

**SPEECH BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE NEW CAMPUS OF THE INSTITUTE OF  
FOREIGN RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY OF MALAYSIA  
AT IDFR, JALAN WISMA PUTRA, KUALA LUMPUR  
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DEFINING MALAYSIA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

Y. B Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais Yatim, Menteri Luar Negeri Malaysia,

Yang Berhormat Menteri-Menteri,

Yang Berbahagia Tan-Tan Sri, Datuk-Datuk dan Dif-Dif Kerhormat,

Tuan-Tuan dan Puan-Puan sekalian,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum and a very good morning to all of you !

It is indeed a double pleasure for me to be here this morning. First, it brings back fond memories of these familiar surroundings of the original Wisma Putra where I spent almost a decade of my political career. Second, it is an honour to preside at the official launching of the current campus of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR).

2. I still recall the occasion back in 1991 when IDFR was established, when I was then Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am therefore very pleased to see the growth and development of this Institute over the years from its modest premises in Jalan Ilmu, Petaling Jaya to this impressive new campus in Jalan Wisma Putra, Kuala Lumpur. It is fitting and symbolic that this site, which was once the cradle of our diplomacy in the early days of the nation's history, has now become the "nursery" and training ground for our current and future generations who choose a career in diplomacy.

3. I am pleased that aside from training Malaysian diplomats, IDFR has also opened its doors to foreign participants. Since its establishment, some 4,000 foreign diplomats and officials have attended courses at IDFR. This is a clear testimony of the confidence being placed in the Institute by other countries, both in ASEAN and beyond. Their participation in these courses, under the sponsorship of the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP), is a matter of satisfaction and pride to Malaysia. We look forward to continuing this programme in the future in the spirit of South-South cooperation and solidarity.

4. It would thus be appropriate for me, I felt, to take the opportunity this morning to speak about Malaysia's foreign policy and diplomacy in the future.

5. The objective of our foreign policy, besides protecting and promoting the national interest, is to secure for Malaysia a coveted place in the eyes of the world.

6. At the Malaysian Heads of Mission Conference in 2007 - the year Malaysia celebrated 50 years of independence - I have said that, as a matter of priority, Malaysian foreign policy for the immediate future should provide support for the national mission of achieving the status of a fully developed nation by the year 2020.

7. Beyond that, Malaysian foreign policy should lay the foundations for Malaysia to remain as a country that counts in the affairs of the world in the more distant future. For instance, we should have a vision of Malaysia's global position in the year 2057 when our country will reach 100 years of its existence as an independent nation.

8. Such a vision should not be mere wishful thinking. Malaysia does have the potential of establishing itself as a stable and prosperous nation-state domestically which can effectively contribute towards the peace and security of the world internationally. After all, for many years already, Malaysia has been in the ranks of the top 20 of the largest trading nations in the world. With proper strategic planning and commitment, our country can maintain and even improve upon this position. Malaysians should continue to think big and have confidence in our abilities to achieve our targets, both nationally and internationally.

9. We should have a vision of Malaysia achieving the status of a model state, a successful and responsible member of the community of nations, the pride of its people and a shining example for others to follow.

10. Before I speak more about the future, let me glance back at the past for a little while. In diplomacy, as in most of our human undertakings, we must never forget the lessons of history.

11. I am gratified that as a relatively young nation, Malaysia has acquitted itself well in the conduct of its relations with the rest of the world. The strength of Malaysia's foreign policy and diplomacy this past half a century lies in the consistency of its principles and balanced approach, anchored upon safeguarding the national interests and fulfilling our responsibility as a staunch member of the international community. The fundamentals of this policy have remained constant and their defining characteristics are clear.

12. The first is Malaysia's strong commitment to regional cooperation and integration, principally in the context of ASEAN, which is a priority goal, and cooperation and collaboration with the larger East Asia region.

13. The second is Malaysia's firm belief in increased cooperation, collaboration and solidarity among the developing countries. This has been manifested in Malaysia's continuing and active support for groupings of the South, such as the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

14. And the third is Malaysia's strong support for an enhancement of the quest for a peaceful and secure world - and a more just and equitable international order - through a more vibrant and productive process of international cooperation and multilateralism. We rely upon the United Nations to play a pivotal and enhanced

role. In particular, we look forward to greater empowerment of the General Assembly, so that this most representative body in the United Nations system can deal more effectively with issues affecting international peace and security.

15. I am also pleased to say that while our foreign policy approach has been a pragmatic one, it is also grounded on moral and ethical principles. I know it is not fashionable or popular in these days of realpolitik to link morality with foreign policy. But I firmly believe that there is a place for ethics and rationality in a nation's foreign policy. Any nation that pursues its narrow national interests without any regard for the equally legitimate interests of other nations will in the end be the loser, without friends or allies in times of need. I do believe that national interests should be pursued in the broader and more enlightened context. After all, the promotion of the interests of the region and the international community as a whole will, in the end, also serve one's own larger national interests. I am convinced that the world would be a better place - and a more peaceful domain - if ethics and morality are given due weight in the conduct of international relations.

16. The question may be asked, how is moral purpose to be introduced into the international order? Governments can apply peer influence upon each other. Civil society within countries and across states can exert sustained pressures upon their own as well as other governments to conform to recognized moral standards and be accountable for these standards. International sanctions have been approved for various breaches of the code of international conduct. Perhaps, the international community should include outrageous breaches of basic moral standards in the list which must be subjected to international sanctions. The point is, we should shift moral purpose from the sidelines of international conduct to centre stage.

17. The escalating crisis in the Middle East is a case in point. It is absolutely immoral for Israel to continue inflicting upon the people of Gaza an entirely disproportionate and excessive deployment of its military power. The people of Palestine must be saved and the nation of Palestine must be preserved. Palestine must never be divided again. The international community has a moral duty to ensure that this does not happen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. As we look towards the future, Malaysia must have a clear and a devoted mission of where it is heading as a nation. It must formulate appropriate strategies accordingly. As we advance towards further progress and development, it would serve the country well to formulate sound and realistic strategies for the short, medium and long-term and to make the necessary adjustments when necessary.

19. Undoubtedly, globalization presents one of the great challenges of our times which impacts on virtually every aspect of our existence as a nation. We will have to be skilful to avoid its pitfalls, while tapping on its potentials to propel the country forward. Obviously, in order to succeed in this endeavor we will have to be creative and innovative. We need to sharpen our competitive edge in many areas of our internal structures and systems, such as investment regulations, finance, banking, agriculture, among others. We will have to be competitive regionally and internationally in order to survive and thrive. This would require serious and meaningful investment in our human capital through education and the upgrading of skills and expertise so that our workers and managers could hold their own among the best in the world.

20. In such a competitive global environment, and in the spirit of Malaysia Incorporated, the agencies of the Government, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will have to play critical roles of support and promotion if we are to stay ahead of the competition, particularly in opening and diversifying markets for our goods and services and in attracting foreign investments. I am confident that with resolve and determination, we will be able to move up the ranks, not only as a major trading nation but also as an attractive destination for foreign investment, especially in the fast changing areas of information and communications technology and the biosciences. For this, we will have to enhance our competence and credibility and to build trust and confidence in our capability.

21. But most important of all, we will have to keep our house in good order so as to ensure internal stability, security and harmony for all our people. It is after all the foremost responsibility of all governments to establish and guarantee good governance, where justice and fairness should prevail at all times and at all levels of the society.

22. In the final analysis, Malaysia's real place in the eyes of the world would be defined by what it does at home for the welfare and wellbeing of its people. For the fundamental purpose of government is to bring a better life for everyone. Therefore, like it or not, Malaysia will be judged by its track record - not only on the world stage - but also by its performance and success on the domestic front.

23. In the last five years, I have spoken in many countries about Islam Hadhari as Malaysia's basis for and approach to good governance. It has been well received in those countries. For example, my lecture on the subject in Germany in the year 2005 was reproduced and published in their Occasional Papers No. 1/2006 by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, a German political, non-profit public interest institution. And the Government of Uzbekistan has published an information booklet on the subject of Islam Hadhari in its own language in 2008. I believe my exposition of Islam Hadhari served to present Malaysia as a caring society which is concerned with progress and development of its people. I think I have registered the point that the religion of Islam is not inconsistent with modernization, including advancements in science and technology. Islam certainly does not enjoin us to turn our backs against the rest of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

24. In preparation for the future, and as a contribution to the development of Malaysian foreign policy, I would like to make a specific proposal for the creation of a new body to provide support and assistance for the conduct of Malaysia's international relations and diplomacy.

25. I think it is timely for us to consider establishing a broad forum for a more informed discussion of regional and international issues involving policy-makers and other stake-holders in the country. Such a forum or a council on foreign relations and diplomacy that is independent and dedicated to increasing Malaysia's understanding of the world - through objective debate, discussion and research - could contribute positively to the country's foreign policy and diplomacy. This neutral forum could stimulate innovative thinking on foreign policy issues and approaches, thereby making a meaningful contribution to the country's efforts to strive for a more just international order, for peace and prosperity of the world including our own country.

26. I believe such a council - whose membership can be drawn from prominent Malaysians from diverse backgrounds, such as politics, business, diplomacy and the civil service, academia, research institutions, journalism, and civil society - can provide a healthy cross-fertilization of ideas, a deep and objective understanding of foreign affairs, and create a common ground for national consensus on policies. Indeed, distinguished members of the council could be co-opted, whenever necessary, to serve as special envoys or emissaries for specific purposes or missions.

27. Learning from the experiences of other countries, both developed and developing, that have similar councils, I can see a lot of merits in the formation of such a forum in Malaysia. I trust it could be constituted in the near future for the sake of promoting the country's political, strategic, and economic interests more effectively.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

28. I am confident that on the basis of what I have briefly outlined this morning, Malaysia's foreign policy and diplomacy in the years ahead will be one of continuity and change. That legacy shall be continued. New milestones will also be created. But they will always be characterised by prudence and pragmatism, appropriate to the demands and the circumstances of the times which are constantly changing and never static. In other words, Malaysia, guided by its principles and diplomatic traditions, must continue to be a reliable friend and trustworthy partner, a staunch supporter of just causes, a relentless opponent of oppression and injustices, a champion of peace, and always a responsible and constructive member of the international community.

29. I am gratified to have played a role, both as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, in this process of continuity and change.

30. I am also confident that Wisma Putra, as custodian of the nation's foreign policy, will continue to maintain its tradition of excellence and contribute on the diplomatic front in the attainment of the nation's ambitious aims and goals. I believe that the current and future generations of our diplomats will carry out their duties with the same dedication, commitment and responsibility as those before them. I trust they will draw inspiration from the achievements of their illustrious predecessors and press on to attain greater heights of accomplishment in the national interest.

31. In the new age we live in today, when diplomacy is no longer the sole or exclusive province of professional diplomats, it is vitally important for diplomats to be suitably qualified and given the necessary training for the challenging tasks of promoting and protecting the multifaceted interests of the nation. They should be recruited from among the best and brightest talents in the country. In particular, diplomats must equip themselves with new and relevant skills and be proficient in the usage of international languages as effective communication is a vital prerequisite of international diplomacy. In addition to linguistic skills and expertise in political and strategic issues, negotiation and conference procedures, diplomats of the 21st century will have to be knowledgeable about many other fields, such as international economic and financial matters, various aspects of international law, and other relevant issues.

32. To prepare Malaysian diplomats for the important role they have to play in the life of the nation, IDFR should be equally ready and competent to do its crucial part.

33. On that note, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have great pleasure in formally declaring open the new campus of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations of Malaysia.

Thank you.