

THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA AS A MEMBER OF THE WORLD SOLAR COMMISSION

HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 16 SEPTEMBER 1996

Please allow me to join others before me in congratulating His Excellency Mr Mugabe for his commendable success in leading the World Solar Summit Process which, today, culminates in the World Solar Summit here in Harare.

2. I would like also to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Mugabe and the Zimbabwe International Organising Committee of the World Solar Summit for giving me this opportunity to speak before such a prestigious assembly.

3. We are gathered here today in pursuit of a strategic alliance to fulfil an agenda of mutual concern. Energy is a fundamental factor in the process of socio-economic development and, with the current growth patterns of energy demand expected to continue well into the next decade, there is an urgent need to place in perspective a sustainable energy system. Traditional primary energy sources are unavoidably depletable in the long -run. To rest on our laurels and conclude that the existing energy sources and technologies are sufficient for our future needs would be an act that could very well cripple the future growth of our nations.

4. The question of adequacy, sustainability and reliability of energy sources must be discussed and resolved. There is need for more policy and resource focus on critical areas, including the diversification of energy sources through the application of solar and other renewable sources of energy. Needless to say, this issue must be seen within the context of the protection and preservation of the global environment, cost- effectiveness and a widely obtainable option of conventional sources of energy.

5. There is also an urgent need for a paradigm shift in energy consumption, from one of simply encouraging increased energy use to that of a more intelligent and efficient use of energy in order to foster continuing socio-economic growth. Essentially, the issue here is to seek a better future for the world community by emphasising on the importance of energy efficiency gains, productivity and improvements.

6. Spreading the sources of energy must also be considered and appreciated as basic to the development process of countries. The question of equitable balance of growth, of equal access to amenities, of national well-being and of socio- economic stability depend on a wise and strategic approach to these important issues of energy supply. To some marginalised communities, to those in remote locations, to those not within

the range of the national grid, the issue of providing other possible sources of energy becomes not only relevant, but crucial.

7. The broader use of solar energy, specifically in the electrification of the rural areas, will be an impetus towards the creation of a better quality of life for the rural population of developing countries. Let us be assured that, despite the high cost for the initial outlay of the technologies involved in the use of solar energy, widespread application will, in the long-run, lead to economies of scale that will vouch for the viability and significance of solar as an alternative energy source for the future.

8. Let us however embark on this strategic approach based on the concerted effort of all nations. We are of the opinion that a fair distribution of responsibilities between both the developed and the developing nations has to be ensured before our endeavours for this better future can be realised. Let us not expound the glory of achieving advanced stages in the development of technologies, if these technologies are not shared and transferred to nations, regions and communities which can utilise them and thus narrow the development gap. Those already benefitting from such technologies should consider it their moral and social obligation to participate and contribute in this process of sharing and transferring. This is where developed countries, non-governmental organisations and inter-governmental bodies, with their resources, knowledge and experience can be of assistance. Technologies on solar use, for instance, need to be transferred to developing countries with minimum cost and hindrance, and with intellectual rights being part and parcel of the technology transfer.

9. Our strategic approach, however, should not stop at technology transfer alone. There is also the equally critical factor of funding. We must look seriously at the possibility of establishing a funding mechanism, perhaps in the form of a world solar fund. Commitments from financing institutions such as the World Bank and regional banks and the international community, especially multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as the private sector and corporate entities, could very well play a lead role in spurring its establishment.

10. Let it be reiterated here, however, that institutional arrangements, main players and funding problems should not distract our attention from the importance of solar and other renewable sources of energy as an additional energy mix. Our agenda should be focussed on developing a more effective partnership that does not require stringent and restrictive institutional arrangements, but hinges on good, pragmatic

planning and smart cooperation among nations. By so doing, we shall in the final analysis, enjoy a winning edge. When barriers are down and the whole world community advances, everybody wins. This, I believe, underlies the whole spirit of the United Nations.