

**The Official Dinner In Honour Of H.E. Mr Abderrahman Youssefi
Prime Minister Of The Kingdom Of Morocco**

Seri Perdana, Putrajaya 13 November 2001

On behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, I wish to extend to Your Excellency, Madam Helene Youssefi and the distinguished members of the Moroccan delegation a very warm welcome to Malaysia. We are indeed honoured to receive Your Excellency and Madam, as this is the first time a Prime Minister from the Kingdom of Morocco is making an official visit to Malaysia. We hope that Your Excellency and members of your delegation will have a pleasant and fruitful stay in Malaysia.

2. I recall with fond memories my first private visit to Agader your beautiful country 11 years ago and my visit to Casablanca to attend the OIC Summit in December 1994, during which members of my delegation and I were received with warmth and great hospitality. I look forward to visiting your beautiful country again in the near future. I believe that regular contacts and interaction between leaders and officials will be useful in fostering closer relations and cooperation between Malaysia and Morocco. Malaysia therefore looks forward to receive His Majesty the King of Morocco in Malaysia next year.

3. In our discussion this morning, we share the view on the need to enhance our bilateral relations. We have identified several areas for both our countries to focus in order to expand our economic and trade relations further. Our bilateral trade, which stood only at USD 22.6 million in 2000 and USD 13.4 million for the first eight months of 2001 may be small, but prospects for expansion are promising. I hope your meeting with the Malaysian private sector this afternoon will yield positive result. As engine of growth for both our economies, the private sector should be encouraged to interact actively.

4. With regard to investment, greater efforts are needed to promote direct investments between our two countries. As Malaysia and Morocco share similar desire to develop the oil, IT, tourism, industrial, financial and the properties sectors, prospects for Malaysian and Moroccan involvement in these sectors look bright. Several Malaysian companies such as PETRONAS, PROTON and MDC have expressed keenness to participate. While we would like to encourage our private sectors to look at Morocco, we too would like to welcome Moroccan investors to invest in Malaysian companies and industries that can supply Morocco's needs and later to expand this operation to Morocco.

5. In this era of globalisation, developing countries are faced with new threats which need to be carefully managed if we are not going to lose out in the struggle to survive and grow. It is our belief that the negative impact of globalisation can be minimised by enhancing cooperation among the developing countries. In this context, Malaysia strongly believes in South- South cooperation as a vital approach to ensure that the developing economies are not marginalised.

6. Towards this end, Malaysia will always be ready to share its knowledge and experiences with other developing countries. It has always been our philosophy to 'prosper our neighbour'. When neighbours are rich, we can benefit from each other.

7. Similarly, Malaysia believes cooperation among the OIC member countries is crucial if our views are to be heard and respected by the major powers. The need is real for Muslim countries to remain united in addressing those challenges which have serious political and economic ramifications for the Muslim world and has become more urgent in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. As demonstrated by the case of Afghanistan today, our failure to stand united and speak in one voice can have quite a disastrous consequence. Today it is Afghanistan, tomorrow it may be Iraq and after that it may be us.

8. Malaysia firmly believes that no nation can dominate another simply because it has the capability to do so. We cannot, but feel greatly disturbed at the failure of resolve to end the bombing of innocent people in Afghanistan. Malaysia is against terrorism and believes that this global menace to humanity would require a concerted international effort to address the issue in a comprehensive manner. In fighting terrorism, Malaysia believes that a UN sponsored international conference should be convened as soon as possible to address the issue, its definition, its root causes and the strategy for combating it.

9. I hope that your visit today will open new ground and would stimulate greater interactions in the fields of economic and trade and cultural exchanges between our two countries. I am confident that the Air Services Agreement and the MOUs on the establishment of the Malaysia - Morocco Joint Commission and between Malaysia's Multimedia Development Corporation and Moroccan Information Technopark Company, signed this morning, would pave the way for meaningful collaboration between Malaysia and Morocco.

10. Thank you.