

THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK, 11 MARCH 1995

On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I wish to convey our deep appreciation to you and through you the Government and people of Denmark for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made.

2. I also wish to acknowledge the important role played by Ambassador Juan Somavia of Chile in his capacity as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee.

3. Although the 50 year-old Charter of the United Nations begins with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations....", this is, arguably, the first time that we meet at this level to discuss the common people and their problems; their social development. That it has taken us 50 years to do this is a measure of our commitment to the lot of the common people and an illustration of the failure of multilateral efforts, derailed for over 5 decades by the ideological battles of the Cold War. That confrontation, usually on someone else's soil, has undermined most of the social action plans of the UN agencies. International development efforts became predicated on the degree of support that developing countries gave to either of the two superpowers. Our regions became cockpits for superpower manipulations and their fields of battle. The developing countries and their people become mere marionettes.

4. The wreckages, the pain suffered and the injustices inflicted, have left many of these countries crippled, incapable of making the necessary adjustments to meet present and future challenges. Afghanistan, Somalia and many others are among the countries that have been pulverised; their infrastructure obliterated, their people in total disarray. The marginalisation process continues even now, despite strides in science and technology.

5. As for the peoples of the world, the vast majority have suffered not only deprivation, but more importantly, loss of human dignity. We are looking at over one billion people caught in a spiral of abject poverty that relegates them permanently to the status of subspecies. The United Nations is faced with an enormous outflow of some 19.7 million international refugees. Admittedly, migration is a nightmare for the developed countries but migrations also cause severe dislocations and drain the developing countries of essential human resources. It does not help that the developed countries discriminatingly welcome the skilled and the educated.

6. Even as the international community takes the first fateful steps into the next millennium, we cannot but be troubled by the emergence of "failed states" in the wake of the break-up and breakdown of nations. The magic of the midnight hour at the moment of independence cannot be sustained. Countries stumble and retrogress and the people's expectations remain largely unfulfilled; paradoxically, at a time of qualitative scientific and technological advances which should have benefitted the needy the most.

7. Even among the developed countries, elements of a failed state can be detected. Contradictions and polarisations have surfaced which reflect possible flaws in the national direction. We see serious poverty, homelessness and joblessness, and rampant crime and drugs in pockets of these societies, even in the most advanced countries. For these countries lessons too need to be learnt; change and adjustments should apply to them as well, especially those relating to unbridled and unsustainable high incomes and consumption, and the breakdown and decline in the moral values of their society. These countries, supposedly locomotives of world growth and paragons of standards, would do well to effect these changes instead of seeking to hold the high ground and preach to others.

8. We also see aspects of racism and ethnic challenges in these states. Economic decline, malaise in society have in some cases dried up the humanitarian outlooks of the past. Targets internationally agreed, such as the 0.7% for ODA, reiterated at the Summit in Rio in 1992, have been largely forgotten. There is diminishing tolerance coupled with a rigid insistence on homogeneity with one group and one set of values. There was, for instance, a national convulsion over the wearing of a head scarf to school in Europe recently. The implications are disturbing. The future of humankind must point towards globalism, pluralism and multi-culturalism, not exclusivity of regions and blocs and the superiority of one set of values.

9. We remain utterly helpless as the bestialities in Bosnia and in Rwanda are committed. All of the political will of Europe could not save the thousands sacrificed in Bosnia. Chechnya is a domestic affair. However, Tian An Men is not. All of the machinery of the United Nations could not respond to and prevent the slaughter in Rwanda. Indeed, the first reaction was to retreat from danger to self.

10. Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has arrived at many crossroads and defining moments but we have fallen short in our collective response almost every time. We move from one major conference to another,

pronouncing with lofty intention global action programmes but we have never satisfactorily made available the means of implementation. We seem to grope and to muddle through to give meaning to global interconnectedness but we find ourselves being only rhetorical, never quite able to distinguish between self-interest and the care and well-being of humankind and the welfare of the planet.

11. In the last few years, the concept of development has changed from one of synthetic economic targets to that of real economic gains, securing human needs and the optimisation of the human person at the centre of development. Obviously, the free market and selective human rights alone will not do the job. Unfortunately the failure of Communism and Fabian Socialism has not taught any lesson. Despite the weaknesses of capitalism and the free market, only one western modal is permitted. The obvious failures of the so-called locomotives of growth are not acknowledged. At the same time the successful economies of Asia and Latin America are not regarded as potential locomotives. Instead the high growth in these areas is regarded as a threat to the industrial North. It seems to be the agreed policy to categorise them and then put impediments in their way.

12. The developing world must not continue to be looked upon as a bottomless pit, meant for wasted western handouts and welfare programmes. The developing world needs to be given its rightful place as much as the composition of the Group of Seven should be regarded as seriously anachronistic. All these require major changes in political perceptions. Also, the United Nations should cease from continuing to be a place to discipline the developing world on the basis of a western model that "one size fits all".

13. At the heart of development lies the issue of governments and society. Certainly, if governments continuously fail to deliver, they should exit. The issue of governance and accountability, renewed by fresh mandates through the democratic process, applies to all, not just the developing countries. Empowerment must take into account the vulnerable groups, women and minorities that exist in all societies. In this area much progress has been made among the developing world. The days of the demigod leader are largely over.

14. In South East Asia where change has been effectively managed, much has been taken stock of. The obvious mistakes of the West will not be repeated. The relevance of Government and a focussed national purpose through a supportive society remains the prerequisite for development. We have left the socialistic concepts of the welfare state for a workdriven, fully participative society.

15. For Malaysia, growth will be tempered with equity and social responsibility. While we try to harness the positive elements of globalisation, where swift movements of capital, technology and markets often outpace governments, we remain committed towards narrowing income and opportunity disparities. I am confident we shall achieve our targets of qualitative growth and the amelioration of every Malaysian as a composite resource in a matrix of pluralism and multi-culturalism.

16. While in the first 25 years of independence the Malaysian Government has been the major actor in the exercise to restructure society, the private sector has not only been involved in the restructuring process of our society, but has been tasked with the creation of opportunities for economic growth in order to achieve the nation's objective to become an economically developed nation by the year 2020.

17. We are determined to develop the nation in our own mould along all dimensions; economically, socially, politically, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. The vision is for a Malaysian society that is democratic, tolerant and caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

18. While we and our neighbours try to make socio-economic progress, we cannot but lament the external impediments which threaten to derail us. We are concerned about pressures and other means by some in the North to erode our limited comparative advantages, particular labour and natural resources. The North had exploited fully these very same assets in their own countries and in ours when they ruled us. Now they seek to stifle our growth by involving human rights, the social clause and environmental conditionalities. Did they care for these things when they were at our stage of development?

19. I give my commitment, speaking on behalf of my people and country, that Malaysia will support the decisions and programmes of Copenhagen. I hope Copenhagen will not be Rio. It should not merely be remembered for the declaration or the plan of action. Copenhagen should be recalled for being the starting point of a new determination to sincerely put into effect the programme to meet the needs and aspirations of people, the focus of our decision. Thank you Mr. Chairman