

**THE 12TH CONFERENCE OF THE HEADS OF STATE OR HEADS OF
GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES**
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 2 SEPTEMBER 1998

May I offer my congratulations to you Mr President on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). My delegation and I are happy to be here in South Africa again, this time in this beautiful city of Durban.

2. Please allow me also to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency President Andres Pastrana of Colombia and, through him, to former President Ernesto Samper for steering the Movement through the past three years. Colombia's efforts as Chairman since our last meeting in Cartagena have added more vigour to NAM's activities.

3. Given the importance of the issue of apartheid in the context of NAM and the role that our Movement played towards its elimination, this meeting in Durban is of particular significance for NAM. NAM rejoiced when South Africa was freed from the odious apartheid regime and achieved majority rule. It is therefore most fitting that President Mandela, the living symbol of the epic struggle to end apartheid, has now taken over the mantle of leadership of NAM. South Africa had for long been at the core of NAM's effort to uphold the cherished principles of freedom, justice and equality. This long association, coupled with its active role in the Movement, strengthens our confidence in South Africa's qualification to lead NAM into the new millennium.

4. When NAM was founded in 1961 the world was divided into two blocs, into Eastern and Western camps, into Communists and non-Communists. It was an unstable world, with the nuclear powers accumulating the weapons of mass destruction sufficient to blow up this world. It was a world perpetually on the brink of war. We the weak third world countries lived in a state of trepidation and fear.

5. We felt a need to come together to protect our mostly recently gained independence, our hopes and aspirations. We did not want to be aligned with any of the blocs but to retain our freedom of choice, our own systems of Government, our rights as sovereign nations.

6. In this we felt we could succeed because we were in many instances being wooed by both East and West. We had the option to align ourselves with one or the other. And that option forced the two blocs to treat us with a modicum of consideration. Both were ready to extend help, to give aid and loans and gifts etc. Their courting enabled us to retain our precious independence. We were, I believe, a little bit spoilt because of the courting.

7. Then the Eastern block decided to throw in the towel. They surrendered unconditionally and a bipolar world became unipolar overnight. Some of us liked to believe that the more humane and righteous bloc won. Dictatorships were out and enlightened democracy apparently triumphed. Surely we would be seeing a better world, a world where human rights are respected, where the rule of law prevails internationally and nationally. We would see a world of free countries

exercising their rights freely.

8. But I think we are wrong. The loss of the option to defect has exposed us to threats from which we find nowhere to hide. We have to submit or we would be bludgeoned into submission.

9. We have seen ample demonstrations of the kind of things that can happen to those who fail to submit. I will not elaborate but suffice to say that we and our people, innocent or otherwise, are no longer safe. An eye for an eye is said to be the basis of Muslim justice, but for the vengeful powers one eye is not sufficient. Two or more eyes can be exacted for the loss of one. It does not matter if the eyes belong to the innocent. The important thing is to teach the world a lesson. Submit or be damned.

10. But physical assault is not the only weapon of the powerful. A new weapon has been found which is even more effective. Merely by devaluing the currency of a nation and so impoverishing it, submission can be obtained even from the proudest and the most independent of nations.

11. The highly successful dragons and tigers of East Asia have now found how flimsy are their great economies. They had thought that their mastery of industrial technologies and management skills would enable them to grow into developed nations, able to compete in the market place with the most developed nations of the Western bloc. But in a few months their decades of achievements have been destroyed and they are reduced to begging for help.

12. When we achieved independence the world believed in the sovereignty of nation-states. Proudly we maintained that our internal affairs and our internal policies are our own to determine. Our former colonisers should leave us alone. While the Cold War lasted they did. But once the Cold War was over the triumphant victors began to enunciate new concepts of international relations which could give them back their dominant imperial role.

13. After the Gulf War demonstrated that indeed there is now only one power, a new concept of international relations was introduced. Briefly no country is sovereign if that country is judged by the Western bloc to have breached their norms of correct behaviour. Initially violation of human rights is expected to warrant interference in the internal affairs of independent nations. Very quickly the right to interfere extended to political and economic systems or policies.

14. Now every nation must adopt the so-called free and open market system which will enable the rich and avaricious capitalists of the Western nations to enter and leave any country at will. They can own and set up banks and businesses everywhere and anywhere unfettered by the national needs and aspirations of any nation. They must be free to revalue and devalue currencies and shares unimpeded by Government rules, laws and regulations. They will control and determine the exchange rates of all currencies anywhere, anytime. But the world must not know who they are and how they work. While they require Governments to be open and transparent, they themselves will remain shadowy

and their operation closed to inspection.

15. The countries of the world have two choices, submit or be impoverished by having their currencies devalued and their share markets destroyed. Unfortunately whether they submit or they don' t the result is the same. From being stable and prosperous they will now become poverty- stricken and beset with political and social turmoil. Today more than 25 million workers in the countries attacked by these capitalists have lost their jobs. This means that they have no food, no medicine and no milk for their children. For this the blame is put squarely on the Governments of these countries for not providing a safety net in the form of unemployment benefits. That the practice in Asia is to provide lifetime employment is not considered good for the workers. According to Western belief workers should be sacked if the business is not doing well and the Government will support them. Sackings and uncertainty of employment is considered better than guarantee of life-time employment. And so millions of workers in East Asia are now unemployed because the countries are being forced to accept the so-called superior Western practices.

16. With tens of thousands of businesses and many scores of banks folding up Governments are now without adequate revenue to pay wages and fund public works. The loans they have been forced to take will ensure that for decades to come they will be debt slaves to the rich in the world.

17. That the free flow of capital and the right of speculators to determine the exchange rates of currencies have clearly destroyed many vibrant economies, resulting in chaos and extreme poverty, have not resulted in any second thoughts on the rightfulness of the free market system, of unregulated capitalism and the free-flow of capital across borders. Instead the economic recession and accompanying problems are blamed on the Governments. The market forces are merely disciplining Governments so that they will adopt superior Western ways of governance and management of the economy.

18. The protests of the victims are not only ignored but they are actually censored by the international media controlled by the West. Apparently freedom of speech and the press is not for everyone. And so the capitalists of the West continue to revel in the ease with which they can strip the wealth of the world. Their raids and attacks have become more frequent and more widespread. Even the former bastion of the Eastern bloc are not free from them.

19. Logically globalisation and a borderless world should mean not just a free flow of capital across borders but also of people. Yet the proponents of a borderless world object strongly to the free flow of people into their countries. Actual fences are being erected so as to stop the people from poor countries from coming in. Those who manage to overcome the physical barriers are subjected to physical abuses and forced to recross the borders. In fact those who profess religions which are not approved are subjected to ethnic cleansing and forced out of their own countries.

20. Again we see here double standards. While globalisation is interpreted as

the free flow of capital and goods from rich countries to poor countries, the free flow of people across borders into rich countries is not considered consistent with borderlessness and globalisation.

21. The tendency of the rich and the powerful to interpret everything to their advantage is not confined to countering alleged terrorism and the markets of the world. It extends into ideology and systems of decision making and Governments. Thus the world is being told and indeed being pressured into the acceptance of liberal democracy and the will of the majority. Those who fail to accept democratic practices of the most liberal kind are subjected to harassments, sanctions, bad-mouthing by the media and a variety of threats and pressures. That such acts are actually undemocratic do not bother the liberal democrats of the first world. Thus leaders of independent nations are kidnapped and tried under laws which they never subscribed to, harbours are mined and economic sanctions applied unilaterally.

22. Yet in the United Nations there is not the slightest semblance of democracy. Anyone of five countries can veto the will of the majority, in fact can do anything they like in the name of the Organisation simply because they won a war fifty years ago. And so one country can reject the will of six billion inhabitants of this planet while demanding that other countries accept liberal democracy. They see no contradiction in their stand.

23. The interpretations of the United Nations' Resolutions have been appropriated by a few powers in the United Nations Security Council. The United Nations General Assembly is totally ignored and bypassed. And so the United Nations' Resolutions in favour of their proteges are upheld while those in favour of the countries not categorised as their clients are either misinterpreted or ignored.

24. The United Nations is a great concept but it was formed by an exclusive club of Nations who presumed they had a monopoly of the right to determine the shape of this world forever because they won World War II. It was an example of justice according to the victors. Such justice is obviously biased. But nevertheless they will resist any reform of the United Nations which might impinge upon their right to use the United Nations to legitimise their national policies. Democratic processes are no argument for them to change their stance. They and in particular the most powerful among them will do just what they like in the furtherance of their national policies.

25. Those of us who entertain hopes of democratic reforms in the United Nations should give up our dreams. We are not going to see anything like the reforms we envisage. If there is to be any reform it is only going to strengthen the hands of those who are already strong and who want more power for themselves.

26. The fact is that after fifty years of being free, largely on account of the Eastern and Western blocs confronting each other, our freedom is being eroded and colonialism is coming back. Of course it is not going to take the same form, but it is colonialism all the same. The strong and the mighty will quite literally rule

us, determine our fate and our roles in the international scheme of things. Poor as we are we will be exploited even as in the past they exploited us.

27. Our only hope lies in staying together. The relevance of being non-aligned in a unipolar world may be questioned. But there are any number of reasons for us to stay together. Divided one by one we will succumb. But in unity there is a chance that we will survive and possibly retain our integrity and independence.

28. The Non-Aligned Movement is therefore worth saving and rejuvenating. After our meeting in Belgrade a small group made up of 15 non-aligned nations was set up to experiment with South-South Cooperation. It is not a resounding success. Not every country is dedicated to South-South Cooperation. But the modus operandi of cooperation between the countries of the South have been devised and tried out quite successfully. It is perhaps time for truly interested members of NAM to be brought into the scheme so that apart from our tri-yearly meet, we can have mutually beneficial interactions. Since the founding of the Group of 15 trade between them has expanded by almost 400 percent. With greater effort trade can be really substantial.

29. Clearly NAM is still a useful forum and organisation for the countries unwilling to be mere clients of the first world. It was founded in a bipolar world but it is clearly still needed in a unipolar world. The need to defend our rights is greater than ever. None of us can do it alone but together we stand a better chance.

30. We now know that the weapons to be used against us are not just military force but also economic forces. The assaults through economic forces are more subtle but are no less damaging and effective compared with military assaults. We need to know about the economic forces that may be used and how we may defend ourselves. As with the struggle against colonisation, the time may come when the good elements among the powerful will see the injustice of their ways and throw their weight behind us. It may take a long time as indeed colonialism took a long time to be condemned. But God Willing, the day will come when justice will triumph. Until then let us keep NAM alive and let us do what we can for ourselves.