISSUES INCLUDING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES.

15. I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND THE LEADERSHIP ROLE THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS PLAYED IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY ESPECIALLY IN THE AFRICAN REGION. SOUTH AFRICA'S OTHER HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS, BOTH NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, TARGETED AT ERADICATING POVERTY, HIV/AIDS AND THE LIKE, RESONATE AND REVERBERATE IN MALAYSIA. GIVEN THE COMMONALITIES OF OUR AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS IN THESE MATTERS, I BELIEVE A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES WOULD MAKE GOOD SENSE.

16. INDEED, SOUTH AFRICA AND MALAYSIA SHARE MUCH IN COMMON ABOUT MULTILATERAL ISSUES AS WELL. WE ARE BOTH AGAINST UNILATERALISM AND THE USE OF FORCE TO SETTLE DISPUTES AMONG STATES. WE HAVE ALWAYS SPOKEN OUT AGAINST THE POWERFUL DOING AS THEY WISH WHILE THE WEAK HAVE TO SUFFER AS THEY MUST. WE NEED TO WORK MORE CLOSELY TO ENSURE THAT THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM IS CONDUCIVE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. WE MUST NOT ONLY WIN THE WAR AGAINST POVERTY AND DISEASE BUT ALSO SUCCEED IN PROMOTING DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS SO THAT THE WORLD BECOMES A KINDER AND SAFER PLACE FOR ALL TO LIVE IN.

MR. PRESIDENT,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

17. I AM AWARE THAT BOTH MALAYSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA SHARE SIMILAR POSITIONS IN ABHORRING VIOLENCE AND CONDEMNING TERRORISM. WE DEEPLY REGRET THE RECENT BOMBINGS IN ENGLAND AND IN EGYPT, ESPECIALLY THE LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES. CLEARLY, ALL THE GLOBAL CONDEMNATIONS HAVE FAILED TO PUT A STOP TO SUCH INCIDENTS. WE SHOULD BE RESOLUTE IN OUR DETERMINATION TO GRAPPLE WITH TERRORISM AND AGREE ON HOW IT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. MALAYSIA HAS ADVOCATED TIME AND AGAIN THAT WE MUST FIND AND IDENTIFY THE ROOT CAUSES OF TERRORISM. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TALK FRANKLY ON ALL ASPECTS OF THIS SCOURGE. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT WHEN WE FULLY UNDERSTAND AND ARE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE ISSUES, WE WOULD THEN BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT ON A CONCERTED MULTILATERAL BASIS.

MR. PRESIDENT,

18. AS CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE SUMMIT AND AS CHAIRMAN OF ASEAN, MALAYSIA IS DETERMINED TO ADVANCE THE JUST CAUSE FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND PROSPERITY. IN THIS CONNECTION, MALAYSIA IS PROUD TO CONTINUE PROMOTING THE CAUSE OF THE NON ALIGNED MOVEMENT, A LEGACY WHICH WE INHERITED FROM SOUTH AFRICA'S SUCCESSFUL CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE MOVEMENT UNDER YOUR PERSONAL LEADERSHIP. AFTER TAKING OVER AS CHAIRMAN OF NAM, MALAYSIA HAS SINCE UNDERTAKEN SEVERAL IMPORTANT

INITIATIVES. FOR EXAMPLE, WE CONVENED A SPECIAL MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE NAM COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE IN MAY 2004. AGAIN, IN MARCH 2005 MALAYSIA GAVE ALL THE NECESSARY SUPPORT FOR THE CONVENING OF A CIVIL SOCIETY GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE. ONE PARTICULAR GROUND BREAKING INITIATIVE WE TOOK WAS TO HOST THE FIRST EVER MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE NAM ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN MAY 2005. THAT CONFERENCE UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND THE INTEGRATION OF THEIR PERSPECTIVES, IN ALL SECTORS AND AT ALL LEVELS, ARE ESSENTIAL TO THEIR EMPOWERMENT AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY. MALAYSIA LOOKS FORWARD TO CONTINUE WORKING CLOSELY WITH SOUTH AFRICA, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NAM TROIKA, TO ADVANCE THE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS OF THE NON ALIGNED MOVEMENT.

19. ALLOW ME, AS I CLOSE MY REMARKS, TO EXPRESS ONCE AGAIN MY SINCERE THANKS AND DEEP APPRECIATION TO YOU, PRESIDENT MBEKI, TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA FOR THE COURTESIES WHICH YOU HAVE EXTENDED TO US. ON A PERSONAL NOTE, I WISH TO SAY THAT IT IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE BACK IN THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, WHERE I NEVER FAIL TO BE TOUCHED BY THE WARMTH AND FRIENDLINESS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE.

20. AND NOW, MAY I IN RETURN PROPOSE A TOAST TO THE GOOD HEALTH OF HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT MBEKI, AND TO THE PROSPERITY AND WELL BEING OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

I THANK YOU.