

## **THE STATE BANQUET ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA, 03 MAY 1997

1. I would like to express my sincere thanks for the very warm welcome extended to my wife and I and to the members of my delegation. Since our arrival in Gaborone this morning we truly feel very much at home. My wife and I are delighted to be in Botswana on this first official visit.

2. We are impressed by the Botswana government's commitment and state of preparedness for the First International Dialogue - Smart Partnership for the Generation of Wealth in Southern Africa which begins in Kasane tomorrow. Mindful of this important event, we are particularly grateful that Botswana has extended to us a warm welcome and generous hospitality.

3. I recall the discussions we had during our previous meeting both in Malaysia and elsewhere and have been looking forward to continuing those discussions. This visit also provides me with an opportunity to get to know your beautiful country and people. I hope these discussions will enable our two countries to develop closer relations, particularly by fostering closer economic, trade and investment cooperation.

4. The exchange of high level visits between our two countries has contributed to an atmosphere of mutual goodwill and understanding. It is essential that the momentum generated by these visits is sustained so that they lead to greater cooperation in the fields of economic development.

5. On our part, Malaysia is ready to extend whatever cooperation within its means to further strengthen the political and economic linkages between our two countries. Beyond these areas there is considerable scope for cooperation in science, education and information technology. I am pleased that a total of 25 Botswanan officials have availed themselves of the various courses provided under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme.

6. Our two countries have been commended for the remarkable efforts made towards the upliftment of the livelihood of our peoples. In this regard, I am highly impressed by Botswana's effort to develop the country and it is an enviable example of a home-grown economy. The channelling of mining revenue to other sectors, such as agriculture, infrastructure development, manufacturing and tourism has brought about important restructuring of the economy. These steps would also contribute to the globalisation of Botswana's economy.

7. The offer of loans by the Botswana Government to would-be investors also reflects an open approach towards foreign investment. This would be crucial in meeting the need for investments in the economy.

8. In the regional context, we are encouraged by the role that Botswana is playing in the growing integration of the Southern African Region through its participation in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The

peace and stability and the mutual confidence that exists in the region augurs well for the economic well-being of the peoples of this region. In this regard, Malaysia welcomes greater inter-regional linkages between Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. These links will help the two regions to consolidate economic, trade and investment cooperation. This is indeed in keeping with our shared commitment towards realising the full potential of South-South Cooperation.

9. Since Your Excellency's visit to Malaysia, there have been exchanges of visits by members of the private sectors of our two countries. We hope that these exchanges will continue. A number of prominent Malaysian businessmen, known for their pioneering spirit, and commitment are in my delegation. They would be meeting their counterparts over the next few days. Their meetings and discussions should help them to explore and identify new areas of cooperation for our mutual benefit. I am told, investment opportunities exist for cooperation and joint ventures in such areas as construction, tourism, mining and financial services. Indeed, the way forward is through partnership between local companies with their foreign counterparts.

10. Your Excellency's participation at the Langkawi International Dialogue in 1996 together with other Heads of State/Government from the Southern African region has inspired a similar conference for this region. The Southern Africa International Dialogue - Smart Partnership for the Generation of Wealth in Southern Africa is an important initiative in fostering open regionalism. Countries in Southern Africa have been successful in their liberation struggle, and Malaysia is confident that they will similarly succeed in regional integration. I therefore wish to congratulate the Botswana Government on its vision in initiating this dialogue process.

11. The countries of the Southeast Asian region have been committed to regionalism for the past 30 years. Our membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has brought about peace and an environment conducive to rapid economic development. We trust that the Dialogue which begins in Kasane tomorrow would bring positive benefit to the SADC members and usher a period of active regionalism.

12. The real test of a country's commitment to regionalism will be its willingness to lead by example, and to open up to its neighbours and countries beyond. I am optimistic that Botswana, with its enlightened policies and initiatives, will move this process of construction and conciliation forward.