

**STATEMENT BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE 11TH SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE
AT DAKAR, REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL
13 MARCH 2008**

(DELIVERED BY THE HON. TAN SRI DATO' SERI DR. ABDUL HAMID PAWANTEH
RESIDENT OF THE SENATE, MALAYSIA)

His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade,
President of the Republic of Senegal
and Chairman of the 11th Islamic Summit Conference

Your Majesties,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu,
Secretary General of the O.I.C

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I deeply regret that I am unable to be with all of you in this historic city of Dakar on this momentous occasion, to share the warm welcome of the Government and people of Senegal. It is because I have some fundamental tasks to perform relating to the functions and responsibilities at home following the general elections which have just taken place in Malaysia. This democratic process had been successfully carried out in an atmosphere of peace and stability. Malaysia is a plural society. But we are proud of our Islamic heritage.

2. I am equally pleased to note that the 11th Islamic Summit Conference is taking place in Senegal, a country which is peaceful, stable and progressive. I have no doubt that Senegal will ably lead the Islamic world to greater successes during its chairmanship. Malaysia wishes to pledge its full commitment to the O.I.C and support for the leadership of Senegal and the personal stewardship of the Honourable President Abdoulaye Wade. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the O.I.C Secretary General, His Excellency Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, and his staff in the O.I.C General Secretariat for their excellence and for the cooperation which they extended to Malaysia during our tenure as Chairman.

Majesties, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Malaysia considers it a privilege and an honour to be entrusted with the Chairmanship of the 10th Islamic Summit Conference since October 2003, following the exemplary leadership provided by Qatar before that. I wish to place on record our sincere appreciation for the cooperation extended to Malaysia by all members of the O.I.C for the last four and a half years. Malaysia will forever value the opportunity given to it to contribute our services for the Ummah. We have done the best we could. We wish Senegal well in carrying out this heavy responsibility.

4. Since being mandated to the Chair, it has been Malaysia's priority to revitalise the O.I.C General Secretariat and the O.I.C system, to make it more efficient and enable our Organization to achieve the objectives of the O.I.C Charter. Malaysia wishes the O.I.C to play a greater role in improving the welfare of Muslims worldwide. We would like to see the O.I.C contribute more effectively to international peace and security. We must make the O.I.C relevant in the 21st Century era of globalization and a borderless world. Malaysia has made efforts to add new focus for the O.I.C, particularly the economic and social focus, in addition to the Organization's traditional emphasis on political and security issues.

5. Towards this end, Malaysia has taken several initiatives. This included strengthening economic linkages and widening the scope of cooperation among Member States of the O.I.C, premised upon our firm belief that human capital development, including the upgrading of knowledge, is key to the development of capacities for wealth creation and economic growth. Malaysia initiated the Capacity Building Programme for O.I.C Countries in 2005 in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank. The primary objective is to enhance human resource development, institutional, organisational and management skills as well as the development of infrastructure. Four projects under Phase 1 of the Programme are currently making good progress. We hope this pioneer projects will encourage other similar programmes in other O.I.C countries.

6. Another initiative taken by Malaysia was the establishment of the World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) to provide a platform for business interaction and networking amongst the private sector and governments especially between O.I.C member countries. I am pleased to announce that the 4th W.I.E.F will be held in Kuwait, from 29th April to 1st May 2008. We hope to see the active participation of member states and their private sectors at the Forum in Kuwait. I also wish to inform this august gathering of the establishment of the WIEF - UiTM International Centre of Excellence in Malaysia since May 2007. The main objective of the Centre is to internationalise education. Initial programmes include research collaboration on biotechnology and a research initiative on vocational and technical training.

7. In September 2007, Malaysia hosted "The International Forum on the Mecca Declaration". This initiative was meant to provide impetus to the "Ten-Year Programme of Action to Face the Challenges of the Muslim Ummah in the Twenty-first Century", adopted by the 3rd Extraordinary Summit in Makkah in 2005. I also took the opportunity of my participation at the Davos World Economic Forum in January this year to canvass for international interest and support for the Declaration. I do believe that it is possible to establish a strategic partnership between the Muslim world and the West to help advance the economic agenda of the Makkah Declaration. This partnership can take a concrete shape through the establishment of an institutional platform that brings together the O.I.C and the developed nations of the West to provide strategic direction, overview and coordination of cooperation. Its tasks could include the mapping of prevailing international and Western support and collaboration, and the identification of further areas of cooperation to advance the economic agenda of the Makkah Declaration.

8. Another initiative carried out during Malaysia's tenure as Chairman was the convening of a group of experts to discuss the possibility of establishing an international zakat organization. A full Report on the work carried out by Malaysia as Chair of the 10th Islamic Summit Conference has been circulated to all of you at this conference.

Majesties, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Malaysia has also been active in promoting dialogue between the west and the Muslim world, to bridge the gap of misunderstandings and mistrust which continue to plague our existence today. We shall be hosting the Third International Conference on this subject in Kuala Lumpur on 9-10 June this year 2008. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, Malaysia has sought to lead by example. We have introduced Islam Hadhari as the approach to good governance and guide for economic and social advancement of our society. Islam Hadhari is a manhaj based on the teachings of the Qur'an for Muslims to progress. It emphasizes the development of human capital as a primary focus of national development, to add value to our resources and achievements and prepare ourselves for the knowledge economy. It is in fact our most important strategy for eradicating poverty. This includes the empowerment of women through education and their right to work, especially as women constitute half the Muslim population throughout the world.

Majesties, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. We need to strengthen the O.I.C to serve as the voice of Muslims in international fora. The O.I.C is not only a platform for cooperation among the Ummah but also the stage for the Ummah to launch its defence against extremism and Islamophobia at the international level. It must also play the role of catalyst and provider for the economic and social development of Muslim countries, especially the least developed members of the O.I.C. We cannot afford to be left behind. As a priority, we must exert joint efforts to remove the shackles of poverty still afflicting millions of our fellow Muslims in many parts of the world. It is for us to shape our own destiny and therefore we must aim to grow through self-reliance. We must, of course, not relent in our struggle for justice and equity in the existing geopolitical global environment. Highest on this list of our concerns is to find solutions to end more than half a century of sufferings of the Palestinian people and establish an independent State of Palestine. Poverty, hunger and disease are the common enemies of mankind. It is indeed the responsibility of the international community to address these problems, but the O.I.C must play its part.

11. We must continue to energize our Organization and pursue programmes and activities in a focused and results-oriented manner. I am confident that we do have the capacity, and can make a difference for the wellbeing of the Ummah. But we need to work together. We must resolve to maintain unity amongst us. We must summon the political will to do so. We need to do all these because that is the best insurance for attaining peace, progress and prosperity for our peoples.

Mr. President, Majesties, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I wish to assure you of Malaysia's unwavering commitment to our common cause and our support for Senegal as the Chairman of the 11th Session of the Islamic Summit Conference. I wish all of you the best and Malaysia looks forward to a productive Summit.

Thank you.