

**SPEECH BY
THE HONOURABLE ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AT JAKARTA
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STRENGTHENING RELATIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST
REDUCING CONFLICT AMONG THE MUSLIM UMMAH

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,
DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

IN 1993, IN A FAMOUS ALBEIT CONTROVERSIAL ESSAY, SAMUEL HUNTINGTON EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE PRIMARY AXIS OF CONFLICT IN THE FUTURE WOULD BE ALONG CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS LINES. IT WAS THEN THE BEGINNING OF THE ENDING OF THE COLD WAR ERA. HUNTINGTON SUGGESTED THAT THE FAULT LINES BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS WERE REPLACING THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES OF THE COLD WAR AS THE NEW FLASH POINTS FOR CRISIS AND BLOODSHED.

2. AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS ON THE TWIN TOWERS IN NEW YORK, HUNTINGTON WAS INCREASINGLY PERCEIVED AS PRESCIENT. CERTAIN GRAVE EVENTS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE THEN LENT FURTHER CREDENCE TO THE PROPHECY. THE UNITED STATES INVADED AFGHANISTAN IN 2001 SOON AFTER THE ATTACKS IN NEW YORK. THE WESTERN COALITION FORCES INVADED IRAQ IN 2003. THEN, EARLY THIS YEAR IN 2006, SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS IN EUROPE TRIGGERED THE CARICATURE CRISIS. ALL OF THESE HAPPENINGS HAVE FUELLED THE PERCEPTION THAT THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS AS FORESHADOWED BY HUNTINGTON IS INDEED WELL UNDERWAY BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN WEST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

3. IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF WHAT SOME OF US WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE AS THE INEVITABLE CLASH BETWEEN THE TWO GREAT CIVILIZATIONS ? IS THIS THE SLIDE IN RELATIONS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE INEVITABLE AND THE IRREVERSIBLE ? I LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THE ANSWER IS NO ! I BELIEVE THAT THE ILLS OF THIS WORLD ARE MAN MADE, NOT PREORDAINED. THEREFORE, IT IS THE DUTY OF ALL PEOPLE OF GOODWILL TO ARREST THE SLIDE IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN WEST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD. THE CLASH BETWEEN THE TWO GREAT CIVILIZATIONS IS NOT INEVITABLE, NOR THE SLIDE IN RELATIONS IRREVERSIBLE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

4. LET ME SUGGEST THAT THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA, WITTINGLY OR UNWITTINGLY, BEARS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CURRENT

STATE OF AFFAIRS. WITH AN EYE FOR PROFIT AND RATINGS, THE SENSATIONAL BECOMES PRESENTED AS THE WHOLE TRUTH. EXTREMISM, VIOLENCE AND GORE BECOME FRONT PAGE NEWS OF THE WORLD. INDEED, THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA MIGHT HAVE FALLEN PREY TO THE PLOTTINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS WHO ORCHESTRATE THEIR CRUELTY IN ORDER TO CAPTURE THE ATTENTION OF THE WIDEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE. ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF THE MISPERCEPTION AND MISREPRESENTATION OF ISLAM IN THE WEST LIES IN THE FALLACY OF MISTAKING THE EXTREME FOR THE NORM. AL QAEDA WHICH PREACHES HATE AND INTOLERANCE HAS BEEN VERY INCORRECTLY PRESUMED AS SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF MUSLIMS.

5. THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CAN RECTIFY THE SITUATION. THEY SHOULD ASSIST TO PROMOTE THE VOICES PREACHING MODERATION AND TOLERANCE. THE CALLS FOR DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS MUST BE GIVEN SUFFICIENT SPACE. FOR EXAMPLE, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE O.I.C SUMMIT CONFERENCE, MALAYSIA HAS REPEATEDLY CONDEMNED ACTS OF TERRORISM. AS PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA, I HAVE PERSONALLY CONDEMNED UNRULY PROTESTS AGAINST THE CARICATURING OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD. BUT THESE ATTRACTED ONLY BRIEF AND PASSING MENTIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TERRORIST ACTS AND THE UNRULY DEMONSTRATIONS WERE SHOWN ON TELEVISION OVER AND OVER AGAIN. THIS IS UNEQUAL TREATMENT WHICH, I MIGHT SUGGEST, WEIGHS ON THE WRONG SIDE. THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA MUST RECOGNIZE THAT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CIVILIZATIONAL DIVIDE, THERE DO EXIST GENUINE WELL-WISHERS, FACILITATORS AND COMMUNICATORS WHO WISH TO BUILD BRIDGES OF GOODWILL BETWEEN THE CULTURES AND RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD. I PLEAD, THEREFORE, THAT THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA PLAY THEIR PART TO PROMOTE THE VOICES OF CONCILIATION AND RAPPROCHEMENT, AND MUFFLE THE VOICES OF THOSE WHO PREACH EXTREMISM AND HATRED EVEN IF THEY HAVE TO BE REPORTED AS BEING PART AND PARCEL OF THE NEWS. THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS SHOULD BE USED FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND. WE MUST PREVENT THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS BEING MISUSED BY THE ENEMIES OF MANKIND.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ISLAM,

6. WE MUSLIMS MUST ALSO TAKE ACTION TO HEAL THE RIFTS WITHIN THE UMMAH SO AS TO DEMONSTRATE, BY WORD AND BY DEED, THAT ISLAM IS INDEED A RELIGION OF MODERATION WHICH REJECTS BIGOTRY, EXTREMISM AND FANATICISM ESPECIALLY TERRORISM. WE MUST UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF COMBATING DEVIANT IDEOLOGY, DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA THAT FIRMLY ESTABLISH THE VALUES OF UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE, DIALOGUE AND MULTILATERALISM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TENETS OF ISLAM. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I HAVE JUST QUOTED FROM THE OPENING PARAGRAPH OF THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE THIRD EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE WHICH WAS HELD IN MAKKAH AL MUKARRAMAH IN DECEMBER 2005.

7. IT ALSO REQUIRES NO REPEATING TO RECALL THAT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN MUSLIMS EXCELLED IN VARIOUS FIELDS, INCLUDING POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, THE MILITARY, SCIENCE, THE ARTS AND, HAD IN FACT, DOMINATED THE WORLD TRADE

SCENE. OUR SHARED HISTORY IS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE CURRENT CONTEXT, WHERE MUSLIMS ARE WEAK, WITH MANY LIVING IN ABJECT POVERTY AND DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS. ABOUT 50% OF THE POPULATION OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES LIVE ON LESS THAN \$2 A DAY, AN AMOUNT BARELY SUFFICIENT FOR SUBSISTENCE LIVING. POVERTY FOR MANY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD HAS CREATED OTHER PROBLEMS SUCH AS ILLITERACY, MALNUTRITION, DISEASE AND CRIME. THE VICIOUS CIRCLE MUST BE BROKEN. WE CANNOT EXPECT OTHERS TO TAKE THE LEAD. IT IS THE DUTY OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES TO HELP EACH OTHER, SO THAT THEY CAN SHARE THE PROSPERITY, NOT THE POVERTY.

8. MUSLIMS MUST UNITE. FOR A START, WE MUST RESOLVE TO PUT AN END TO ALL THE SECTARIAN CONFLICTS THAT DIVIDE US. THE DIFFERENT WAYS WE CHAMPION THE FAITH SHOULD NOT BECOME A SOURCE OF DISCORD AMONG MUSLIMS. AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST REJECT THOSE WHO DELIBERATELY KILL NON-COMBATANTS AND THE INNOCENT; THOSE WHO OPPRESS AND EXPLOIT OTHERS; THOSE WHO ARE CORRUPT AND GREEDY; THOSE WHO ARE CHAUVINISTIC AND COMMUNAL. THE TRUE MUSLIMS ARE THOSE WHO UPHOLD JUSTICE, WHO FIGHT TYRANNY, WHO SEEK LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION, WHO ARE HONEST AND UPRIGHT, WHO ARE UNIVERSAL AND INCLUSIVE IN WORD AND DEED. ONE SHOULD ALSO ADD THAT THOSE WHO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THE HUMAN BEING, THOSE WHO TREASURE THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN AND THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN, THOSE WHO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF THE FAMILY, THOSE WHO HELP THE POOR AND FEED THE HUNGRY, THOSE WHO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT ARE ALSO GOOD MUSLIMS. IN A NUTSHELL, ALL MUSLIMS ANYWHERE WHO SINCERELY ENDEAVOR TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM, PRACTISING MODERATION WHILE EMBRACING THE UNIVERSAL VALUES ENSHRINED IN THE QU'RAN ARE THE TRUE CHAMPIONS OF ISLAM.

9. WE MUSLIMS MUST DEMONSTRATE, IN PRACTICE AS WELL AS IN THEORY, THAT ISLAM IS NEITHER OPPOSED TO MODERNITY NOR INHERENTLY ANTAGONISTIC TOWARDS THE WEST. MUCH OF THE ANTAGONISM AS THEY EXIST HAS ARISEN AS A RESULT OF THE REJECTION BY MUSLIMS OF THE NOTION THAT THEY CAN BE CONSIDERED MODERN ONLY IF THEY ESPOUSE WESTERN VALUES. MUSLIMS SHOULD BE MADE AWARE THAT THEY CAN INDEED BE MODERN WITHOUT BEING WESTERN. MUSLIMS CAN MODERNIZE AND YET NOT WESTERNIZE. THE TRULY MODERN MUSLIM IS ONE WHO IS ABLE TO HARMONIZE THE REVELATION OF ISLAM AND THE TRADITIONS OF THE PROPHET ON THE ONE HAND, AND HUMAN REASONING AND SCIENCE ON THE OTHER HAND. THESE WERE THE WORDS OF A GREAT ISLAMIC SCHOLAR, MUHAMMAD ABDUH (1849-1905), WHICH I HAVE JUST ADAPTED AND REPEATED FOR OUR COMMON BENEFIT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

10. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RELATE TO YOU MY COUNTRY'S EXPERIENCE TO SERVE AS AN ILLUSTRATION THAT ISLAM IS NO OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS AND MODERNITY, INCLUDING THE PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY. THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAYSIA HAS SELECTED THE TERM ISLAM HADHARI TO DESCRIBE THE SET OF PRINCIPLES THAT REFLECT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PROPER GOVERNANCE FLOWING OUT OF THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE, IN WHICH

BEING FAIR AND JUST TO ALL WITHOUT DISTINCTION AS TO RACE OR RELIGION IS A CORE PRINCIPLE . THIS IS ESPECIALLY PERTINENT TO OUR CASE BECAUSE MALAYSIA IS A MULTI RACIAL AND MULTI RELIGIOUS COUNTRY OF SOME 20 MILLION PEOPLE, OF WHICH 33 % ARE NON-MUSLIMS.

11. ISLAM HADHARI IS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANKIND, SOCIETY AND COUNTRY BASED ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS AND ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION. IT IS AN UNDERTAKING TO ANCHOR OURSELVES IN THE PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMIC LAW AND JURISPRUDENCE.

12. AS AN APPROACH TO RELIGION, WE FEEL EVERYONE SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE WITH ISLAM HADHARI BECAUSE IT EMBODIES PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE UNIVERSALLY FAMILIAR AND ACCEPTED. WE HAVE LISTED TEN PARTICULAR PRINCIPLES WHICH FORM THE FOUNDATION OF THE APPROACH, AND THEY READ AS FOLLOWS:

- I. FAITH AND PIETY IN ALLAH;
- II. A JUST AND TRUSTWORTHY GOVERNMENT;
- III. A FREE AND INDEPENDENT PEOPLE;
- IV. A VIGOROUS PURSUIT AND MASTERY OF KNOWLEDGE;
- V. BALANCED AND COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT;
- VI. A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE;
- VII. THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MINORITY GROUPS AND WOMEN;
- VIII. CULTURAL AND MORAL INTEGRITY;
- IX. THE SAFEGUARDING OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT;
- X. STRONG DEFENSE CAPABILITIES

13. ALTHOUGH MUSLIMS ARE IN PREPONDERANT MAJORITY IN MALAYSIA, OUR COUNTRY IS GOVERNED ACCORDING TO A PROCESS OF SHARING OF POLITICAL POWER AMONG THE VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS WHICH PROFESS DIFFERENT RELIGIONS AND BELIEFS. THE RULING PARTY IS A GRAND NATIONAL COALITION OF FOURTEEN POLITICAL PARTIES. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INEQUITIES HAVE BEEN MINIMIZED BY A DISTRIBUTIONAL STRATEGY DESIGNED TO AFFIRMATIVELY REDUCE PROGRESSIVELY THE ECONOMIC DISPARITIES BETWEEN THE VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS, IN THE CONTEXT OF AN EVER EXPANDING ECONOMY. RELIGIOUS HARMONY IS MAINTAINED BY A CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE OF FREEDOM OF WORSHIP. ABOVE ALL, EVERY MALAYSIAN IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE OR RELIGION IS EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW.

14. ISLAM HADHARI IS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL MALAYSIANS, WHETHER THEY ARE MUSLIMS OR NON-MUSLIMS. AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, THE OBJECTIVE IS TO ESTABLISH A PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY WHICH IS MODERN AND DEMOCRATIC, YET FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE NOBLE VALUES AND INJUNCTIONS OF ISLAM.

15. AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, ISLAM HADHARI IS MALAYSIA'S WAY OF SHOWING BY EXAMPLE THAT ISLAM IS IN FACT A VERY TOLERANT AND CARING RELIGION AND CULTURE. I MUST MAKE IT CLEAR, TO MY FELLOW MUSLIMS IN PARTICULAR, THAT ISLAM HADHARI IS NOT A NEW RELIGION OR A NEW MAZHAB OR ANY NEW RELIGIOUS ORDER. IT IS NOT AN EFFORT TO SEEK APPROVAL FOR A MORE FRIENDLY AND GENTLE IMAGE IF ISLAM. THE TEN FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM HADHARI ARE INTENDED TO MANIFEST THE CENTRALITY OF ISLAM IN THE DAILY LIVES OF ITS BELIEVERS, AND TO SERVE AS A GUIDE FOR APPRECIATING AND PRACTICING THE FAITH IN THESE MODERN TIMES, INSYALLAH.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

16. ON THE QUESTION OF ARRESTING THE SLIDE IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE WEST, THE WAY FORWARD IS FOR LEADERS ON BOTH SIDES TO COMMIT THEMSELVES, THEIR GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR PEOPLES TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE THAT WILL RESULT IN REAL ACTION. DIALOGUE WILL BE FRUITLESS UNLESS FOLLOWED BY TANGIBLE ACTION. DIALOGUE CAN NEVER BE THE SUBSTITUTE FOR ACTION.

17. DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN WEST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD MUST RESULT NOT ONLY IN ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING, BUT ALSO IN THE COURAGE TO RIGHT THE WRONGS. ULTIMATELY, THIS MEANS REVIEWING, AT THE DOMESTIC LEVEL, ANY POLICY WHICH CREATES INEQUITIES AMONG THE POPULATION. AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL, IT MEANS REVIEWING ONE SIDED ACTIONS THAT INFLICT INJUSTICES UPON OTHER PEOPLES AND OTHER NATIONS.

18. BOTH SIDES MUST CEASE PRESENTING THEIR WORLD VIEW IN A CERTAIN WAY SO AS TO LEGITIMIZE CERTAIN POLITICS. TOPPING THE LIST OF ITEMS TO BE SO REVIEWED AND RECTIFIED IS THE POLITICS OF DOMINATION, WHICH IS SOMETIMES DISGUISED AS THE CALL FOR MODERNIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION. I WONDER WHETHER THESE CALLS ARE, IN REALITY, ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH BENCHMARKS FOR MODERNITY AND DEMOCRACY IN ACCORDANCE WITH WESTERN STANDARDS. I HOPE THERE IS NO HIDDEN MESSAGE THAT PEACE AND HARMONY IN THE WORLD ARE ATTAINABLE ONLY WHEN ALL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES ACCEPT WESTERN VALUES, ADOPT WESTERN NORMS AND PRACTICES, AND EMULATE WESTERN INSTITUTIONS. I CALL UPON THE LEADERS OF THE WEST TO REFLECT DEEPLY ON WHAT THEY WOULD WISH TO ACCOMPLISH IN A DIALOGUE WITH THE LEADERS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

19. TO ENSURE THAT THE DIALOGUE ACHIEVES ITS INTENDED PURPOSES, IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE WEST TO ACKNOWLEDGE FIRST THAT ISLAM IS NOT MERELY A RELIGION. ISLAM IS A CIVILIZATION, A CULTURAL ENTITY, A WAY OF LIFE ALL AT ONCE. THAT IS WHY IN DEALING WITH MUSLIMS, ONE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THEIR RELIGIOUS SENSITIVITIES BECAUSE ISLAM IS THEIR WAY OF LIFE.

20. I DO SUBMIT, AS A MUSLIM WHO HAS FULL FAITH AND TRUST IN THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH, THAT WE NEED TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE CORRECT AND TRUE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM TO ALL BELIEVERS. DISPLAYING CONFIDENCE IN OURSELVES IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN SECURE THE RESPECT OF THE WEST AND BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY THEM AS EQUALS. THE DIALOGUE WILL SUCCEED IF THERE IS MUTUAL RESPECT, EQUALITY AND RECIPROCITY. WE MUST ALSO BE HONEST, RATIONAL AND SINCERE WITH EACH OTHER.

21. BOTH SIDES MUST CEASE TO BE IN A STATE OF DENIAL. WE MUST PROBE DEEPLY INTO THE INTERSECTION POINTS BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS. WE MUST CEASE TO CONFUSE MILITARY OCCUPATION WITH THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. WE MUST NOT USE RELIGIOUS COMMANDMENTS AS A SMOKE SCREEN FOR STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL DESIGNS. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST HELP RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF PALESTINE. IN IRAQ, THERE MUST BE A GENERAL AND COMPLETE CEASEFIRE ALL ROUND AND FOREIGN FORCES MUST LEAVE. IN AFGHANISTAN, THERE MUST BE A PROGRAMME TO STRENGTHEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING A TIME-TABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES FROM THAT COUNTRY. THERE MUST BE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE CURRENT IMPASSE BETWEEN THE WEST AND IRAN. THE CASE OF IRAQ WAS A BITTER LESSON FOR ALL OF US. THAT MISTAKE MUST NEVER BE REPEATED ANYTIME, ANYWHERE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

22. BEFORE I CONCLUDE, I WISH TO THANK THE ORGANIZERS OF THIS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS, THAT IS THE CENTRAL BOARD OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA, FOR INVITING ME AND GIVING ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CRITICAL DIALOGUE THAT I HAVE SPOKEN OF. I WISH THIS CONFERENCE GREAT SUCCESS IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF OUR WORLD.

MY DEAR FRIENDS AND CO-BELIEVERS IN GOD,

23. I PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD, THAT HE BLESSES US ALL IN OUR WORK, SPECIFICALLY IN THIS OUR PRESENT ENDEAVOUR. I PRAY THAT HE MAKES US THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS GUIDANCE, HIS WISDOM, HIS COMPASSION AND HIS WILL.

I THANK YOU.